**The Department of Agriculture (USDA) – Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)**

**Office of Capacity Building and Development**

**Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**

**Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING) Mid-Term Evaluation**

1. **Program Description**

**Program Overview, Objectives, and Priorities**

The RING Project aims to improve the livelihood and nutritional status of vulnerable households in targeted communities in the Northern Region of Ghana. The RING project proposes to strengthen local networks (i.e., district and regional structures) to develop, implement, and monitor nutrition, WASH, and livelihoods activities that will improve beneficiary nutrition and hygiene behaviors, leading to improved nutrition and health status of reproductive age women and children under five in targeted vulnerable households.

To determine the effectiveness of the RING project implementation a mid-term evaluation shall be conducted. The results of this evaluation will be useful for a variety of actors in the USAID/Ghana Mission and beyond. However, the results will be used directly by the following key actors:

* + USAID/Ghana Mission Director to inform broad strategy during the development of the CDCS;
  + Directors of the Offices of Economic Growth and Health, Population and Nutrition to inform sector-­level strategies for inclusion in the CDCS;
  + RING COR, Government Agreement Technical Representatives (GATRs), and activity managers to inform course-­corrective measures for the remaining project implementation period;
  + RING CORs, GATRs, and activity managers to inform decisions on potential follow-­on activities to build on any successes achieved and challenges observed through the current project; and
  + Directors and key staff of all USAID/Ghana Offices in considering the continued role of sub-­national G2G programming for results-­based programming.

**Issued By**

Foreign Agricultural Service, Office of Capacity Building and Development, Development Resources and Disaster Assistance Division, Agriculture Market Systems Development Branch

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number and Title**

10.960 Technical Agricultural Assistance*.*

**Notice of Funding Opportunity Title**

Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING) Mid-Term Evaluation

**NOFO Number**

[To be assigned]

**Authorizing Authority for Program**

National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, PL 95-113, as amended, 7 USC §§ 3291(a)(1)(B), 3291(a)(3), 3291(a)(7)(A), 3317, & 3319a

**Program Type**

New, One-Time

1. **Federal Award Information**

**Award Amounts, Important Dates, and Extensions**

Estimated Award Amount: Up to $283,890.00*(Subject to the availability of funding)*

**Projected number of Awards**: 1

**Period of Performance:** Approximately four (4) months

**Projected Period of Performance Start Date(s):** 10/30/2017

**Projected Period of Performance End Date(s):** 02/28/2018

*Extensions may be considered; please see Section H.*

**Pre-Award costs:** Not authorized.

**Cost Share or Match requirements**:None/Not required

**Funding Instrument**

Cost-Reimbursable Agreement

Note that indirect costs, by law, cannot exceed 10% of direct costs under this agreement instrument. FAS has no authority to waive this ceiling.

Subawards will be considered on a case-by-case basis, if included in the awardee’s proposal.

1. **Eligibility Information**

**Eligible Applicants**

Public & State controlled institutions of higher education

State cooperative institutions (as defined by 7 USC § 3103)

All applicants must have an active registration in the SAM database at <https://www.sam.gov> – pending or expired registrants are not eligible. This requirement must be met by the closing date of the announcement and will not be waived. Please contact the program officer listed if you have questions about this requirement.

**Other Submission Requirements and Information**

Pursuant to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017, PL 115-31, § 746, all applicants must certify that they have not been convicted of a felony criminal violation under any Federal law within the preceding 24 months.

**Maintenance of Effort (MOE)**

MOE is not allowable.

1. **Application and Submission Information**

**Key Dates and Times**

**Application Start Date:** Immediately

**Application Submission Deadline:** Wednesday, October 4, 2017

11:59 PM EDT

**Anticipated Funding Selection Date**: Monday, October 16, 2017

**Anticipated Award Date:** Friday, October 20, 2017

**Other Key Dates**

FAS will hold an open conference call to discuss this notice of funding opportunities and answer questions. All interested parties are encouraged to join on Wednesday, October 20, 2017, at 1:00 PM EDT. Participants will not be required to identify themselves or their institutions, and participation in this call is not required or tracked. (Note: The conference call system may prompt callers to “please state your name.” Just press the pound key to bypass.)

The conference line is: +1 888 844 9904

Conference ID: 1370358#

**Address to Request Application Package**

This document contains the entire application package.

Applications are preferred to be received through the ezFedGrants portal at <https://grants.fms.usda.gov> – prospective applicants are encouraged to register for this portal. Applicants that are unable to access the ezFedGrants portal should contact the program manager for alternative submission instructions. Note that if selected, registration is a requirement of performance.

Applicants, who have submitted their applications through the ezFedGrants portal, are encouraged to contact the program manager to confirm receipt.

**Content and Form of Application Submission**

All applications must be in Adobe PDF format, accompanied by the following documents in Adobe PDF format. Please ensure that the most current version of each required form is used by following the links provided.

* [Standard Form 424](https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/sample/SF424_2_1-V2.1.pdf), signed by the applicant
* [Standard Form 424A](https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/sample/SF424A-V1.0.pdf)
* [Agriculture Department Form 3030](https://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/AD-3030%20REPRESENTATIONS%20REGARDING%20FELONY%20CONVICTION.pdf), signed by the applicant
* [Agriculture Department Form 3031](https://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/AD-3031%20ASSURANCE%20REGARDING%20FELONY%20CONVICTION.pdf), signed by the applicant
* A detailed budget **and** budget narrative, of sufficient detail to justify the expenditure of federal funds

The proposal narrative should not exceed 12 pages and should describe *how* the scope will be approached, and include clear timelines for field work and deliverables.

**Electronic Signature.**

FAS accepts electronic signatures on all proposal and award documents. FAS will use only electronic signatures on award documents unless the proposal specifically states that institutional policy precludes the use of electronic signatures.

**Intergovernmental Review**

This program is not subject to E.O. 12372.

**Funding Restrictions**

Generally, funds may not be used in any manner that is prohibited by 2 CFR Part 200 and 2 CFR Part 400.

For this program, funds may not be used for general-purpose equipment.

All air travel must be in economy class, and compliant with the Fly America Act (49 USC § 40118).

**Management and Administration (M&A) Costs:**

M&A costs are not allowable.

**Indirect Facilities & Administrative (F&A) Costs.**

Pursuant to statutory restriction in 7 USC § 3319a, indirect costs are limited to 10% of direct costs. FAS has no authority to waive this limitation.

1. **Application Review Information**

**Application Evaluation Criteria**

Prior to making a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency is required by 31 U.S.C. 3321 and 41 U.S.C. 2313 to review information available through any OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information. Therefore, application evaluation criteria may include the following risk based considerations of the applicant: (1) financial stability; (2) quality of management systems and ability to meet management standards; (3) history of performance in managing federal award; (4) reports and findings from audits; and, (5) ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements.

*Factor 1: Technical Approach*

i. The applicant’s proposal describes a realistic, effective and sound approach, including a description of methods that is of high quality and analytical rigor for achieving the project’s requirements.

ii. The applicant’s proposal contains specific deliverables and proposed timeline.

iii. The applicant’s proposal includes all of the sections in the statement of work.

*Factor 2: Experience and Expertise*

i. The applicant’s proposal contains evidence of experience in designing and implementing evaluations for agricultural programs in the context of developing countries.

ii. The applicant’s proposal contains a staffing plan that identifies how the evaluation will be staffed, including the role of key personnel and sub-awardees (if any). It is not strictly necessary to identify individuals, other than the principal investigator and other key personnel, by name, so long as the staffing plan includes

*Factor 3: Past Performance*

i. Past programs, with similar objectives, described by the applicant in their proposal, will be positively reviewed.

ii. Prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold as defined by 48 CFR § 2.101, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently FAPIIS).

iii. An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.

iv. The agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant’s integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

*Factor 4: Cost effectiveness*

The agency will consider the “value for money” in its evaluation of the program. This factor does not consider the cost alone, but rather the cost relative to the value for the work to be performed. Note that the agency’s available funding may not exceed the amount shown in part B.

The agency will not consider cost sharing in the evaluation of the application.

**Review and Selection Process**

A panel of personnel with expertise in the program will be retained to review applications received, scoring on the criteria shown above, and selecting based on the proposal that the panel feels has the potential to have the greatest contribution to the field. The panel reserves the right to ‘split’ the award if it sees fit, and applicants should be prepared to modify their proposals to accept such a split on short notice.

In the interest of transparency, the agency will (upon request) discuss with non-selected applicants the reasons for their non-selection. Non-selected applicants should be aware that, pursuant to statutory restriction in 7 USC § 3319a, selections cannot be contested.

1. **Federal Award Administration Information**

**Notice of Award**

Notice of Selection (which may be conditional) is expected not later than Monday, October 16, 2017. Awards will be issued note later than Thursday, October 19, 2017. Awardees must have the capability to secure the necessary signatures back to the agency by the close of business on October 6. A post-award discussion will be scheduled to take place in the second week of October at a time of mutual availability.

**Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

All successful applicants may be required to comply with Standard Administrative Terms and Conditions, which are available online at:

<https://www.fas.usda.gov/grants/general_terms_and_conditions/default.asp>

The applicable Standard Administrative Terms and Conditions will be those in effect for Fiscal Year 2017, unless specifically amended at a later time.

Before accepting the award the Recipient should carefully read the award package for instructions on administering the grant award and the terms and conditions associated with responsibilities under Federal Awards. Recipients must accept all conditions in this NOFO as well as any Special Terms and Conditions in the Notice of Award to receive an award under this program.

**Reporting**

**Federal Financial Reporting Requirements.**

The Federal Financial Reporting Form (FFR), as known as the SF-425, must be filed within 30 days after the end of each quarter and within 90 days of the end of the agreement, andis available online at:

<https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/sample/SF425-V1.0.pdf>

**Program Performance Reporting Requirements.**

Performance Progress Reporting must be filed within 30 days after the end of each quarter and within 90 days of the end of the agreement; this is *in addition to* any agreed-upon deliverables under the scope of the award, and details the activities undertaken and progress made during the reporting period. In generally will not include the technical findings detailed in the deliverable reports. This may be filed using form SF-PPR or in any other format mutually agreeable to the recipient and the agency.

**Close Out Reporting Requirements.**

Within 90 days after the end of the period of performance, recipients must submit a final financial report and final progress report detailing all accomplishments and a qualitative summary of the impact of those accomplishments throughout the period of performance.

Acceptance of final reports by the agency constitutes a closeout of the award with no further notice or obligation to either party.

1. **Awarding Agency Contact Information**

**Contact and Resource Information**

Prospective applicants with questions are encouraged to join the conference call described in section D.

The designated agency point of contact for this agreement is:

Harold Tarver ([Harold.Tarver@fas.usda.gov](mailto:Harold.Tarver@fas.usda.gov))

Chris Finstrom ([Chris.Finstrom@fas.usda.gov](mailto:Chris.Finstrom@fas.usda.gov))

Inquiries will be returned within 24 hours. All questions must be received no later than 48 hours prior to submission deadline, except the point of contact will confirm receipt of proposals upon request.

1. **Additional Information**

**1. Extensions**

Extensions to this program will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Requests for extensions must be submitted 60 days prior to the expiration of the performance period with a strong accompanying justification. Requests for extensions are subject to approval by FAS.

**2. Pre-Award Costs**

Pre-Award Costs are not authorized.

**3. Budget Revisions**

a. Transfers of funds between direct cost categories in the approved budget when such cumulative transfers among those direct cost categories exceed ten percent of the total budget approved in this Award require prior written approval by FAS.

b. The Recipient is not authorized at any time to transfer amounts budgeted for direct costs to the indirect costs line item or vice versa, without prior written approval of FAS.

**4. Award Decision**

FAS is not obligated to make any award as a result of this NOFO.

**Appendix: Full Scope**

# Purpose

The purpose of this mid-term evaluationis to:

* + Determine the effectiveness of the RING implementation approach in reaching the project’s results to inform course corrective measures for application throughout the remaining implementation period.

The effectiveness of the approach could be measured by factors such as: (1) cost of the RING “mixed G2G/contractor” approach in achieving results as compared to the estimated cost of achieving the results through a traditional cooperative agreement and/or contract; (2) impact of improved capacity of district and regional staff to achieve programmatic results; and, (3) beneficiary perception of district staff delivering services and quality of services provided.

* + Understand USAID/Ghana’s experience with the project’s implementation approach to implement interventions at the community level and its potential to be applied more broadly across activities to improve the sustainability of USAID/Ghana’s future investments. USAID/Ghana, through this evaluation, would like to explore whether the activities could realistically be sustained without donor intervention.

USAID/Ghana contracted out a survey of 2,517 RING beneficiaries in all 17 implementation districts. The survey questions correspond with 12 performance indicators (i.e. output and outcome levels) that are measured within the RING Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (AMEP).

As part of the evaluation, the results of the Beneficiary Survey may be compared with the results of the baseline and follow-up Feed the Future/Ghana population based surveys that were conducted in 2012 (baseline) and 2016 (interim). Data collected from this survey focused on the following key elements: comprehensive household demographic information; dwelling characteristics; consumption expenditure; food security; women's dietary diversity; women's anthropometry; women's empowerment in agriculture; exclusive breastfeeding; minimum adequate diet; and children's anthropometry. Data were collected in geographic areas targeted by Feed the Future interventions, known as the Feed the Future Zones of Influence (ZOI), which include Northern Region, where RING is implemented.

# METHODOLOGY

The approach to this activity will include:

* + Desk Review.
  + Key Informant Interviews and/or Focus Group Discussions.
  + Triangulation of findings between the desk review and the interactions with key stakeholders
  + Visits to randomly selected districts drawn from the different parts of Northern Region.
  + Contact other districts to cross check the information gathered from the visited districts for uniformity.
  + Data collection in the capital Accra from USAID/Ghana staff and national partners such as the Government of Ghana; and,
  + Data collection at the regional level.

The recipient should submit data collection instruments (i.e. interview guides and questionnaires, observation, and/or field guides, etc.) to USDA for review before finalizing. USDA will be expected to approve or request changes within 10 business days of receipt.

# Evaluation Questions

Field visits are anticipated to be an important and necessary component of this activity. FAS is particularly interested in answers to the following questions, along with such others that the recipient may propose:

1. How has direct funding to district structures altered their capability to address the needs of vulnerable populations, particularly in the areas of agriculture, livelihoods, nutrition, and water, sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)?
2. What has been the level of effectiveness of the different elements promoted through the RING approach in achieving the project’s results?
3. What are the costs and benefits to the use of the RING approach in achieving the project’s results?
4. What is the potential for the sustainability of RING interventions at the end of the project implementation period? Which specific project elements have the most potential for sustainability?
5. Are there added benefits of G2G to implementation and results (compared to sub-contracting district implementation under Global Communities) considering the additional management burden?

# TIMEFRAME & TRAVEL

1. **Timeframe**

USAID/Ghana is prepared to commence the evaluation as early as November 2017, with anticipated final results by February 28, 2018.

1. **Travel**

It is anticipated that the researchers will travel to Ghana for data collection, and presentation of final results.

# DELIVERABLES

1. **Deliverables**
   * A Performance Evaluation Concept Paper (no more than five pages in length).
   * A Performance Evaluation Protocol (no more than 20 pages in length).
   * Documented Official Approval from all relevant institutional review boards and from host country institutions if primary data are to be collected.
   * Data collection instruments (if applicable) that will be reviewed and approved by USDA.
   * Supervisor and/or enumerator manuals (if applicable) that will be reviewed and approved by USDA.
   * Up to two draft versions of Evaluation Reports of no more than 50 pages in length.
2. **Report Format and Data Sets**
   * All Final Evaluation Reports must be made ADS 508 compliant and uploaded to the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse.
   * Quantitative data sets in CSV and other formats without personally identifiably information and with accompanying documentation as described in the Open Data policy. Qualitative data sets in MS Word and other requested formats following existing USAID guidelines (if any) on qualitative data. All data sets must be uploaded to the Data Development Library.
   * Final summary report presentation provided orally and electronically through a Microsoft PowerPoint document.