**CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**

**Issuance Date**: April 24, 2024

**Submission due date:** August 2024

**Review Dates:** Review of Expression of Interests will take place from May 30 , 2024

**Period of performance: 12-24 months**

**Background**

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) recently awarded ACDI/VOCA the five-year Market Driven Rural Development (MDRD) Activity. MDRD will accelerate Tajikistan’s agriculture sector growth through a facilitative, inclusive market systems approach that enables inclusive access to economic opportunities in rural communities, with a focus on the vegetable, fruits, and dairy sectors in Tajikistan. The Activity will prioritize i) women- and youth-owned, managed, and operated businesses and those businesses that catalyze opportunities for women and youth and ii) climate-smart practices, technology, and investment.

MDRD has three primary objectives.

Objective 1: Increased investment in the agriculture sector

Objective 2: Improved value chain productivity

Objective 3: Greater access to profitable markets

At the end of the program, Tajikistan’s agriculture sector will become more competitive and resilient, where fragmented farmers, in close and mutually beneficial cooperation with private agribusinesses, will increase the profitability of their farms and have access to services that facilitate formal linkages with regional and international markets. These activities will result in increased investment in the agriculture system, at least $15 million in private sector investment and 500 small-medium enterprises strengthened, which will lead to an estimated 1,200 MT of carbon sequestered through climate-smart practices.

The proposed interventions should be linked to the Value Chains of the project, including:

* Vegetables: tomato, onion;
* Fruits: apricot, cherry, grapes;
* Berries and nuts
* Dairy (processing and fodder production)

**SECTION 1: MDRD SUMMARY DESCRIPTION**

1. ACTIVITY AND GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

MDRD is inviting entrepreneurs, involved in agriculture mechanization service in Tajikistan, for partnership who propose Business Models with advanced technology solutions for improving supply chain efficiency in agriculture sector in Tajikistan (production of agro products). The business model can be products, services that offer improving yield, efficiency, and profitability of input/output process in agriculture. Advanced technology solutions can include agriculture machines (land cultivation and harvesting), drones, irrigation, satellite imagery/sensors and others.

Interested entrepreneurs must provide profile of their company, proposed business model clearly indicating the value it creates, custom and market analyses, available resources (human, financial, assets) and required investment.

**SECTION 2. AWARD INFORMATION**

1. AWARDS TYPE AND VALUE

MDRD anticipates awarding In-Kind, Fixed Amount or Standard Grant mechanism for implementation of projects as a financial or technical support. The award mechanism will depend on the capacity of the applying organization/company.

1. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The period of performance can be from 12 to 24 months. Applications will be reviewed every month from May till end of August and partnership co-creation commence starting from May 2024.

1. COST SHARE REQUIREMENTS

Final budget and leverage amount will be negotiated and determined after MDRD and applicant finalize the Business Model. Applicants must be able to demonstrate their ability to leverage a contribution an amount equivalent to 50% of the proposed business model budget. Applicants that provide higher levels of leverage contributions will be reviewed more favorably during second phase of evaluation. Applicant contributions may be in the form of expert’s time, space, equipment, supplies, and other expendable property, and the value of goods and services directly benefiting, and specifically identifiable to the business model results.

Selected Business Models will be provided with technical and financial support. The technical part may include further refining the business models. For instance, on irrigation, MDRD can facilitate links with international companies on introducing customized pivot irrigation systems and others. Of the total investment required, MDRD will finance 50% of the cost depending on the business model idea, technology it proposes for increasing supply chain efficiency and value for clients/farmers.

1. FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

The following restrictions apply to awards issued under this EOI.

* The award will not allow the reimbursement of pre-award costs. That is, only allowable obligations incurred during the period defined within the grant agreement will be covered by the Grant.

**SECTION 3. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

1. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Small and medium enterprises involved in agriculture mechanization service in Tajikistan particularly with commercial operations, ago-input companies/enterprises.

All organizations that have not previously received USAID funding are specifically encouraged to apply. To be eligible for an award, applicants must;

* For organizations and medium enterprises:
* Be legally registered;
* Possess sound managerial, technical, and institutional capacities to achieve project results;
* Are in good standing with all civil and fiscal authorities;
* Possess financial accountability and maintain detailed records of all expenses;
* Do not have a negative determination on the SAM, UN 1267, or OFAC Blocked Persons Lists;
* Are willing to sign applicable assurances and certifications prior to award; and
* Can leverage their own resources to achieve project objectives;

Unallowable expenses

* Activities deemed unnecessary to accomplish grant purposes as determined by MDRD, including any office or administrative expenses that are not directly linked to the implementation of the project;
* Previous obligations and/or bad debts, Fines, and or Penalties;
* Creation of endowments or revolving funds;
* Activities that duplicate the activities of other USG-supported programs or programs conducted by other organizations in MDRD target districts;

**SECTION 4. SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

1. INSTRUCTIONS

Eligible Applicants should submit a Expression of Interest Form following the format provided in Annex A

1. SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES

Expression of Interest (EoI) will be reviewed as noted on the first page of this solicitation. EoIs submitted after the indicated Closing Date will not be accepted.

1. SUBMISSION POINT OF CONTACT

Questions and Letter of Interest must be submitted electronically, in Tajik, English or Russian, within the dates indicated on the first page of the solicitation. They should be directed to mdrdgrants@acdivoca-tj.org with the subject line MDRD-EOI-03-24

**SECTION 5. REVIEW INFORMATION**

1. INITIAL SCREENING

MDRD will conduct evaluation on rolling basis every month till due date of this EoI. Upon receipt of Expression of Interest, the MDRD Market Fund Partnership Manager will review each application to ensure it meets the minimum requirements before proceeding with technical review. The initial screening requirements include:

* Applicant has submitted a two-page Expression of Interest using the template (Annex A).
* Applicant provided information about enterprise/company portfolio describing coverage area, districts.
* Applicant meets the eligibility criteria listed in section 3; and
* Applicant is not found with a negative determination in the SAM, OFAC, or UN 1267 lists.
1. EVALUATION CRITERIA

All Expression of Interest that pass the initial screening will be evaluated by MDRD Evaluation Committee based on the following evaluation criteria:

1. Technical, management and operational capacity: Management capability, personnel qualifications, other capabilities required to ensure successful business management. Ability of the entity to manage donor funded projects and meet the grant conditions and commitments. **30 scores**
2. Business capacity, coverage area of the service: sales turnover, list of districts, number of shops, range of products including their source. It should include details of the agriculture mechanization service that has been provided and what is being intended to be provided with MDRD support. **40 scores**
3. Leverage: The recipients’ willingness to contribute their own in-kind funds or other sources of funds (leverage), the applicant’s ability to leverage other funds towards the change, and the transformation, or multiplier, that is achieved on that investment in the system. **20 scores**
4. Previous Support: Applicants prior support from other sources the past three years may be evaluated. Considerations include technical area focus, amount of support, and donor source.  **10 scores**

**SECTION 6. APPLICATION PROCESS AND AWARD INFORMATION**

1. APPLICATION PROCESS

As described above, this EOI will follow a two-stage process to select the final Grantees:

1. Applicants must first submit an Expression of Interest. MDRD will conduct an initial review based on the criteria provided in Section 5. Organizations with successful EoI that demonstrate an alignment with the project objectives and satisfy the minimum requirements will be invited to a co-creation session and due diligence process and subsequently sign grant agreement. MDRD will host Co-Creation where the team will provide further details on full description development.
2. Applicants that are invited to the next stage will be provided detailed implementation plan and budget templates. While MDRD will guide applicants through this process, the applicant is expected to actively contribute during the co-creation process and lead the development of a full description of the project.
3. MDRD evaluation committee will make the final decision based on the same criteria provided in SECTION 5.3 after completion of the co-creation process and notify applicants within one month period.

e) The MDRD team will organize offline and online information sessions to provide detailed information on this solicitation and answer all questions raised by potential applicants. Info session is scheduled in May 20, June 17, July 15 and August 19th at 16-00 Dushanbe time at the MDRD office located on Rudaki Plaza, 7th floor, Dushanbe city. Applicants who prefer online participation can attend these meetings by using this [link.](https://tajikistan.un.org/en/256732-request-applications-annual-program-statement-usaid-tajikistan-market-driven-rural)

1. BASIC RISK ASSESSMENT/PRE-AWARD REQUIREMENTS

Notification of a successful Expression of Interest or **invitation to submit a full application is *not* a notification that the applicant will receive an award**. MDRD will conduct a thorough cost analysis of the proposed budget to ensure all costs are reasonable, allowable, and allocable in accordance with USAIDs cost principles. MDRD will also conduct a pre-award risk assessment withing due diligence process and applicants will be asked to provide additional documents be not limited to signed copy the Certification Regarding Terrorist Financing

1. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A grant award will be administered in accordance with applicable regulations stipulated in grant agreement and with reference to:

* For non-U.S. organizations, 2 CFR 200, [ADS 303mab, Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations](http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mab) will apply.
1. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

As a condition of the award, all grant recipients will be required to submit report on their contribution to the activity. The frequency and type of reports will vary depending on multiple factors but will be discussed with the organization prior to award.

expression of Interest

ANNEX A

1. Company profile (include detailed description of the services you have provided, particularly those related to agriculture mechanization and details of your assets (HR, finances etc)

2. Describe the problem that your company will address

3. Describe proposed solution (product/service) for the problem identified, benefits that your company will deliver to clients/farmers, and agriculture technologies you propose.

4. Market analyses (demand, clients, competitors)

5. Investment required for the business model and your company’s contribution

 contribution