

## **CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

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**PARTNERING WITH ENTERPRISE SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS (ESO) TO STRENGTHEN LOCAL ECOSYSTEMS FOR AGRIFOOD SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMES).**

**Release Date: 8 April 2024**

**Application Deadline: 25 April 2024**

## I. Contents

SECTION I. INTRODUCTION	3
1.1. The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)	3
1.2. The role Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Food Systems	3
1.3. The relevance of agrifood SMEs to GAIN	3
1.4. The Nutrition Impact at Scale (NIS) Project	4
1.5. Enterprise Support Organisations	4
SECTION II. THE CALL FOR APPLICATION (CFP)	5
2.1. Geographic coverage	5
2.2. Partnership period	5
2.3. Deadline	5
2.4. Cost sharing	5
2.5. Application process	6
2.6. Completion	6
2.7. Rights of rejection	6
2.8. Key Timelines	6
SECTION III. ELIGIBILITY	7
3.1. Eligible concepts	7
3.2. Ineligible concepts	7
3.3. Eligible activities and allowable costs	8
3.4. Ineligible activities and unallowable costs	8
SECTION IV: TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS CFP	8
4.1. Evaluation and Selection	8
4.2. Notice of non-binding solicitation	9
4.3. Confidentiality	9
4.4. Review process.	9
4.5. Limitations regarding third parties	9
4.6. Final acceptance	9
4.7. Validity period	10
4.8. Intellectual property	10
ANNEX I: APPLICATION FORM	11
ANNEX II: Q&A	13

## SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

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

At GAIN, we believe that everyone in the world should have access to nutritious, safe, and affordable food. Today, one in three people - drawn from nearly every country on the planet - are unable to consume enough nutritious food. We work to develop and deliver solutions to this daily challenge.

Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, GAIN has offices in countries with high levels of malnutrition: Bangladesh, Benin, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. To support work in those countries, we have representative offices in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

### 1.2. The role Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Food Systems

Globally, over 3.1 billion people could not afford a healthy diet in 2021 - an increase of 134 million since the start of COVID-19 (Moncayo et al, 2023). The report found that Africa and Asia saw the highest increases in the number of people unable to afford a healthy diet between 2019 (pre-pandemic) and 2021 and together accounted for 92% of the global increase. An additional 1 billion may be at risk (FAO, 2023) since most consumers prioritise food price above all other factors (UNFSS, 2021). According to the World Bank (2020), Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) account for 90% of all businesses and more than 50% of employment worldwide with formal SMEs accounting for at least 40% of GDP in emerging countries; substantially more when informal SMEs are considered (World Bank, 2019). In developing countries, SMEs play a critical role in driving the transformation of food systems in Africa (Africa Agriculture Status Report, 2019). For instance, up to 70% of nutritious foods like fruits, vegetables, dairy and animal sourced proteins are produced, processed, or sold by SMEs in Africa (GAIN, 2019). In low- and middle-income countries, SMEs dominate agricultural value chains from farm to fork. SMEs play a critical role in pricing (affordability), marketplaces (accessibility), and quantity (availability) of foods on the market. However, despite the crucial role that SMEs play in ensuring affordability, availability, and access of safe and nutritious foods, they face several challenges that limit their ability to grow and increase production of nutritious foods. Interventions supporting agrifood SMEs must deploy solutions that address specific challenges constraining SMEs across the value chain (UNFSS, 2021).

### 1.3. The relevance of agrifood SMEs to GAIN

GAIN's mission is to improve the consumption of healthier diets for all, especially the most vulnerable, by improving the availability, affordability, desirability, and sustainability of nutritious and safe foods, and reducing the consumption of unhealthy and unsafe foods. GAIN's 2023-2027 strategy will scale up the impact of its work by designing programmes to amplify impact through government policies, markets, partnerships with business and civil society, and via knowledge sharing. SMEs are a critical component of business and markets. Keats, S, LeBlanc, C., and Kissick, C. (2021) discuss how rather than just expanding the scale of operations, the goal is to use small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as a mechanism to achieve impact on nutrition and diets. This involves collaborating with development partners, governments, and other stakeholders to maximize the reach and nutritional impact of SME products and services while ensuring profitable growth and returns on investment by SME.

#### 1.4. The Nutrition Impact at Scale (NIS) Project

Through the Nutrition Impact at Scale (NIS) Project, GAIN partners with Enterprise Support Organisations (ESOs) to scale the impact of its work to increase access to safe and nutritious foods, especially for low-income consumers. Funded by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands over five years (January 2022 – December 2026), the project uses a market systems development approach to improve food systems, increase inclusivity, and ultimately, nutrition outcomes. It leverages the extensive experience GAIN has developed over the years of providing quality technical assistance, networking, knowledge sharing, building capacity of partners, and the provision of various tools and resources to SMEs to attach a ‘nutrition lens’ to the work of ESOs Nigeria, Benin, Uganda, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Kenya.

At the end of the project, NIS will have partnered with ESOs to support agrifood SMEs producing sustainably more safe and nutritious foods that are accessible, affordable, and desirable by populations “The partnership”. Specific objectives are:

- ✓ ESOs will adapt a nutrition lens in their SME support strategies.
- ✓ ESOs will use developed tools to support SMEs as part of their interventions.
- ✓ ESOs will understand the impact of SMEs in food systems and how to invest in nutrition enterprises.
- ✓ ESOs will share/discuss knowledge, exploit opportunities, advocate for issues, and efficient solutions to support SMEs.
- ✓ ESOs will lead the design of effective, sustainable, and inclusive SME programming from a country perspective.

#### Measuring NIS success

The success is measured by these project indicators:

- Number of additional servings of safe and nutritious foods produced by SMEs.
- Number of ESOs reporting adoption of a nutrition lens in their SME support programs.
- Amount of ESOs investment in nutrition programmes as result of NIS
- Number of knowledge materials developed/updated and disseminated to ESOs and SMEs
- Number of SMEs/ESOs reached by information/approached on knowledge and business models.
- Number of SMEs/ESOs who report applying information/approaches acquired through knowledge and business models.

#### 1.5. Enterprise Support Organisations

Enterprise Support Organisations known as ESOs, are entities providing Business Development Services (BDS) to enterprises. In the food systems sector, the word “BDS” is given different meanings. It is referred to as agricultural business development services, market-oriented agricultural advisory services, or value chain development advisory services by different actors (Wongtschowski, M., J. Belt, W. Heemskerk, and D. Kahan (eds). 2013). NIS recognises that such services may include different forms of technical, financial, and non-financial support provided to improve enterprise competitiveness and performance at any level of business growth. Specifically, ESOs may provide funding or access to funding, knowledge and skills, tools and platforms, advisory support, networking, market access or information addressing the needs of enterprises. ESOs can be:

- ✓ Private sector agencies
- ✓ Public institutions
- ✓ Non-government organizations
- ✓ Civil society organisations

In this document, the term applicant is referred to ESO.

## SECTION II. THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS (CFP)

GAIN opens this Call for Proposals to identify partnerships with ESOs to partner with on the NIS project. Partnership activities will apply a market systems development approach and be performance based. In line with this approach, GAIN is seeking concept notes from ESOs in 6 countries of Africa where GAIN is implementing the NIS project. Eligibility requirements are outlined in Section III and instructions for completing the application can be found in Annex I.

The partnerships will result in formalized grant awards between GAIN and the ESO to co-invest in new or existing strategies aimed at sustainable support to SMEs producing safe and nutritious foods. ESOs are required to contribute a cost-share investment to ensure ownership and sustainability of interventions supported by the NIS project.

Note that applications in response to this Call for Proposals can be submitted at any time leading up to the closing date and will be evaluated based on funding availability, programmatic needs, and staffing resources available from NIS. Proposals will be reviewed on a rolling basis and awarded depending on the availability of funds. For any questions during the application window, please contact [molorunfemi@gainhealth.org](mailto:molorunfemi@gainhealth.org) in weekdays.

### 2.1. Geographic coverage

ESOs are required to be registered and supporting enterprises within NIS countries: Nigeria, Benin, Uganda, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Kenya. Proposals from other countries will not be evaluated.

### 2.2. Partnership period

July 2024 – June 2026 (24 months), with possibility of extension depending on the availability of resources.

### 2.3. Deadline

Completed Proposals should be submitted to NIS Team via the application form by 23:59 CET on 24 April 2024.

### 2.4. Cost sharing

GAIN will provide up to **USD 50,000.00** (Fifty Thousand United States Dollars) in financial contribution and in-kind contribution. The use of GAIN contribution is provided in section 3.3. It is to be noted that the financial contribution from GAIN might be lower than the ceiling mentioned above depending on the nature of proposed activities by applicants.

This partnership also requires a contribution of cost share from ESOs. Therefore, ESOs will be required to allocate financial and/or in-kind contributions as well. The share of ESOs will vary depending on the capacity, partnership value, among other factors, to demonstrate ESO commitment to sustainability and achievement of the objectives.

## 2.5. Application process

Date	Action
<b>Release of the Call for Proposals</b> <i>Application is done online via this link, <a href="#">apply here</a>. A copy of application of can be found in Annex 1. This is an indicative form which should not be completed manually.</i>	<b>8 April 2024</b>
<b>Deadline for answering applicant's questions.</b> <i>Any questions or enquiries regarding this CFP may be directed to <a href="mailto:molorunfemi@gainhealth.org">molorunfemi@gainhealth.org</a> before this date. Kindly allow up to 24 hours maximum for the team to reply.</i>	<b>22 April 2024</b>
<b>Application deadline.</b> <i>Kindly submit your application based on the guidance provided at the start of the online application form or in the annex 1.</i>	<b>25 April 2024 (23:59 CET)</b>

## 2.6. Completion

- ✓ Concept notes must be submitted via the online application form in the link in the table. By clicking the submit button, the application is automatically received as an official document signed by a principal or authorising signatory of the applying organisation.
- ✓ It is the applicant's responsibility to understand the requirements and instructions specified by GAIN. If clarification is necessary, applicants are advised to contact the responsible person at GAIN via email at [molorunfemi@gainhealth.org](mailto:molorunfemi@gainhealth.org)
- ✓ While GAIN has used considerable efforts to ensure an accurate representation in this CFP, the information contained in this CFP is supplied solely as a guideline. The information is not warranted to be accurate by GAIN. Nothing in this CFP is intended to relieve applicants from forming their own opinions and conclusions with respect to the matters addressed in this CFP.
- ✓ By responding to this CFP, the applicant confirms its understanding that failing to comply with any of the CFP conditions may result in the disqualification of their submission.

## 2.7. Rights of rejection

GAIN reserves the right to reject any or all submissions or to cancel or withdraw this Call for Proposals (CFP) 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.

## 2.8. Key Timelines

Action	Date
<b>Call for Proposals is open</b>	8 April 2024
<b>Deadline for answering to applicant's questions.</b>	22 April 2024
<b>Application deadline</b>	25 April 2024
<b>Notify applicants</b>	2 May 2024

<b>Interview with successful applicants</b>	9 – 10 May 2024
<b>Due diligence (site visits)</b>	20 – 30 May 2024
<b>Notify finalists</b>	10 June 2024
<b>Contracting</b>	10 – 30 June 2024
<b>Implementation starts</b>	1 July 2024

## SECTION III. ELIGIBILITY

GAIN will consider Proposals submitted by Enterprise Support Organisations (ESO). Priority will be given to concepts that impact larger numbers of SMEs in the food systems and the capacity of the applicant to continue supporting agrifood SMEs in the long-term with or without continuous support from GAIN.

### 3.1. Eligible concepts

To be considered eligible for partnership, applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Provide BDS to small and medium enterprises.
- Willing to partner with GAIN to attach a nutrition lens to their enterprise support agenda.
- Objectives of the proposed partnership activity must be aligned with NIS objectives and results.
- Have a strategy or objectives to continue supporting SMEs in long term.
- Can impact a significant number of agrifood SMEs, leading to increased production and supply of nutritious foods.
- Local or international organisations providing support to enterprises.
- Registered and have legal right to operate in the country of intervention.
- Be willing to contribute cost-share contribution and meet cost-share requirement.
- Be willing to submit a detailed application – through a solicitation responding to NIS's requirements and conditions, which will include a full budget that demonstrates cost-share and source.
- Be committed to adhering to high ethical business standards, including transparency in delivery of activities and record keeping.
- Be prepared to undertake an independent financial review at the end of the project (if necessary)
- Open to explore further areas of collaboration with GAIN outside NIS window (scope and timeline).

### 3.2. Ineligible concepts

The following applicants are not eligible:

- Entities that are not legally registered.
- Any entity not registered in one of the 6 countries.
- Any public international organization.
- Any entity that has been found to have misused GAIN funds in the past.
- Political parties, groupings, or institutions or their subsidiaries and affiliates.
- Entities or members engaged in any activities related to Trafficking in Persons.
- Faith-based organizations whose objectives are for discriminatory and religious purposes, and whose main objective for the co-investment is of a religious nature.
- Entities or members engaged, transacting with, or providing resources to individuals or organizations associated with terrorism.



### 3.3. Eligible activities and allowable costs

- Capacity building activities such as training and other BDS to agrifood SMEs.
- Grant to agrifood SMEs
- Costs associated to provision of BDS and/or grant to agrifood SMEs.
- Development and disseminate tools and knowledge materials for agrifood SMEs.
- Creating visibility and monitoring of primary activities.

### 3.4. Ineligible activities and unallowable costs

NIS funds cannot be utilized for the following:

- Indirect costs such as, but not limited to, rent, overhead or salaries of staff.
- Previous obligations and/or bad debts.
- Private ceremonies, parties, celebrations, or "representation" expenses.
- Fines and/or penalties.
- Purchases of restricted goods, which may include motor vehicles, pharmaceuticals, pesticides, used equipment, or fertilizers, without the prior waiver and approval provided by a GAIN staff. Purchase of these goods requires additional approvals from GAIN before they may be allowed and procured. As such, applicants are discouraged from requesting funding for these restricted goods unless the goods are necessary to the accomplishment of the partnership objectives.
- Ineligible goods including but not limited to; military equipment; surveillance equipment; police or law enforcement equipment; abortion equipment and services; weather modification equipment; luxury goods; and gambling equipment.
- Any headquarters expenses that are not directly linked to the implementation of the proposed project.

## SECTION IV: TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS CFP

### 4.1. Evaluation and Selection

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 provided to enhance the applicants' ability to respond with substance. GAIN reserves the right to contact the individuals and contractor(s) to verify the information provided as part of the concept note. This is not a competitive selection.

Category of Assessment	Criteria	Maximum score
<i>Sustainability/scale</i>	The applicant demonstrates a well thought out implementation plan and ownership for long-term vision and scalable intervention and investment.	30 points
<i>Impact of the partnership</i>	Experience and capacity to reach many agrifood SMEs with support services.	25 points
<i>Innovation and feasibility</i>	How well the applicant defines the partnership activity, its relevance to the existing agenda for enterprises and its feasibility.	15 points
<i>Capacity</i>	Demonstrated organizational and financial capacity of the applicant to meet the demands of implementing	15 points



	the proposed partnership activity including the ability to contribute an appropriate amount of cost share.	
<i>Shared goals</i>	Alignment of the concept with NIS objective: support agrifood SMEs to produce more safe and nutritious foods that are accessible, affordable, and desirable by populations.	15 points
<b>Total</b>		<b>100 points</b>

If the concept note is considered acceptable, GAIN will contact the applicant to engage in further discussions and may request a full application. A decision to engage in more in-depth and specific discussion following initial selection is not a commitment to funding; it is simply a decision to move forward in the collaborative and joint effort to develop an impactful partnership. If the in-depth and specific discussions do not result in the identification and development of a partnership activity worthy of further pursuit, then GAIN will inform the applicant that the application is no longer eligible. Prior to award, successful applicants will be subject to a site visit from NIS staff for an applicant pre-award assessment to verify the accuracy of their submission, perform an administrative and capacity review. If the site visit assessment uncovers no major issues, GAIN will provide the necessary instructions, technical requirements, and next steps for partnership award.

#### **4.2. Notice of non-binding solicitation**

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

#### **4.3. Confidentiality**

All information provided as part of this CFP is considered confidential. If any information is inappropriately released, GAIN will seek appropriate remedies as allowed. Concepts, proposals, discussions, and all information received in response to this solicitation will be held as strictly confidential.

#### **4.4. Review process.**

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

#### **4.5. Limitations regarding third parties**

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

#### **4.6. Final acceptance**

Award of a concept does not imply acceptance of its terms and conditions. GAIN reserves the right to negotiate on the final terms and conditions including the cost sharing and the scope of work when negotiating the final partnership agreement to be agreed between GAIN and the applicant.

#### **4.7. Validity period**

The concept notes will remain valid for a period of 6 months after the CFP closing date. In the event of award, the successful applicant will be expected to enter into an agreement subject to GAIN's terms and conditions.

#### **4.8. Intellectual property**

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

## ANNEX I: APPLICATION FORM

Name of the ESO Representative	
Email address of the Representative	
Telephone number of the Representative	
Official title of the Representative	
Official Name of the ESO (as appearing on the registration certificate)	
Organisation website (if applicable)	
Country	
City	
Year founded/established/registered	
Type of organisation	

**Brief description of business/organization, mission, and experience:** *Briefly describe organization and its activities, organization background and major accomplishments in the Enterprise support perspective, current activities, etc.*

**Analysis of constraint identified and statement:** *Identify the root cause of the problem that the partnership activity proposes to address.*

**Current support provided to enterprises:** *describe the nature of the enterprises supported, and the kind of support your organization provides to each category of enterprises. Cite any specific interventions to agrifood enterprises if applicable.*

**Partnership description and objectives:** *Provide the detailed description of your proposed partnership activity with GAIN through NIS, results to be achieved, linkage to NIS objective, and verifiable indicators of achievement must be linked to NIS objectives in section 1.4.*

**Partnership for agrifood SMEs:** *How does the business/organization intend to identify its agrifood SMEs among their network members, taking into consideration gender and youth inclusion. Furthermore, what are the projected benefits that these various groups will obtain from engaging with partnership activities?*

**Social inclusion:** *How will the partnership activity will contribute towards inclusion of women and youth-led agrifood SMEs?*

**Cost-sharing:** *Cost-share is a contribution from partners toward the total cost of the activity to support or contribute to the achievement of results. Applicants are requested to describe the sources for their cost-share contribution to the total cost of the partnership activity.*

**Sustainability and scalability plan:** *How is the organization planning for long-term viability of the activity after GAIN funding? Partners are asked to explain how their intended activity and investments are locally owned and expected to grow over time.*

**Additionality:** *Would your business/organization have undertaken this activity without GAIN? What are the new activities that the organization is taking on due to its partnership with GAIN?*

*Upload any relevant documents.*

## ANNEX II: Q&A

- 1) **Can an applicant submit more than one concepts?** No. Each ESO/Applicant is allowed to submit one concept for the sake of diversity and scalability.
- 2) **Can I submit a concept combining more than one country of intervention?** Yes. If you are registered and operational in one of those countries.
- 3) **Do you accept Proposals submitted by a consortium of ESOs?** Yes
- 4) **How do you define ESOs?** ESOs are private sector agencies, public institutions, non-government organizations, civil society organisations providing business development services to enterprises.
- 5) **Do business incubators and innovation accelerator programmes eligible to apply?** Yes. If they are registered as entities in the country
- 6) **How do I contact you?** Email [molorufemi@gainhealth.org](mailto:molorufemi@gainhealth.org)
- 7) **What is the timeline of the proposed partnership?** July 2024 – June 2026. This may be extended based on the need and availability of resources.
- 8) **Can I pay staff salaries or overhead with GAIN contribution?** No. GAIN contribution should be spent on direct costs.
- 9) **Can ESOs/Applicants provide in-kind contribution?** Yes. it could be a mix of financial and in-kind contribution or one of the two.
- 10) **Do you have a cost-share percentage of the applicant?** Concepts with high impact and sustainability capacity will be prioritised. Any percentage is accepted but good proposals will have 50/50 cost share or more in favour of the Applicant.
- 11) **What if an applicant is based/registered in another country but want to implement activities in 1 or more NIS countries?** Only applicants registered and operating in NIS countries will be considered.
- 12) **Can I submit my application using the annex one to the email address of the contact person?** No. All proposals must be submitted electronically via an online form provided in the link
- 13) **How long has been NIS existing?** Since January of 2022
- 14) **Has NIS partnered with other ESOs before?** Yes. we have partnered with 5 ESOs in 4 countries.
- 15) **Does NIS have a target number of ESOs to partner with?** No. the number will depend on the availability of resources (budget)
- 16) **What is the number one condition an applicant must meet?** Provide business development services to enterprises in eligible countries.
- 17) **Which party is accountable for designing activity plan?** NIS works with ESOs to make their SME support plans nutrition sensitive. Therefore, ESOs lead the definition of partnership activities.
- 18) **Is this a competitive process?** No. The award of partnership is not competitive.

END