

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

---

# CONSULTANT TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CASE STUDY ON SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS IN MEXICO

---

Issued by  
The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF WORK	2
II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESPONDING	6
III. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS SOLICITATION	8
IV. OFFER OF SERVICES	10

---

## **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**

School feeding programs constitute a multisectoral transformative factor that improves educational outcomes, child health and nutrition, as well as gender equity. In a broader sense, these programs support the entire community by providing an important safety net and strengthening local food systems and economies (WFP, 2024).

As part of the School Meals Coalition, GAIN is dedicated to supporting governments in improving and establishing sustainable national school feeding programs, with the goal of ensuring every child has access to healthy and nutritious food at school by 2030. In collaboration with its intellectual partner, the Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF), GAIN seeks to document successful implementation experiences of multi-component school programs, with emphasis on learning about experiences that promote the sourcing of products from local small producers and businesses. The Government of Mexico implements a notable example of these programs.

#### **2.1.1. MEXICO'S SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS**

##### *Institutional Framework*

The School Meal Programs in Mexico operates within the Comprehensive Strategy for Social Assistance, Feeding and Community Development (EIASADC), a fundamental pillar of the policies of the National System for the Comprehensive Development of the Family (SNDIF). This strategy is designed to ensure food security and promote community development in vulnerable populations, providing the Sub-nationals DIF Systems (SEDIF) with the necessary flexibility to implement food assistance actions adapted to local contexts.

### *Programs Objective*

The primary objective of the School Meal component, one of the fundamental programs of the EIASADC, is to contribute to the food security of the school population that benefits from social protection programs. To achieve this objective, the program contemplates the provision of cold meals (industrialized products) or complete meals, designed based on nutritional quality criteria, accompanied by cross-cutting actions such as nutrition education.

### *Main Characteristics*

This program has several distinctive elements. Among them, the promotion of purchasing products from local small producers and businesses stands out, which contributes to the economic development of local communities. It also incorporates specific criteria for the creation of nutritious menus that ensure adequate nutrient intake for students. Likewise, it promotes community organization and participation as a fundamental pillar for its effective implementation.

Additionally, the program includes cross-cutting lines that enrich its impact. These include nutrition education to promote healthy habits among students and their families. It also promotes the implementation of community school gardens as practical learning tools and complementary sources of fresh food. The program incorporates a nutritional surveillance system to monitor the status of beneficiaries and establishes various controls to ensure the quality and safety of the food provided.

Detailed description of the program is available in Annex 1.

### **2.1.2. SNDIF SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS AS A CASE STUDY**

The large scale of the program, its high level of complexity, and its extensive trajectory have allowed for the development of adaptations for its continuous improvement, generating valuable learnings. This knowledge not only contributes to the refinement of the programs in the 32 states where it is implemented but can also be highly useful for other international contexts.

To support the SNDIF in documenting these learnings, GAIN, in collaboration with the SNDIF and GCNF, seeks to develop a case study of this school feeding program. The objective of the study is to document and analyze Mexico's School Meal Program, with emphasis on identifying and systematizing best practices and lessons learned, especially those related to the acquisition of local products and the adaptation of the program to different regional contexts. Specific objectives of the case study are to:

1. Document the various operational models of the program in selected states of Mexico, with special attention to strategies for food acquisition, preparation, and distribution.
  - Comparatively analyze mechanisms that promote local purchasing and the incorporation of small producers into the supply chain across different states.
  - Identify successful strategies for adapting the program to diverse sociocultural and geographic contexts throughout the country.
  - Identify and document key factors that have enabled successful and sustainable implementation of the large-scale program, as well as the main challenges faced and lessons learned that may be transferable to other national and international contexts.

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 support the planning and development of the case study on School Meal Programs in Mexico.

### **3. SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES**

#### **3.1. OBJECTIVES**

GAIN seeks a consultant who, under the leadership of GCNF and in collaboration with GAIN and SNDIF, will execute essential components of a case study on Mexico's School Breakfast Program. The consultant will contribute across three key phases: 1) pre-fieldwork, including methodology design and planning; 2) fieldwork in four states, collecting primary data through interviews and observations; and 3) analysis and reporting, synthesizing findings into actionable insights and recommendations. This work will document diverse implementation models and identify transferable best practices for both national and international contexts.

#### **3.2. DELIVERABLES**

The main deliverables will be defined once the methodology of the study has been finalized. For the purpose of submitting the proposal, the service provider should address the following activities:

#### **3.3. PRE-FIELDWORK PHASE**

##### **Methodology Development and Planning**

- Participate in weekly coordination calls with the GCNF-GAIN research team
- Provide substantive input to the draft study methodology, including recommendations for data collection instruments, sampling strategy, and analysis framework
- Contribute to the selection criteria for the states to be included in the study, ensuring representation of different operational models and regional contexts
- Review interview guide and data collection tools, to be developed by GCNF, in collaboration with the research team

##### **Documentation Review**

- Conduct a comprehensive review of existing programs documentation, including policy frameworks, operational guidelines, and previous evaluations. This can be done with AI support.
- Analyze available quantitative data on programs coverage, beneficiaries, and resource allocation
- Prepare a preliminary report identifying information gaps to be addressed during fieldwork

#### **3.4. FIELDWORK PHASE**

##### **Regional Field Visits**

- Conduct 3-4 day field visits to each of four selected states (TBD), representing the country's diverse regions (North, Center, West-Central, and Southeast)
- Observe program implementation in at least 2-3 schools per state, including both hot and cold modality operations where possible
- Document the different operational aspects of the program (with appropriate permissions) and identify any existing information available in the states

## Stakeholder Interviews

- Conduct 6-8 semi-structured interviews per state with key stakeholders, including:
  - SEDIF program coordinators and technical staff
  - School directors and teachers
  - Parent committee members
  - Local food suppliers and producers
  - Municipal authorities involved in program implementation
- Facilitate at least 2 group discussions per state with parents of program beneficiaries
- Interview federal-level stakeholders from SNDIF and other relevant institutions

## 3.5. ANALYSIS AND REPORTING PHASE

### Data Processing and Analysis

- Transcribe (in Spanish) and systematize qualitative information collected through interviews and observations
- Review, synthesize, and analyze documentation and data provided by states
- Prepare state-level case summaries highlighting distinctive features of implementation in each visited state. Incorporate feedback from GAIN and partners to the case summaries.
- Develop a comprehensive cross-case analysis identifying patterns, innovations, and lessons learned. Discuss analysis with and refine based on GAIN and partner's feedback
- Contribute to the drafting of the full case study report, with particular focus on the synthesis of field findings

### Knowledge Dissemination Support

- Participate in virtual validation workshops with key stakeholders to verify findings
- Support the preparation of knowledge products derived from the case study
- Contribute to recommendations for knowledge sharing between Mexican states and with other countries

## 3.6. EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

Deliverable	Estimated deliverable date
Contribution to methodology and research instruments	18 September 2025
Preliminary desk review report	10 October 2025
Field visit reports for each of the 4 states	17 November 2025
Database of interview transcripts and field observations	1 December 2025
Contribution to the final case study report	15 December 2025

*Note: The final scope of work and deliverables will be agreed upon with the selected consultant based on the finalized study methodology and available resources.*

### 3.7. RECOMMENDED PROFILE

#### Experience

- Academic degree in nutrition, public health, public policy, or related social sciences.
- Experience in evaluation or implementation of school feeding or food security programs.
- Knowledge of the social assistance system in Mexico, ideally with experience in programs related to DIF.

#### Key competencies

- Mastery of social research methodologies (qualitative and quantitative).
- Experience in systematizing best practices and lessons learned.
- Capacity for comparative analysis of social programs in different contexts.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in Spanish and English.

#### Availability

- Availability to conduct fieldwork in representative states from different regions of the country.

## 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 all inquiries and other communications to the contact below. Responses will not be confidential except in cases where proprietary information is involved.

- [rfp@gainhealth.org](mailto:rfp@gainhealth.org) , subject line 'Consultant – Mexico study'

### 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

Interested applicants should prepare a brief proposal (maximum 6 pages) in English that includes:

- *Description of research approach (2 pages max)*: understanding of the case study objectives and context, methodological approach, proposed sampling strategy for the six states, procedures for ethical approval and local authorization, quality assurance and risk mitigation plan
- *Activities and timeline (1 page)*: Detailed Gantt chart showing key activities and clear milestones and deliverables.
- *Team composition (1 page)*: Lead consultant's qualifications and relevant experience, research assistant(s) role and qualifications, division of responsibilities among team members
- *Budget (1 page)*: Provide a budget in USD (US Dollar), broken down by main cost categories and by main activities. Include a brief narrative justification for line items included. **The budget should be inclusive of all taxes/VAT and indirect costs.**

- *Relevant experience (1 page)*: Summary of most relevant prior work, experience working with school feeding programs or similar initiatives, experience in Mexico's social assistance context
- *Attachments (not counted in page limit)*: CVs of proposed team members (max 2 pages each), a completed 'Offer of Services' form (see end of RFP for template), sample of previous relevant work (optional, max 5 pages)

#### **4. SUBMISSION**

Completed proposals should be submitted by email at [rfp@gainhealth.org](mailto:rfp@gainhealth.org) on **8 September 2025**.

#### **5. 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.

#### **6. REVISIONS**

Proposals may be revised by electronic mail and confirmed by hard copy provided such revision(s) are received before the deadline.

#### **7. 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.

#### **8. COMPLETION**

- Proposals must be submitted on official letterhead of the lead organisation or firm (if applicable) 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.

#### **9. 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.

## **10. 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.

## **11. 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:
  - o 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.
- 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)

## **Annex 1. School Meal Programs description**

### **Operational Modalities**

The School Meal Program operates through two complementary modalities that adapt to the different realities and capacities of educational centers. The hot modality comprises the delivery of nutritious food rations prepared in specific food spaces for the target population, allowing for greater variety and complexity in the dishes offered. On the other hand, the cold modality encompasses the direct delivery of a structured menu that includes a portion of unflavored milk, a portion of whole grain cereal, a fresh or dehydrated fruit, and a portion of oilseeds, facilitating distribution in schools that do not have infrastructure for food preparation. In both modalities, the program seeks to contribute with a caloric intake appropriate to the needs of students: 325 kcal for preschoolers and 425 kcal for school-age children.

### **Target Population**

The target population of the program consists of: a) Children and adolescents who attend public schools of the National Education System located in municipalities, localities, or rural, urban, or indigenous AGEBs with high and very high degrees of marginalization (CONAPO 2020) or social lag (CONEVAL 2020). b) Students who attend public schools with a prevalence greater than or equal to 15% of students with malnutrition, regardless of the degree of marginalization.

Once this priority population has been served, other school centers can be included to promote universal coverage. The potential population of the program amounts to 27 million children and adolescents from 3 to 17 years of age who attend school, including 12 million in public primary education.

The school feeding program has benefited more than 85,000 educational centers, providing more than one billion food supports.

### **Regional Differences in Implementation**

The program operates through a decentralized scheme, where:

- The SNDIF establishes the general guidelines through the EIASADC
- The State DIF System (SEDIF) in each state has autonomy to manage and operate the program according to their contexts and resources

This decentralization has generated significant variations in:

- Food acquisition: Centralized at the state level vs. purchase from local producers
- Preparation: From cold rations with minimal handling to preparation of hot breakfasts
- Distribution: Direct delivery to schools, collection by parents, or consumption in school cafeterias

### **Comparison of Modalities**

Cold Modality:

- Advantages: Lower costs, simple logistics, ease of storage and distribution, greater coverage
- Disadvantages: Possibly lower nutritional value, less attractive to students, industrialized products

Hot Modality:

- Advantages: Greater variety of nutritious foods, culturally relevant meals, greater community participation
- Disadvantages: Higher costs, more complex logistics, need for infrastructure and trained personnel

The different modalities vary across the country's regions:

- Center: Mexico City, Hidalgo, State of Mexico, Morelos, Puebla, Querétaro, Tlaxcala
- West-Central: Aguascalientes, Colima, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayarit, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, and Zacatecas
- Northern Region: Baja California, Baja California Sur, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Nuevo León, Sinaloa, Sonora, and Tamaulipas
- Southeast Region: Campeche, Chiapas, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, Veracruz, Oaxaca, and Yucatán