

CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Partnership for Agricultural Research, Education and Development (PAIRED)

Recruitment of firm or group of consultants
Consultancy for the Establishment of Web-based Data Management and sharing
Platform for CORAF

Opening Date: March 20, 2020

Closing Date: April 10, 2020

CEI N° 05-2020

The West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF) is a subregional organization founded in 1987. It currently has 23 National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) in 23 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

In June 2017, the USAID awarded US\$ 15 Million to 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. The PAIRED program aims to primarily undertake systemic reforms that will improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and professionalism of CORAF to move the organization towards becoming a stellar instrument for regional coordination of agricultural research, and to put it on a path to financial stability and sustainability. The reforms will result in a solid and resilient organization with a new strategic orientation capable of providing a high-quality, demand-led, core service package.

While CORAF has strong M&E skills and has established a library, there is a need to strengthen the data management, and especially learning. At the heart of this process, CORAF has to set a rigorous Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEAL) to support decision making. In 2019, the M&E team developed data collection sheet built upon the Operational Plan (2018-2022) Result Framework (RF). The team will now focus on creating an online web-based MEAL system and Data Management (DM) Platform to assist in the generation of data, codification, and sharing data and information among stakeholders.

The Platform portal will provide a singular place where staff across teams and NARS members in various countries can access and report on standardized indicators and customized indicators related to the Operational Plan 2018-2022. The primary means of gathering data against these performance indicators and outcomes is through bi-annual narrative reports, providing both quantitative and qualitative data, from CORAF ongoing Projects and for the regional Organizations and partners. Given the multiplicity of partners institutions, the current monitoring and reporting systems need to be improved to meet the requirements.

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.

Candidates interested in this call must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform such services (CVs, references concerning the performance of similar contracts, publications, experience in the similar field, etc.).

Interested firms can obtain additional information from the CORAF Executive Secretariat by sending correspondence to the CORAF's M&E Specialist by e-mail to i.amadou@coraf.org.

Applications must be submitted by e-mail to the following address : procurement@coraf.org on **April 10, 2020**, 16:30 GMT at the latest.

Dr. Abdou TENKOUANO
Executive Director of CORAF

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Consultancy for the Establishment of Web-based data management and sharing Platform for CORAF

1.0. Background

USAID has supported CORAF for over 12 years during which the institution has been strengthened to achieve significant results in increasing the availability of improved technologies, including quality seeds to millions of farmers to increase food production and incomes. The improved strength of CORAF has enabled it to leverage funding from the ECOWAS Commission, UEMOA, the World Bank, DFID, AusAID, IDRC, EU, AfDB, the Islamic Development Bank, etc. in delivering impactful results. The USAID is committed to continue its relationship with CORAF in moving to a more comprehensive program (rather than project-based approaches).

In response to the Notice for Funding Opportunity (NOFO), CORAF submitted a proposal to the USAID West Africa Mission that resulted in the award of US\$ 15 Million to implement a five-year (June 20th, 2017 to June 19th, 2022) program titled A Partnership for Agricultural Research, Education and Development (PAIRED) in West and Central Africa. PAIRED is being implemented through three well-crafted components : (i) CORAF capacity strengthened for effective coordination of agricultural research and development, (ii) CORAF's leadership in scaling Agri-input T&Is established in West Africa (WA) and (iii) Use of quality Agri-inputs in WA increased. The program is supporting CORAF to undertake systemic reforms to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and professionalism of the organization. These efforts have positioned CORAF in becoming a stellar instrument for regional coordination of agricultural research, and to put it on a path to financial stability and sustainability.

2.0. Context of the assignment

In 2019, the M&E team developed a Data Collection Sheet built upon the Operational Plan (2018-2022) Result Framework (RF). The team will now focus on creating an online web-based MEAL system and Knowledge Management (KM) Platform to assist in the generation of data, codification, and sharing data and information among stakeholders. The Platform portal will provide a singular place where staff across teams and NARS members in various countries can access and report on standardized indicators and customized indicators related to the Operational Plan 2018-2022.

At the heart of the web-based MEAL system, the RF sets out the overall intended outcomes, indicators, baselines (where possible), and targets that will be used to establish whether these outcomes have been achieved on the basis of credible and reliable evidence. It also provides information on key activities aligned to each objective area.

The primary means of gathering data against these performance indicators and outcomes is through bi-annual narrative reports, providing both quantitative and qualitative data, from CORAF ongoing Projects and for the regional Organizations and partners. Given the multiplicity of partners institutions, the current monitoring and reporting systems need to be improved to meet the requirements.

While improvements have constantly been made, they are still inefficient data and information management systems in place. Data capture, analysis and report generation are complex and cumbersome, as the reporting templates and components are provided in different formats (MS Word and MS Excel), and manual transfer of information across multiple formats is tedious, time consuming and leaves space for error. Furthermore, there is limited staffing within CORAF dedicated to the monitoring processes. The monitoring structure as a whole is under-resourced, including staffing at the CORAF Executive Secretariat and within the membership countries.

In addition, CORAF has a huge task to provide regional oversights, but results are difficult to trace, and reporting cannot be guaranteed to be of consistent quality. Another important hindering factor is that there has not been any significant training in the existing system across the whole of the CORAF constituencies since the new Strategic Plan (2017-2027) has been approved. It is a fact that all information generated from CORAF various intervention, are not put together in one place, but it's also not easily accessible to all stakeholders. A functional virtual place where Stakeholders from the NARIS and other key partners can add content and generate intrinsic database and knowledge, and to facilitate collaboration, regardless of their location is key for a good M&E and knowledge platform.

3.0. Objective of the assignment

The web-based software platform which streamlines results-based management and M&E of CORAF is crucial. A well-functioning M&E system is a critical part of good programme management and accountability. Therefore, the CORAF wishes to appoint a consulting firm to develop an integrated online Web-based Performance M&E and sharing of data and information. More specifically the consultancy is:

- to design and develop an integrated online web-based System accessible to different stakeholders across three languages (French, English, Portuguese) to monitor results periodically;
- to design and develop Web-based database application for online data entry and inquiry. The database is expected in assisting all activities undertaken to implement the OP (2018-2022) at Programme and Projects levels with respect to the performance indicators as per the programme RF.
- to build the capacity of the relevant staff to manage the system on a sustainable basis through specific trainings, help documents and tutorials.

4.0. Details of the Assignment

The assignment can be broken down into five main components. However, it should be noted that from this guidance note, the consultant is expected to propose specific and comprehensive technical requirements for each of the components of the assignment.

4.1. Prototype model

The consultants will be responsible for defining the requirements of the desired system in consultation with all key stakeholders. In summary, the Consultant will be expected, among other duties, to:

- Establish requirements of the new system based on the CORAF OP (2018-2022) RF;
- Identify possible linkages with AR4D results collected and managed by the NARIS and regional organizations (ECOWAS, ECCAS, UEMOA, CAADP);
- Determine internet connectivity requirements at all levels (national, regional);
- Define roles and responsibilities for the system administrators and users; and
- Develop and present a prototype model for the new system and supporting IT infrastructure.

4.2. Integrated (web-based) performance M&E System (IPM&ES)

The system must be designed in a way that all core monitoring and evaluation tasks can be easily undertaken by national and CORAF ES Staff. It should also allow necessary data entry or importing of data from other information systems and data sources, i.e. M&E system from the NARIS, ECOWAP M&E system, CAADP-Malabo Reporting Framework, etc. More specifically, the IPM&ES should have the following functionalities:

- Planning - data entry and monitoring – data entry, export in various formats;
- Ensure data retrieval/exchange capability with other national and regional structures systems and databases;
- Display summary pages showing data from all available sources, aggregate statistics and summary visuals which illuminate what is and is not working;
- Present summary dashboards showing progress towards achieving CORAF OP((2018-2022) results;
- Allow users to overlay and/or compare data on activities, outputs, and outcomes with data on programme spending and aggregated results against programme indicators data;
- Provide administrators with intuitive tools for reconciling discrepancies between different data sources, and a clear indication in the event that any link between systems becomes inoperable or offline;
- Provide administrators with tools for defining core headline indicators and defining the relationship between those indicators and higher-level programme objectives;
- Provide a database administration module, allowing for advanced user management, with a staggered set of privileges for different users as well as user authorization, tracking/authorizing changes to results hierarchy, database download, online backup and other necessary features; and
- Reporting – geographical view (national, sub-regional and regional), reports, graphs and ad-hoc custom reporting capability.

4.3. Data and associated information sharing platform

To facilitate better communication across National partners and sub-regions, the data and related information sharing Platform will serve as a place where M&E focal points across partners can share and manage files, calendars, media etc. The Platform will be integrated into the IPM&ES and should include:

- Capacity to create groups, portals etc;

- Hosting of various “shared” areas where users can upload, edit and share files;
- System administrators with the capacity to manage groups, areas etc;
- Flexible architecture which allows for the adding/removing of pages, sections etc.; and
- Integration of existing shared databases and platforms.

4.4. Technical (IT) specifications of the M&E System

The M&E system shall be compatible with latest internet explorer and operating system.

- The applications accessible in browser would be developed in HTML, DHTML, XML, and web server JavaScript.
- The Database server would be having Microsoft -SQL server etc.
- The product has enough flexibility to accommodate the frequent changes and open to customization as required for the future.
- The product should provide user manual of the system and should have a dynamic access menu control.
- System should support use of multiple users at a time be usable in both online and offline contexts and cross platforms compatible with mobile capability (Android / IOS) and high security and cost-effective online portal.

4.5. Training

The consultants will be expected to hold sets of trainings and backstopping sessions to ensure that the system is both relevant and useful to partners and that a sustainability plan is in place. All installation steps and steps for linking database systems must be documented and communicated to staff clearly. Further to this, the consultancy will be expected to :

- Develop training handbooks and “How to Guides”;
- Develop video tutorials and other help systems;
- Develop technical documents including requirements analysis, design documents and user/admin manuals;
- Conduct specific training to relevant staff and partners on each area of the assignment; and
- Ensure relevant staff are in a position to manage all components of the system upon inception and modify them as needs arise.

5.0. Duration

The mission will be carried out over a total of 60 men/days over a calendar period of no more than 3 months.

6.0. Deliverables

The Consultants will be expected to deliver the following:

- A Prototype model for the new IPM&ES demonstrated with all the characteristics described above under the section 1.2. The demonstration session must use existing or similar data of CORAF OP92017-2022);
- A Software running IPM&ES with all the features described under the section 1.4. Once Indicator Data with regard to the OP (2017-2022) are downloaded, the Software must show that it is strong enough, for data analysis, data management, mapping, and reporting. The Software must be supported by a “User Manual”.
- Adequate training of CORAF ES Staff and handover completed to allow CORAF Staff ownership of the system.

In order to allow CORAF monitoring the progress, the Consultants must produce the following progress reports :

- **Inception Report** – the consultant should produce an Inception Report within 15 days after the contract is signed. The report should provide a clear picture of how the consultant understands the ToRs and intends to achieve the expected tasks. It should identify those that will be consulted and should propose methodology for the assignment, including specific questions that will be researched to carry out the required assessments. The report should also include a work plan with timelines for all the tasks that the consultant will undertake during the assignment.
- **Prototype report** – the consultant should present a report determining the requirements to the system and a prototype model within 30 workdays after commencement of the assignment. The report will be presented for validation by a reference committee and incorporate feedback and comments from the discussion.

- **Completion Report** – upon completion of the assignment, the consultants should submit a final completion report. The report should outline all work undertaken, including characteristics of the system developed. Any follow-ups and/or recommendations should also be included in the report.

In addition, work outputs should be shared on a monthly basis to ensure alignment between the ToRs and actual work completed.

7.0. Required skills and experience

Interested Firms should mobilize a team with at least :

7.1. A season Monitoring & Evaluation and Data Management Specialist with:

- At least a master's degree in agriculture, economics, or a related field;
- Proven technical expertise (at least 8 years) in monitoring and evaluating agriculture and food security programmes;
- Proven Expertise in Project Planning, Result frameworks and Result-Based Management ;
- These experiences include among others, the management of M&E databases, field surveys, use of qualitative and quantitative statistical methods, etc.
- General skills in the use of standard software, such as MS Office (Word, Excel, Power Point).
- A valuable experience of GIS and ICT applications for the S and E.

7.2. A Computer Science and Systems Development Specialist with:

- At least a master's degree in IT, or another related discipline ;
- At least ten years' experience in developing IT solutions and providing IT support and maintenance services ;
- Proven professional experience in web technologies, including the development and deployment of web-based information systems;
- Demonstrated expertise in User Experience and User Interface Designing and
- Proven professional experience in developing and managing M&E databases within the Agriculture non-profit sector;
- Good understanding of Project Planning, Result frameworks and Result-Based Management Concepts.

8.0. Application Procedures

Interested firms must submit the following documents/information to demonstrate their suitability for the assignment: CVs, references concerning the performance of similar contracts, publications, experience in the similar field, etc.).

Interested firms can obtain additional information from the CORAF Executive Secretariat by sending correspondence to the CORAF's M&E Specialist by e-mail to i.amadou@coraf.org.

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