

Call for proposals: Private sector-led digital agriculture extension for smallholder farmers: a literature review and learning study

Frequently asked questions

Q1: The call document mentions that FCDO is interested in using some of the 11 M4D grantees as case studies to contribute to the emerging evidence base on effective, private sector-led, digital agricultural extension programmes that are impactful, scalable, and financially sustainable. Is there a minimum number of countries or case studies that should be prioritised?

A1: We would like to have a diverse range of case studies; however, there is no fixed number that we require. 3–5 countries would be sufficient, but this is not a strict requirement. It is a recommendation that can be adjusted at a later stage after further discussion.

Q2: Is the budget £500,000 per country/ app evaluation?

A2: The total budget for the full 2-stage study is £500,000.

Q3: In the Expression of Interest (EoI), are applicants expected to specify potential partners or countries where they have partners and would be interested in working, or must the countries be finalised in Phase I?

A3: Please refer to the Terms of Reference (ToR) for details. We expect the work to cover the countries where GSMA projects have been implemented, as outlined in the ToR. The final list of countries will be confirmed during phase one.

Q4: What are the expectations regarding in-country partnerships? Does the funder prefer local experts to be included as Principal Investigators (PIs) or Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PIs), or can they be involved as research team members or consultants (e.g. gender experts, agricultural extension specialists) to support research and coordination at the local level? Additionally, should local experts or researchers be engaged in Stage I, or is their involvement only expected in Stage II?

A4: FCDO strongly encourages suppliers to include some form of local expertise, given local experts often better understand the context and because it builds expertise in the Global South. It is for the supplier to decide where and how they can build a strong team, and during which stages of the project they need whom.

Q5: What role will the GSMA grantees play in facilitating the evaluation? Will the FCDO facilitate app-related data (detailed information of users) or does the supplier/funding recipient have to work directly with the GSMA grantees to get the data and support needed?

A5: The supplier should work directly with the GSMA grantees. However, GSMA will make initial introductions and share with the supplier the data they already have. GSMA will be involved in coordinating contact with their grantees in order to manage the requests coming to them with other initiatives. However, ultimately, the supplier would need to work directly with the GSMA grantees.

Q6: Can submitting organisations offer feedback on the desired timeline? Depending on the number of countries selected for fieldwork and the desired depth of evidence review, the current time constraints listed in the RFP may be unrealistic.

A6: The RCC welcomes all feedback from applicants, and if the project parameters are not feasible/realistic, please indicate this. The project is intended to cover as many countries as the timeline allows.

Q7: What will be the role of the RCC in this study? Do 3ie and/or the University of Birmingham expect to deliver any aspects of the study? To what extent and in what capacities would they be involved in information gathering, diagnosis, and knowledge-sharing activities?

A7: The Research Commissioning Centre facilitates this commission on behalf of the FCDO's Technology and Innovation Unit, organises a peer review of the applications, ensures proper due diligence and facilitates the contracting process. Following award, the RCC provides quality assurance of deliverables and monitors project delivery. The RCC monitors quality (we employ subject specialists to do this) and gives recommendations on improvements. The RCC does not otherwise participate in the research activities of the awardee.

Q8: Can FDCO please confirm if there is a budget template?

A8: Yes, a budget template will be accessible on the call for proposals page—no budget information is required at the EoI stage.

Q9: Stage I focuses on conducting a literature review and developing evaluation tools. The call document states that, following Stage I, the funding recipient will move to the implementation stage, during which selected programmes will be evaluated in collaboration with GSMA, and recommendations for agricultural extension interventions will be formulated. Should the implementation stage cover all the programmes selected during Stage I?

A9: Yes, the implementation stage should cover all selected programmes unless the supplier determines during Stage I that one or more of the selected programmes are not suitable for evaluation.

Q10: What Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) tools does GSMA currently use for data collection?

A10: GSMA's MEL process and tools for these Innovation Fund grant rounds include:

- Theory of Change Development: Grantees develop roadmaps combining a Theory of Change and Theory of Action to outline challenges, key activities, expected outcomes, and underlying assumptions.
- Quarterly progress reports: Tracking KPIs, including service usage data. Baseline and endline assessments, using surveys and interviews.
- Scalability & Reflections: Grantees participate in reflection sessions and scalability interviews to assess scalability, share challenges and successes, and provide feedback on GSMA support.
- Synthesis & Case Studies: Analysis of trends across baseline and endline assessments. Written and video case studies will document lessons learned and highlight project impacts.

Q11: What is the expected length of the full proposal following the submission of the Expression of Interest (Eoi)?

A11: You can view an example of a full application form here:

[RCC application template behavioural science 0.docx](#). However, full proposals are not requested at this stage. For the Eoi stage, the word limits are indicated in the Eoi form. For the full proposal application, there are no word limits.

Q12: Is there a specific format that applicants should follow when compiling the required three-page CVs for the Eoi submission? Additionally, is there a required font size for these documents?

A12: We do not have a template or preferred format, and no prescriptions for formatting.

Q13: Can a non-UK university apply? Or does the applicant need to be legally registered in the UK?

A13: Non-UK institutions are eligible to apply.

Q14: The guidelines state 'only legally registered organisations and consortia of registered organisations, not individuals, may apply'. Does this mean that, one can only submit applications on behalf of one's institution?

A14: We will only award to organisations rather than individuals. Thus, organisations are welcome to apply through individuals directly affiliated with those organisations but we can't accept applications from individuals outside of organisations or working for organisations but applying on their own behalf.

Q15: Will the award incur VAT?

A15: This depends on the trading status of the applicant. As a US nonprofit organisation providing a public good, 3ie does not incur VAT for the management of the Research Commissioning Centre. If you are likewise applying as a not-for-profit organisation or registered charity, this award should not incur VAT.

Q16: Who retains ownership of the intellectual property (IP) once an award is granted?

A16: Intellectual property in all material (including, but not limited to, reports, data and designs, whether or not electronically stored) produced by the applicant will be the property of the applicant. The applicant will be asked to grant to 3ie and FCDO a worldwide, non-exclusive, irrevocable and royalty-free licence to use all the material produced, where "use" shall mean, without limitation, the reproduction, publication and sub-licence of all the material and the intellectual property therein, including the reproduction and sale of the material and products incorporating the same, for use by any person or for sale or other dealing anywhere in the world.

Q17: Will the successful applicant be able to freely use the IP for teaching and non-commercial activities?

A17: The IP may be used for teaching and non-commercial activities provided that this is approved by FCDO.

Q18: Are suppliers permitted to include links within their submission?

A18: Please provide all the information you want to be reviewed in your application. External attachments (except CVs) and links will not be reviewed.

Q19: Can applicants submit their responses as PDFs?

A19: Yes.

Q20: Is there a limitation to the number of Eols that can come from one institution?

A20: No.

Q21: Will the resulting award be subject to FCDO's standard terms and conditions, specifically those around data protection regulations?

A21: Yes, the award will be subject to signing an Accountable Grant Agreement, so successful awardees will be subject to FCDO's standard terms and conditions including FCDO's eligible cost guidance and the Programme Operating Framework (PrOF).

Q22: For Indirect Costs, should we plan to use FCDO's rate or 3ie's rate? What would be the permissible rate?

A22: For Indirect Costs, organisations should follow FCDO's guidance on applying NPAC (Non-Attributable Project Costs). UK based higher education institutions should follow the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) methodology. If you do not follow NPAC or TRAC then the maximum limit of indirect costs will be 15%.