REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

DEVELOPING THE E-LEARNING COMPONENT FOR INSTITUTIONALIZED LABORATORY CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

issued by
The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

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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

Since 2012, GAIN has been working in Nigeria to improve Large Scale Food Fortification. Within this period, the frequency of loss of technical analytical capacity in laboratories, especially from regulatory agencies has been raised as a persistent challenge by industry stakeholders who are faced with grappling the constant changes and inconsistent quality of the officials they interface with. Regular staff redeployment is a norm in public sector laboratories which poses a challenge to long term capacity development and sustainable knowledge investments, as trained staff can be moved at any time to other units or departments, which may or may not be relevant to the built capacity.

GAIN is therefore collaborating with the Institute of Public Analysts of Nigeria (IPAN) through the Driving Fortification’s Effectiveness through the Systems Innovations Project to develop an innovative and interactive training and certification program that will facilitate the institutionalization of laboratory analytical capacity development and maintain a premium capacity standard for personnel.

The three-tiered certification program will have a client group which will include: fresh graduates; laboratory technical professionals, statisticians, field staff involved in surveys and sampling, and laboratory services managers involved in laboratory management and quality systems. The training exercises offered should elevate the skill set of this group to meet pre-defined internationally accepted and recognized quality standards.

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is thus 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 develop an innovative and interactive platform to deliver/run for an accredited certifiable training program jointly developed by the Institute of Public Analyst of Nigeria (IPAN) and GAIN. *The proposed e-learning component will be a key delivery component of the training programme currently under development a range of partners under the leadership of IPAN. Overall, the training programme will support further professionalization of the skilled workforce involved in sampling and laboratory analysis of micronutrients and food safety parameters and deliver certification to internationally recognized standards and best practice.
2.1.1. CONTEXT & INTRODUCTION TO LARGE-SCALE FOOD FORTIFICATION

Despite tremendous progress, malnutrition continues to be a global challenge. It not only results in short-and long-term health problems at the individual level, but also has a detrimental impact on productivity resulting in negative socioeconomic consequences for countries at large. As a global community, we are working hard towards reaching the ambitious Sustainable Development Goal of ending all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030, making sure all people—especially children—have sufficient and nutritious food all year. Meeting this goal requires that nutritious foods are made available and accessible, particularly to vulnerable populations. Our current efforts must be enhanced and scaled up.

Micronutrient malnutrition, commonly in the form of iron, iodine, vitamin A, zinc, and folate deficiencies, affect nearly half of children worldwide younger than 5 years of age and approximately one-third of the world’s population. Fortification with iron and iodine has been ranked as a top public health intervention priority for countries, based on a benefit-cost analysis. When it comes to improving nutrition outcomes, particularly in the case of micronutrient intervention implementation, business as usual will not suffice to make significant progress by 2030. Fortification must also be incorporated within a comprehensive “revolution in food systems” to deliver healthy and safe foods, all within the confines of planetary health.

Large scale food fortification (LSFF) programs (one intervention within the fortification “toolbox” of options) has been shown to significantly improve nutrition, health and development outcomes: a recent systematic review found that LSFF improved the micronutrient status and health outcomes of populations in low- and middle-income countries. These included reduction of birth defects, improvements in iron status, and improvements in vitamin A status, among others. Practically, LSFF has a number of benefits as an intervention; it is cost-effective, requires minimal behavior change, and can be sustained long-term through the support of government and private sector partnerships.

Currently, more than 130 countries have mandated the fortification of at least one type of food with micronutrients. Despite this, some LSFF programs have yet to deliver their full potential in terms of reach and impact on nutrition in many countries.

One major pitfall in the case of fortification to health impact is that even when a country has made fortification of a food vehicle mandatory, gaps in fortification quality may remain. Fortified foods that do not meet the established standards can result in a program not reaching its intended impact. Quality gaps can result from several challenges including the failure of industry to comply with government mandated fortification standards (driven by several factors), poor quality or insufficient amounts of premix added during production, exposure of goods to sunlight (coupled with suboptimal conditions of packaging and storage) which diminish the added micronutrient levels, among others. Understanding and addressing these gaps along the fortification supply chain is critical to ensure the quality and safety of fortified products in the food system.

Figure 1. Food Fortification Value Chain
2.1.2. CHALLENGES IN LAB TESTING FOR FORTIFICATION QUALITY ASSESSMENT (QA) & QUALITY CONTROL (QC)

One of the key issues identified by GAIN and LSFF stakeholders is the potential for erroneous monitoring carried out by industry & regulators, which can lead to inaccurate fortification quality control & assurance, and ultimately to the supply of unfortified or under-fortified products to market.

In particular, periodic loss of technical analytical capacity from laboratories, especially from regulatory agencies, has been raised as an ongoing challenge for regulators and producers – who lament the constant changes and inconsistent quality of officials responsible for the regulation & enforcement of fortification. Regular staff redeployment is a norm in public sector laboratories and a challenge to long term capacity development and sustainable investments, as trained staff can be moved at any time to other units or departments, which may or may not be relevant to the built capacity. For these staff, a lack of prospects within the analytical workforce is a disincentive to stay in their laboratory roles.

2.1.3. INSTITUTIONALIZING LABORATORY ANALYTICAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Objective

Under the Driving the Effectiveness of Fortification through Systems Innovations project, GAIN has been working with key partners to design and implement an intervention that will deliver improvements in laboratory systems and processes by raising and standardizing the skills and competency levels of laboratory personnel, field inspectors, and other key staff to meet pre-defined internationally accepted and recognized quality standards. The Institutionalizing Laboratory Analytical Capacity Development (ILACD) initiative provides the requisite practical skills to university graduates, technical laboratory professionals, statisticians, and field staff involved in surveys and sampling, and laboratory services managers involved in laboratory quality management systems. The intervention will seek to drive these improvements not only at the regulatory (publicly) owned/funded laboratories and establishments, but also in private laboratories, in order to increase access to high quality services and improve system efficiency in regulatory food / micronutrient testing and analysis. The initiative aims to catalyze micronutrient analysts’ professionalization by developing and delivering regular and progressive certificated training and capacity building modules for technical officers involved in food and micronutrient analyses.

The certification program will be offered at three Levels: Level 1, Level 2, and Advanced.

The Project Management Group coordinated by GAIN and IPAN has developed the curriculum’s outline (an abridged version shared with this RFP for guidance only) under the Technical Advisory Committee’s technical leadership.

Solution

Through this intervention, GAIN intends to further professionalize the workforce by developing and delivering an accredited, certified training programme that will build capacity of technical offers involved in food and micronutrient analyses. The client group will be laboratory technical professionals, field staff involved in surveys and sampling, and laboratory services managers involved in laboratory management and quality systems.

The objective is to develop an innovative and interactive, accredited, certifiable training program.

Considerations & Stakeholder Feedback

Public and private laboratories and organizations in Nigeria may not have access to the most up-to-date cutting-edge analytical equipment. It is therefore essential to keep the Nigerian context in view while developing the delivery platform that is responsive to the content of the curriculum. In particular, it is essential to contextualize tools to ensure that the equipment required to teach the techniques are readily available.
3. SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

GAIN has been working with the Institute of Public Analysts of Nigeria (IPAN) to develop the curriculum for a technical training course for laboratory staff involved in fortification QA & QC (see abridged curriculum attached). Once developed, this course content will entail certain elements delivered in person (through hands-on sessions in labs) and other elements delivered through an eLearning course. The successful applicant shall present expertise in creating & delivering engaging, interactive, modular eLearning courses and the required content based on the course curriculum outlined in the attachment.

3.1. OBJECTIVES

The requirements for this project come in two parts, and responses are invited for either or both parts. Applications from consortia of partners who can fulfil both parts of the project are also welcome.

Part A entails the development of the eLearning course content – adapting materials to be provided by GAIN and IPAN to create an optimal eLearning experience, including a variety of content formats (including but not limited to audio, video, animations, interactive exercises, quizzes, etc.). Please note that, for confidentiality reasons, more detail on the content will be provided to potential applicants upon expression of interest. You are invited to contact the team (details below) for more information.

Part B entails the provision of a Learning Management System (LMS) that will enable the delivery of the course content to laboratory staff from regulatory bodies and private sector organisations across Nigeria (in the first instance), with potential to scale to other countries. The LMS must offer these key features:

- **Modular content**: to ensure that trainees only take the courses required for their level of knowledge and / or their professional needs
- **Pre-assessment questionnaire**: designed to identify the training modules appropriate for the trainee
- **Interactions with a ‘trainer’**, for example via integration with a video conferencing application
- **Assessment & ongoing performance analysis**
- **Downloadable course materials**

3.2. DELIVERABLES

A fully developed eLearning course either as a standalone package for GAIN and partners to use at will, or delivered together with ongoing access to an LMS platform or equivalent to manage future deployment of the course.

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

Members of the GAIN team in both Nigeria and Global offices are part of the selection team of the organisation and will review the proposals, with expert input provided by the Project Management Group & Technical Advisory Committee. They will be available via email to respond to clarifications on this solicitation. Please direct all inquiries and other communications to the contacts below. Responses will not be confidential except in cases where proprietary information is involved.

- Oliver Camp, Senior Associate, GAIN London (ocamp@gainhealth.org)
2. BUDGET

Applicants are required to provide GAIN with a detailed fee percentage proposal. The final budget amount will have to be approved by the organisation prior to starting the project.

3. FORMAT FOR PROPOSAL

The proposal needs to be formatted as follows:

- **A Technical Proposal**, consisting of an executive summary, project background, methodology, activities to be conducted, and a Gantt chart with the estimated timelines. Describe reasons for any deviations from the suggested due dates listed in the scope of work.

- **Budget Proposal**, consisting of the detailed budget needed to implement the activities based on the assignment of this project. Budget should include itemized costs for key elements of the assignment as follows:
  - Rates of key staff and percentage participation in total level of effort for key staff.
  - Estimated schedule of other anticipated expenses (travel, sub-contracted resources, supplies, outside resources, etc.).
  - Itemization of all other costs, e.g., agency costs, agency fees, administrative costs, etc.
  - Preparation of reports and required documentation.
  - The fees shall be quoted as a fixed sum inclusive of all applicable taxes and/or institutional overhead.
  - In case of errors in calculating overall costs, the unit costs will govern.

- **Annex** should contain the following information:
  - Profile of relevant applicant qualifications, including years in business. If your organization has more than one location, please distinguish these qualifications for the site that is responding. Experience in implementing community-based interventions or working in low-resource settings is strongly desired.
  - Profile of relevant experience and examples of related work, including references of 2-3 prior clients.
  - Qualifications of key members of the proposed project team (Please attach CVs and provide details of back up/standby teams).

*The Technical Proposal should be no more than 5 standard A4 pages. Further information to back up this proposal can be included as annexes up to 10 standard A4 pages. Each component should be a separate document marked accordingly as “Technical Proposal”, “Budget Proposal”, and “Annex”.*

4. SUBMISSION

An electronic copy containing the documents preferably in Microsoft Office Suite formats and / or PDF, along with all the required information (including the fee proposal) should reach GAIN at the following address: ooyekenu@gainhealth.org and jpilaku@gainhealth.org.

5. DEADLINE

Completed proposals should be submitted to Oluwatoyin Oyekenu, Senior Project Manager, GAIN before 2300HRS Central European Time on 28th December 2020. Proposals may be postmarked on the due date, provided that an email of the proposal is submitted by the deadline.
6. UNACCEPTABLE

The following proposals will automatically not be considered or accepted:

- Proposals that are received after the RFP deadline at the specified receiving office.
- Proposals received by fax.
- Incomplete proposals.
- Proposals that are not signed.

7. REVISIONS

Proposals may be revised by electronic mail and confirmed by hard copy provided such revision(s) are received 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 contact the responsible person at GAIN under section II, point 1., 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 the 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:

- Understanding of the scope of work:
  - Proposal shall demonstrate a clear understanding of the project objective and deliverables as outlined in Section I.
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the technical requirements of this RFP:
  - Providing detailed technical documentation of the proposed strategy.
  - Evidence of experience delivering solutions using the proposed information technology platform.
- The creative and methodological approaches required to implement each of the parts of the scope of work.
- Comprehensiveness of work plan and reasonableness of proposed time frame:
  - Proposal shall include a feasible work plan to ensure successful completion of deliverables.
  - The work plan details how activities will be coordinated.
- Detailed budget and cost-effectiveness of proposed approach:
Evidence of cost-effective approaches to undertaking the scope of work within the proposed budget.
Proposal shall identify possible challenges and include creative approaches to addressing them.

- Management and personnel plan:
  - The team members working on this project shall have the relevant qualifications and overall experience required to successfully implement the project.
  - Roles and responsibilities of each team member shall be clearly defined. GAIN shall have one main contact person clearly identified in the proposal.

- A duly completed offer of services.

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)
Bibliography & References


iv CDC. https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/micronutrient-malnutrition/index.html


Annex: ABRIDGED CURRICULUM OUTLINE

CURRICULUM CONTENT (1) – Micronutrient analysis in food matrix

QUALITY MANAGEMENT:
- Key concepts of Quality Management Systems (for laboratories and calibration bodies):
- Key/relevant clauses of ISO17025:2017 (what change is included from 2005)
- Validation and verification processes
- Internal controls (internal audit)
- External controls (external audit)
- Accreditation bodies and accreditation process for micronutrient analysis methods
- Quality control procedures:
  o Define key performance characteristics (LOD, LOQ, repeatability, reproducibility, accuracy, precision, trueness, measurement uncertainty, …)
  o How to choose the appropriate method
  o Device/Instrument
  o Matrix and measurand
  o Method
  o Expected concentration (customer requirements)
  o Analytical range
  o Measurement uncertainty

CURRICULUM CONTENT (2) – Micronutrient analysis in foods

DEVICES
- Equipment management
- Selection and purchasing, installation
- Calibration and performance evaluation
- Maintenance, trouble shooting, repair or retirement
- Understand the principles and use of applicable basic laboratory equipment
  o i.e. pH meter, Colour Comparator, Thermometer, Oven, Muffle furnace, etc.
- Understand the principles and use of applicable high precision laboratory equipment
  o Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer (AAS)
  o High Performance Liquid Chromatography (UV, Fluorescence and Diode Array Detectors)
  o Gas Chromatography (FID, ECD, TOF, MS)
  o Ultraviolet / Visible Spectrophotometry

CURRICULUM CONTENT (3) – Micronutrient analysis in foods

- Matrices and Measurement
- Sample management (Handling and storage, Labelling, preparation)
- Reagents and materials (procurement, inventory)
- Characteristics of matrix, analyte
  o Refined Vegetable Oil – Vitamin A
  o Margarine -Vitamin A
  o Wheat flour – Fe, Zn, Vitamin A, Vitamin B’s (FA)
  o Maize flour – Fe, Zn, Vitamin A, Vitamin B’s
  o Rice flour – Fe, Zn, Vitamin A, Vitamin B’s
  o Refined Sugar – Vitamin A
- Refined Table Salt – Iodine

  - METHOD (each method)
    - Quantitative tests
    - Qualitative tests (Iron red spot test, Iodine in salt, Vitamin A in oil)
    - SOPs
    - Performance characteristics and QC procedures
    - Record keeping
    - Reporting