

CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Partnership for Agricultural Research, Education and Development (PAIRED)

Firm Consultant Services

Consultancy to upgrade the Seed information electronic platform www.wasix.net

(Seed information and seed data management and UX / UT Designing)

Call Opening: May 20, 2019

Call Closing: June 11, 2019

CEI N° 13-2019

In June 2017, a new Cooperative Agreement was signed between the USAID and CORAF to facilitate the implementation of a five-year program named “Partnership for Agricultural Research, Education and Development (PAIRED)” in West (and Central) Africa. The PAIRED is being implemented through three interdependent components: (i) Strengthening CORAF capacity for effective coordination of agricultural research and development, (ii) Establishing innovative scaling framework for Agri-input Technologies and Innovations (T&Is) in West Africa (WA) and (iii) Increasing the use of quality Agri-inputs in WA. For achieving this objective, CORAF seeks to revolutionize seed supply chains, by connecting farmers to large, high-value quality seed markets and greatly increases the number of farmers connected to high-value markets, by boosting the effectiveness of supply mechanism based on strong communication services.

Under the former Regional West Africa Seed Program (WASP), CORAF has developed and deployed a seed electronic platform so called the “West Africa Seed Information Exchange” known by its acronym WASIX accessible on www.wasix.net.

The key objectives of the wasix e-platform are: (i) to make accurate seed information available; (ii) to support the implement regional seed regulations, (iii) to promote the sharing of experiences, know-how and research results between different actors and countries, (iv) to network the different players in the seed industry and to (v) to develop the seed market.

The concept of the current seed information electronic platform sounds relevant, but the system falls short down because of the aforementioned constraints. That is why, CORAF under the PAIRED program is recruiting a consultant firm to upgrade the wasix platform by improving its effectiveness, design and administration mechanism to be more business and policy decision making tool and also connecting more farmers with high-value seed supplier and seed market.

The tasks to be performed as well as other information relating to the call are detailed in the terms of reference attached.

The Executive Director of CORAF invites candidates meeting the qualification criteria, as indicated in the terms of reference, to express their interest in this recruitment.

Interested consultants can obtain additional information from the CORAF Executive Secretariat by sending correspondence to the CORAF Agri-input expert by e-mail to y.diallo@coraf.org from 8h to 12h and 15h to 17h GMT.

Applications must be submitted by e-mail to the following address : procurement@coraf.org on **June 11, 2019 before 10:00 GMT** at the latest.

Executive Director
Dr. Abdou TENKOUANO

TERMS OF REFERENCES

I. BACKGROUND.

In traditional seed supply chains, farmers have limited market access to quality seed. The dominant scheme is the isolated farmers buying seed from informal distributors into low-value markets. However, farmers can substantially increase their earnings by creating access to quality seeds through: (1) national and regional markets with formal system suppliers, (2) access to relevant information and (3) and (3) strengthening to negotiating power to get good purchase deals.

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The current system is designed on four (4) interfaces:

- 1) **The professional space:** It is the virtual market place which is directly managed by authorized seed professional actors (seed producers and seed distributors). They can connect to the system via a secured personal password to enter their data (production forecasts, update production volume, inventory updates, sales prices and product location).
The potential Seed buyers express their interest (demand seed) after registered their profile on the platform and express their needs in terms of types and categories of seed, quantity and preferential prices.
- 2) **The BackOffice:** At this administrators’ interface, the seed quality control and seed Certification national officials get access via secure connection to register authorized seed producers and seed distributors and they validate the production data or reject if the data are not consistent or incomplete. The National Seed Committees uploads the seed varieties registered in the catalogs and disseminate the relevant data as part of the implementation of the regulations;
The administrators of the System (IT specialist/trained person) at the national or regional level monitor the expressions of interest (demand for seed) and validate for sharing with the network of registered producers via SMS, email and on the platform.
- 3) **The WEB to SMS Service (actors networking): this Interface manages the SMS et email services by (i) sending together an SMS to the mobile phone of the head of the country's official seed service (national administrator) and an email to inform him that an update is made by a producer / distributor for his validation, (ii) sending an SMS on the administrator's mobile phone and an email to notify that a seed request is made on the platform and is pending and needs to be validated; (iii) sending an SMS on the mobile phone of the applicant who has expressed an interest and an email to signify that his request is validated and (iv) broadcasting SMS and an email to all authorized (officially registered) producers / distributors to inform them there is demand for seed by a third party.**
- 4) **The Front Office, disseminates the update of (i) all seed production forecast data, (ii) seed productions and locations (iii) Present this data in tabular and mapping through a georeferencing module and (iv) insights for political and economic analysis of the seed sector in at the national and regional levels;**

After some time of use, the system encounters difficulties that require improvement work

They current constraints/Challenges reported by the users are fall out as follows:

- **Technical constraints:** The system is criticized for being (i) heavy and difficult to access mostly when internet connection is poor , (ii) the user registration process is too long, (iii) the Translation of the English version is poor and (iv) the ergonomics (design, colors) not attractive.
- **Management and administration constraints:** Despite the training and launching session in at least 7 countries, there are (i) a low buy-in of the country seed actors mostly the Government officials; however their engagement for data validation is key of the success of the project, (ii) the weak daily management/administration of the Platform (regionally and nationally). The system needs a web manager to interact with the user and to monitor the security of the system and (iii) the SMS services module requires a strong partnership with the mobile service providers for more efficiency and cost effectiveness.

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II. OBJECTIF OF THE CONSULTANCY

The objective is to upgrade the wasix electronic platform and its business model to provide efficient technical and seed business solutions and cost effective system.

III. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

a) Assessment of the platform

- conduct an assessment of the electronic platform: UX/UI research and analysis.
- analysis of the administrator and users' profile and protocols.
- Determine data required versus data collected and shared (timeline, quality,...)
- Develop a report on UX/IU analysis , the data consistency and the platform administration protocols
- Formulate recommendation to address the constraints.
- Evaluate existing applications to reprogram, update and add new features
- Understand the project (WASIX) requirements and how he translates in application features

b) Propose detailed technical solutions for the new design;

- Propose a model based on the formulated recommendations and validated by CORAF
- Produce the integrable content of the model (HTML, CSS)
- Re design the platform (public interface) to promote information exchange (a knowledge center on seeds: WASIX, catalogs, policy and technical documents, new technologies, forum, etc.),
- Develop an appropriate data collection tool and methodology that supports the effective use of maps and data and their accuracy;
- Complete the data mapping and statistical modules;
- Upload all the existing data in the new design
- Upgrade the English version.(better translation)
- Propose an appropriate administration scheme (national and regional level)

- Establish a secure system and ensure quality control of the electronic platform;
- Personal data Collection and Protection: ensure compliance with personal data protection legislation
- Server Maintenance: Oversee servers used by CORAF; and propose quality assurance mechanism
- Collaborate with a team of IT professionals to set specifications for new applications
- Design creative prototypes according to specifications
- Write high quality source code to program complete applications within deadlines
- Troubleshoot and debug applications
- Develop technical documents and handbooks to accurately represent application design and code

c) Validation process

- Conduct functional and non-functional testing
- Perform unit and integration testing before launch
- Finalize the application by integrating the observations made by CORAF and during the user tests.
- Install the application after validation and provide all the application and administration codes to CORAF.
- Develop a comprehensive guide for administration and use
- Put the platform online after validation.

d) Deployment of the platform and Capacity building of CORAF Staff

- Train the CORAF staff in charge of the operation of the platform in order to develop ownership.
- Provide the technical assistance to implement, management and the use of the platform.
- Propose options to promote the platform on the internet (SEO, social media) & marketing.
- Provide corrective maintenance for a period of trois (3) months after installation.
- Facilitate regular meetings to assist information sharing between information support team at CORAF and The consultant team during the period of the assignment.
- Provide coaching and technical supervision to CORAF staff.

e) Backstopping the platform deployment in the target countries (Optional)

Once validated, CORAF will support the deployment of the platform in the countries and could request for assistance of the consultant for backstopping and coaching. The support to countries aims at:

- Encouraging/sensitizing the actors of countries (producers/distributors,) to develop the responsible participation of the various actors in the information of the system.
- Obtaining a strong commitment of official country seed services so that they can validate the data entered by producers and distributors.
Contract with a mobile phone service provider for the WEB to SMS services.
- Transferring the platform administration to a permanent institution so that the costs associated with hosting and exchanging SMS can be covered by this organization.
- Provide appropriate training directly for all field based staff (seed producer, seed suppliers, official administrator for the seed services).

IV. DELIVERABLES

1. Un report on UX research assessment in which the problems and the appropriate solutions will be proposed.
2. Develop an upgraded embeddable content of the model (HTML, CSS) based on the validated UX, the, design and administration scheme report
3. Un user guide/manual
4. A mission report with all the required codes.

V. THE CONSULTANT TEAM AND QUALIFICATION

The consultant team will comprise at least three experts:

1. Expert 1: Seed production specialist - Team leader :

Qualification

- This expert should have at least M.Sc. in Agriculture, Agricultural Economics, Seed Technology, Plant Breeding or related subject.
- He/she should be knowledgeable in the agricultural research and development and seed systems in West Africa,
- He/she must be competent in the development of seed value chain with a strong knowledge in designing seed demand and supply roadmap.
- He/she must have a network amongst the private and public actors in the west Africa seed system..

Experience

- Experience, particularly in the production and marketing of Breeder, Foundation and Certified seeds is required.
- Experience or interest in agricultural research, extension and agricultural and rural advisory services, education, and capacity building.
- Propensity for working in multi-disciplinary and multi-country teams and willingness to travel extensively within the sub-region.
- Good communication and interpersonal skills and ability to get your point across to senior government and development partner officials, succinctly and diplomatically, and to be proactive.
- Skills in writing and editing scientific literature and/or 'general' material.
- Computer and modelling literate and fully familiar with the internet tools.
- The candidate should possess excellent English and French oral and written communication skills.

2. Expert N2: UX /UT Designer expert=

Qualification

- Higher level qualification in a technical field, preferably in Systems & Computing.
- Strong working knowledge of English (spoken and written).
- Have proven knowledge and skills in modeling: Sketch, Photoshop, Illustrator, Adobe Xd;
- Have proven knowledge and skills in web design: HTML, CSS, JavaScript, jQuery;
- Have proven skills in web-multimedia creation - web integration or equivalent;
- Have a very good command of HTML / CSS languages;

Experience

- Have a minimum of two years' experience in designing UX /UI solutions
- Experience in server management (e.g., ODK aggregate server, QlikView server, user management).
- Experience in training / mentoring / coaching staff. Problem solving ability.
- Ability to manage project implementation.
- Good numerical, report writing and administration skills.
- Able to take the initiative in project decisions.
- Have made at least 5 models of platforms or similar sites;
- Have knowledge of the agricultural sector of the sub-region would be an asset.

3. Expert N3: Application Developer Expert

Requirement

- BSc/BA in computer science or relevant field; MSc/MA will be appreciated
- Certified application developer is a plus
- Proven experience in designing and building applications
- Ability to program in at least one programming language such as iOS, Android, PHP, Java (J2EE) etc.
- Perfect command of at least one of the frameworks in PHP (Laravel, Django etc.) or Java
- In-depth knowledge of programming for diverse operating systems and platforms using development tools
- Excellent understanding of software design and programming principles.
- A team player with excellent communication skills
- Analytical thinking and problem-solving capability
- Provide at least 2 Android and iOS apps developed and deployed either on Google Play or Apple Store;
- Provide at least 2 web applications developed with a PHP or J2EE Framework
- Great attention to detail and time-management skills

VI. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

The applicants should submit separately a technical Proposal and a financial proposal. Each proposal will be placed in sealed envelope and the both offers will be and placed in a in a large envelope marked exclusively "**WASIX CONSULTANCY**" and delivered at CORAF Executive Secretariat, 7, Avenue Bourguiba, BP 48 Dakar-RP, Senegal or send by e-mail to procurement@coraf.org. The application should be received at the CORAF Secretariat no later than **June 11, 2019 at 10:00 GMT**.

The technical proposal:

The technical offer must include the following elements:

- The consultant firm presentation and experience in the similar assignment
- The proposed methodology for the missions emphasizing the understanding of the terms of reference of the mission, a planning highlighting the main phases of the mission and the deliverables.
- The specific references of the consultant in UX / UI designing and in the agricultural and agri-input sector.
- The Tenderers must justify their experience with certificates of completion
- The Evidences supporting the 5-year experience of the >Firm.
- The Detailed and signed CVs of the key Experts and,
- Any other useful reference.

VII. VIII. PROCEDURE FOR SELECTING OFFERS

The selection is made by a CORAF panel in accordance with the CORAF evaluation criteria

- Review of technical proposal.
- selection of the 3 best offers technical proposal.
- The successful applicant will be the one who received the highest score in combining the scores of the technical and financial proposals.