

GHANA MARKET SYSTEMS AND RESILIENCE (MSR) ACTIVITY

Request for Expressions of Interest Partnership Innovation Fund (Grants Under Contract)

The Feed the Future Ghana Market Systems and Resilience Activity (MSR) is a five-year activity managed by ACDI/VOCA and funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Under the Ghana MSR Activity, USAID has authorized the issuing of Grants under Contract (GUC) to Ghanaian private and non-governmental organizations, intending to increase sustainable on-farm and off-farm employment and investment opportunities through leveraged investments in agriculture and non-agriculture enterprises that lead to improved farm productivity, access to markets, and improved market efficiency.

MSR seeks to support and strengthen agricultural market systems, resulting in greater productivity, efficiency, and investment in goods and services that drive agricultural-led economic growth and increase household incomes in northern Ghana. ACDI/VOCA and partners implement the Activity in four regions of northern Ghana: The Northern, Northeast, Upper East, and Upper West Regions within 17 districts.

MSR is looking for organizations to partner with in achieving the following key objectives:

- 1) Increase commercialization and profitability of agriculture markets.
- 2) Increase the institutional capacity of market actors.
- 3) Improve market access and the quality of business services.
- 4) Improve the enabling environment for local market actors.
- 5) Improve inclusion and empowerment of women, youth, and persons with disability in agricultural markets in the Zone of Influence.

Partnership Eligibility

To be eligible for a partnership award under this opportunity, an applicant must demonstrate that they are one of the organizations below:

- a. Farmer-based organizations, including associations and/or cooperatives
- b. Micro, Small and Medium enterprises
- c. Anchor firms (buyers, processors, exporters, etc.)
- d. Private sector umbrella organizations
- e. Ghanaian non-governmental organizations
- f. Business service providers (BSP), including banks and other financial institutions, technical assistance organizations, consultancy firms, training organizations, input and agriculture technology suppliers, value chain intermediaries, product certification services, etc.

Government entities are not eligible to apply. However, research institutions and universities supported by national funding are eligible to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI).

MSR would like to invite interested and eligible Ghanaian private enterprises, industry associations, networks, and non-governmental organizations that possess the right skills, resources, and innovative

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ideas/solutions to submit an EOI under the MSR Partnership Innovation Fund (PIF) in the following thematic areas of interest (see Table 1).

Table 1: Thematic Areas of Interest for Partnerships

#	Thematic Area	Expected Output/Impact
1	Promoting new inclusive outgrower business (OB) models in northern Ghana, with a focus on less appreciated crops like cowpea, groundnut, and horticultural crops.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Widespread adoption of the OB model among medium and large agribusinesses.
2	Digitalization of agriculture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Increased innovations that will expand Information and Communication Technology for Agriculture (ICT4Ag) platforms to provide agriculture extension and other bundled services (i.e., integration of multiple services such as inputs, financing, insurance, irrigation, etc., delivered together to enhance farmers' productivity and resilience) through digital platforms. ii. Enhanced capacity of market participants, including smallholder farmers (particularly women, youth, and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)), on the use of digital platforms for improved access to extension services, market information, and micro-loans. iii. Integrated ICT4Ag applications and solutions with agricultural service providers to optimize service delivery.
3	Quality and competitiveness of products sourced from northern Ghana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Increased expansion into new markets (including e-commerce). ii. Enhanced innovative cooperative models that improve aggregation and access to high-value retail markets. iii. Improved post-harvest technology practices among market actors. iv. Improved technologies in food processing to promote value addition. v. Enhanced processing and preservation of nutritious foods to improve household nutrition and resilience.
4	Research institutions develop and promote improved technologies to respond to the market's needs and changing climatic conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Developed partnerships among Research institutions, private sector companies, and other industry partners (e.g., seed companies, seed industry partners, soil improvement and agroforestry service providers, mechanization service providers, irrigation equipment and service providers, etc.) are established that showcase profitable and sustainable partnership models that ensure the uptake, multiplication, and marketing of these technologies to smallholder farmers in the ZOI.



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5	Youth involved in productive economic activities.	i. Increased Business Development Service (BDS) providers and financial and supply chain intermediaries working with youth groups, to develop innovative and sustainable business ideas around income-generating activities on irrigation service delivery, agricultural production, and critical inputs to build viable youth-led business entities in high-value crop production or service delivery.
6	Adoption of resilience and risk mitigation products (e.g., insurance, micro-insurance, informal pension, market information services, weather forecasting, and climate-smart technologies)	i. Mitigated risks of climate variability and market fluctuations and increased market actor and smallholder farmers' investment in climate-smart agriculture technologies and practices that improve resilience in northern Ghana.
7	Access to finance (A2F) for investment, input, and credit services for market actors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Improved availability, accessibility, affordability (?), and utilization of farm inputs and services. ii. Enhanced technology adoption through input and services to market actors, focusing on the non-digital methods provided by input and farm services providers (ISPs). iii. Improved trade of agricultural inputs. iv. Enhanced availability, accessibility, and utilization of agricultural finance, including input credit, loans, and other forms of investment.
8	Private Sector Participation in Agricultural Sector Policy Implementation.	i. Improved capacity of value chain actors (including associations such as FBOs, GAIDA, NASTAG, etc.) to engage with local government actors in policy implementation and coordination processes.

Eligible entities are encouraged to submit an EOI for one or more of the Thematic Areas of Interest. The EOI should be **no more than 7 pages in length**. The EOI needs to convey the following information:

- a. General background and overview of the firm/consortium, including the following:
 - 1) Status of Company (partnership, limited liability, not-for-profit, etc.)
 - 2) Number of years of business experience
 - 3) Point of contact name, email address and phone number
 - 4) Area of expertise, services provided, and innovative ideas
 - 5) Previous experience and partnerships/clients in the last 3 years
- b. A summary of discussions the potential partner may have had with MSR about thematic areas.
- c. The issue(s), challenge(s), or opportunity(ies) the potential partner seeks to address, including the core business interests and objectives that motivate the potential partner to address the issue, challenge, or opportunity in question.
- d. The specific outcomes and results the approach seeks to achieve and what would constitute success.
- e. The market-based, market-oriented, or market-informed approach the potential partner seeks to address the issue, challenge, or opportunity. This should include a description of the proposed roles





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and responsibilities of the partners, including the potential partner, MSR, and any other partners deemed critical to the partnership's success. The description of the approach, roles, and responsibilities should also note the potential value proposition that collaboration with MSR offers to the private sector.

- f. How the partnership will foster a situation in which markets and private sector firm behavior continue to generate valuable and sustainable business and development outcomes and results in an ongoing manner over the short, medium, and long term – without the need for further USAID funding.

In addition to the EOI, the eligible parties should attach the following:

- A copy of the potential partner's official documentation of the registration certificate
- The potential partner's Unique Entity Identifier Number (UEI) - if available
- A list of proposed partners (private, public, NGO, etc.) and the name and contact information (phone and email) for each partner's key Point of Contact (POC).

Please note that the EOI conveys initial ideas regarding a proposed partnership in one or more of the identified thematic areas. As the co-creation process continues, the ideas and approaches may evolve significantly as the partners jointly determine the most appropriate way to work together to sustainably address the problems, challenges, issues, and opportunities outlined in Table 1: Thematic Areas of Interest for Partnerships.

During the review process, MSR evaluators will be looking for potential partners that demonstrate the following:

- 1) A profitable and sustainable business case that produces a market system-level impact beyond a single entity's business.
- 2) Innovative Financing models aimed at reducing the cost of lending, improving the liquidity of financial service providers (FSPs), and encouraging more agriculture service providers to offer targeted financial services to MSMEs.
- 3) Initiatives that support one or more of the following:
 - i) new and innovative business models,
 - ii) new and innovative technologies,
 - iii) expansion of agribusiness to underserved customers in rural areas, such as women, youth, or PWDs, and
 - iv) solutions to systemic market system constraints. Strong relationships with other market actors, including smallholder farmers, are needed to support the building of effective partnerships and resiliency in agricultural markets.
- 4) Willingness to adopt and incorporate Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) and Adaptive Management approaches and utilize MEL/Collaborating, Learning, and Adaptation (CLA) tools with designated objectives and milestones.
- 5) The willingness and ability to invest at least 50% of the initiative's cost.



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Once the review process is completed, MSR will shortlist potential partners to receive a Request for Proposals (RFP). After proposals are submitted and reviewed, MSR will select potential partners to enter co-creation discussions.

How to Apply

The response to the EOI should be structured as follows:

- Response letter (1-page max): The letter should formally reference the specific assignment(s) under the thematic areas (above), declaring the firm/consortium's interest in undertaking the assignment(s). Briefly introduce the consortium members (if any) and convey why the firm/consortium should be shortlisted. An authorized signatory from the leading firm should sign the letter.
- Statement of qualifications (6 pages max): The statement of qualifications should highlight the firm's/consortium's sector-specific expertise and experience applicable to the specific thematic area(s).
- Required attachments (registration certificate, list of proposed partners, etc.)

Interested firms, associations, and organizations should send an expression of interest to the following email address: grants@acdivocaghana.org on or before the close of business, Ghana time on **January 10, 2025**.

All applications will undergo a screening process, and successful applicants will receive a Request for Application (RFA) inviting them to submit a full application/proposal. If needed, a co-creation process may precede the RFA.

Disclaimers:

- *This request for EOI is not an offer by MSR but an invitation to receive responses from eligible potential partners to create partnerships to sustainably unlock the economic potential in northern Ghana. No contractual obligation whatsoever shall arise from the EOI process unless and until a formal partnership/contract is signed and executed between the MSR Activity and the entities concerned.*
- *The MSR Activity and USAID reserve the right to fund any or none of the submitted applications. Additionally, any award pursuant to this funding opportunity is contingent upon the availability of funds.*
- *The MSR Activity may reject any application that is incomplete. An incomplete application is one that does not comply with all requirements and terms and conditions of the solicitation. An application must be complete, signed by an authorized signatory, and delivered no later than the closing date indicated on the cover sheet of this solicitation. The MSR Activity may reserve the right to waive any minor discrepancies in an application.*
- *USAID is not a party to this solicitation and any concerns about the solicitation process should be presented – in writing with full explanation – to MSR at msrgrant@acdivocaghana.org for consideration.*
- *Applications may be withdrawn by written notice via email from an authorized representative at any time before award.*
- *The MSR Activity reserves the right to issue awards based on the initial evaluation of applications without discussion.*

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- *The MSR Activity retains the right to terminate this solicitation or modify the requirements upon notification to potential applicants or through an amendment to the solicitation.*

Please Note:

**Public International Organizations (PIOs), International non-governmental organizations (INGOs), International consulting firms, and associations are not eligible to apply.*