

## **CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

### **Performance Evaluation of the West Africa Trade and Investment Hub**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

USAID Nigeria and USAID West Africa wish to carry out a Mid Term Performance evaluation of the West Africa Trade and Investment Hub (the Hub) activity. The activity is implemented by Creative Associates International Inc. and supported by Dalberg Consulting U.S., LLC. The 5- year activity commenced in September 2019 and is expected to end in August 2024. The total funding level is \$140 million. The Trade Hub Activity is jointly funded by USAID/Nigeria, USAID/West Africa, USAID/Côte d'Ivoire, USAID/Senegal, and other USAID Missions. The geographic focus for the activity is the 15 ECOWAS countries plus Mauritania, Cameroon, and Chad. (Refer to Annex I for additional project background information).

#### **PURPOSE**

The main objective of this evaluation is to assess and document the extent to which the USAID West Africa Trade and Investment Hub is achieving its objectives, and intermediate results; document activity challenges and lessons learned and provide recommendations that will inform the direction of the activity for the remainder of the contract. Specifically, an assessment of the validity of the theory of change will be made. The evaluation will also assess the sustainability and exit strategy of the Trade Hub.

#### **TEAM COMPOSITION AND QUALIFICATIONS**

USAID/WA has commissioned the Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS) mechanism to conduct a Mid-Term Performance evaluation of the West Africa Trade and Investment Hub (the Hub) activity. To this end, ASSESS is seeking to recruit three experts to form the team to conduct this evaluation. It is expected that evaluation team members will have relevant prior experience in West Africa, be proficient in both English and French, have familiarity with USAID's objectives, approaches, and operations, and prior evaluation/assessment experience. In addition, individual team members should have the technical qualifications identified for their respective positions.

The experts include:

1. A Team Leader (Evaluation Specialist)
2. Trade and Integration Expert
3. Investment Expert

#### **Team Leader**

- A minimum of a master's degree in a relevant discipline (Business, Finance, International Trade Law, Economics, etc.)
- At least 15 years' experience in program evaluation of donor funded development programs. Priority will be given to those who have evaluated programs of similar nature.
- Excellent analytical and report writing skills as well as demonstrated skills in applied economic analysis, project management, and survey administration.
- Demonstrated knowledge of and experience in West African countries, with a preference for experience with regional dynamics and a knowledge of the current context.
- Demonstrated strong leadership, analytical, management and organizational, communication and interpersonal skills.

- Proven ability to interact effectively with a broad range of internal and external partners, including international organizations, host country government officials, and NGO counterparts.

### **Trade and Integration Expert**

- A minimum of a master's degree in a relevant discipline (Business, Finance, International Trade Law, Economics, etc.) and eight (8) years of experience in international trade.
- Experience with USAID evaluation projects in Africa and have demonstrated abilities in applied economic analysis.
- Excellent analytical skills with the ability to extract and analyze data from secondary sources.
- Excellent writing skills with the ability to present ideas logically.

### **Investment Expert**

- A minimum of a master's degree in commerce/finance from a recognized university.
- At least 10 years' experience in investment analysis, promotion, and transaction advisory.
- A demonstrated experience in investment and finance within the West Africa region.
- A demonstrated skills in critical thinking and analysis, as well as written and verbal communication.
- Experience in the evaluation of donor funded activities in Africa. Sound knowledge of donor funded programs and an understanding of the evaluation approaches.
- Excellent analytical, report writing and presentation skills.

## **TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The evaluation team will be required to conduct fieldwork in selected countries. Fieldwork activities will include interviewing project stakeholders including government partners, Trade Hub applicant firms and partner businesses, private sector apex bodies, processors, farmers and traders across the region and university or research centers especially for the Nigeria component of the project.

## **EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

The following questions will be addressed, and recommendations developed for both USAID and the activity to address any shortcomings in activity implementation or design.

1. How effective and timely has the activity been in achieving planned results across the various key focus areas:
2. Are the grants being given out by the Hub set to provide the catalytic effects needed to improve private sector competitiveness in the region?
3. Are the Research and Development grants being issued by the hub supporting cutting edge innovation needed to propel businesses in Nigeria?
4. How well is the hub supporting business recover from the effects of the COVID pandemic in the region?
5. Is there an adequate mix of technical assistance for the Trade Hub grantees?
6. Is the activity on-track to achieve planned outcomes and impact across all components and overall? What are the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of planned results and objectives?
7. To what extent is the theory of change still valid and does it respond to the needs of partner USAID Missions?

8. To what extent is the activity's work sustainable and how has the activity worked with businesses to ensure that the results of their partnerships will have lasting benefits?
9. Is engagement with women and youth sufficient and adequate to ensure that the activity's anticipated results are achieved?

## **DELIVERABLES**

### **1. Inception Report**

The inception report must describe the conceptual framework that will be used to undertake the evaluation and the justification for selecting this approach. It must detail the evaluation methodology (i.e., how each question will be answered by way of data collection methods, data sources and sampling). The report must also contain a work plan, which indicates the phases in the evaluation with key deliverables and milestones and timelines.

### **2. Progress Debriefing Meeting**

The Evaluation Team must debrief the contractor on the preliminary findings of the evaluation. This meeting must provide a summary of any analytical results; discuss challenges, successes, and way forward. The Team must deliver an oral presentation of the evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations for each question, prior to finalizing the draft evaluation report. The evaluation team leader will be required to routinely update the evaluation point of contact on the progress of the evaluation.

### **3. Learning Workshop and Report**

A learning workshop must be organized in support of Agency collaboration learning and adaptation methodologies. The focus of the workshop is to generate varied and diverse learning points including useful and actionable suggestions or proposals for addressing recurrent development challenges (based on the specific activity evaluation) in the West African context with the end goal being to enhance achievement of USAID objectives.

### **4. Final Evaluation Report**

The Evaluation Team must submit a final evaluation report that is based on analyzed facts and evidence and fully addresses all the evaluation questions. The report must be no less than 25 and no more than 30 single-spaced pages in length in 12-point Times New Roman font, excluding annexes and a five-page Executive Summary, and comply with the Checklist for Assessing USAID Evaluation Reports.

## **PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE**

The evaluation is expected to be conducted between January and May 2022.

## **CONDITIONS OF REMUNERATION AND REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPERTS**

The evaluation team will be remunerated at an agreed fixed price per day.

## **PLACE OF PERFORMANCE**

The place of performance is West Africa with special emphasis on Nigeria, Ghana, Cote D'Ivoire, Senegal, Sahel, Liberia, and Cape Verde. The extent of travel will be determined by the evaluation design and data

needs as agreed upon between ASSESS and USAID. A designated contact person from USAID Nigeria will serve as the primary Point of Contact and Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) for the Performance Evaluation.

### **ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS**

The consultants will be contracted under the USAID/WA ASSESS mechanism. ASSESS will be responsible for the administrative and technical management of their respective contracts. This will include monitoring of LOE and payments. This will include approval of the consultants' work plan, assigning tasks within the scope of the contract, reviewing technical outputs and providing feedback.

### **APPLICATION PROCESS**

The objective of this call for expressions of interest is to identify qualified experts for this assignment. Interested candidates should send a 2-3-page expression of interest with a brief description of the proposed methodological approach, taking into account the objectives and scope of the assignment by **December 22, 2021**. Expressions of Interest should be submitted by email to [pkoomson@assess-wa.org](mailto:pkoomson@assess-wa.org) with copy to [jtchorlyboadi@assess-wa.org](mailto:jtchorlyboadi@assess-wa.org). **Please specify the position you wish to apply for.** ASSESS is under no obligation to select a consultant upon receipt of his/her EOI. ASSESS will also not reimburse a consultant for the time and resources used in the application process.

### **CONTACT**

If you need help or have queries, please contact Patrick Koomson ([pkoomson@assess-wa.org](mailto:pkoomson@assess-wa.org)).

## **ANNEX I: PROJECT BACKGROUND**

For a lower-middle income country, Nigeria experiences high levels of poverty (53.3% of the population), with significant income inequalities along the north-south divide. Linked to poverty, malnutrition remains high. According to the 2015 Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, national stunting rates are 32% for children under five (soaring to 54% in the Northwest). Agriculture can become a strong force in alleviating poverty and malnutrition. An agricultural powerhouse at its independence in 1960, Nigeria gradually succumbed to dependence on revenues from petroleum exports to fund GON operations. In spite of the oil, agriculture remains the base of the Nigerian economy, providing the main source of livelihood for most Nigerians. The country has not exploited its comparative advantage in agriculture. The sector faces many challenges, notably an outdated land tenure system that constrains access to land (1.8 ha/farming household), a very low level of irrigation development (less than 1 percent of cropped land under irrigation), limited adoption of research findings and technologies, high cost of farm inputs, poor access to credit, inefficient fertilizer procurement and distribution, inadequate storage facilities and poor access to markets have all combined to keep agricultural productivity low (average of 1.2 metric tons of cereals/ha) with high postharvest losses and waste. Also, the high cost and unreliable supply of electricity rendered processing companies uncompetitive when compared with peers overseas. Processors struggle to source a consistent supply of high-quality inputs on the domestic market due to the low quality of on-farm produce. They also face significant obstacles importing inputs from abroad due to high tariff rates as well as restrictions on financing for the importation of many commodity items. These challenges make it difficult for businesses to demonstrate their commercial viability and catalyze greater private sector investment.

West Africa trade is deeply constrained by businesses' inability to meet the huge demands of the global market as they are mostly unable to meet market requirements of quality and volume and succeed in the international marketplace and are therefore not competitive. West Africa is a globally important exporter in many commodities including cocoa, cashew, cotton, shea, and some tropical fruits, it is hampered by low levels of productivity on the production side and relatively limited investment and export of value-added processed commodities. The large number of smallholders and cooperatives active in the supply chains for these commodities presents an opportunity to increase incomes for the poor. Their diffuse nature makes aggregating enough challenging and significantly increases the transaction costs for the buyers in comparison to buying from commercial-scale farmers. For processors, securing supplies across countries in West Africa is extremely challenging and often cost-prohibitive due to different currencies, languages, excessive transportation costs, roadblocks, formal and informal charges, and a lack of developed infrastructure in services such as cold-chain logistics.

Vertical integration into farming to guarantee at least minimal supplies to keep processing facilities running is a common adaptation to supply challenges but is complicated by lack of secure land rights. Working capital requirements for processing industries (such as cashew) where the supply of raw material must be purchased up front for year-round processing is particularly difficult for locally based firms who compete with lower cost of capital available to foreign operators. The cost and availability of energy is also relatively high in the region in comparison to competitor countries. The integration of small holders and firms into international and regional supply chains requires investments in upgrading and certification that are difficult to finance in much of the West African region. Many financial institutions are reluctant to lend to the agriculture sector and the applicants often do not have adequate financial documentation, business plans, or credit history to qualify for commercial loans.

To help address these challenges, the USAID West Africa Trade and Investment Hub seeks to improve private sector competitiveness in West Africa with a focus on increasing the agricultural productivity and

profitability of smallholder farmers in Nigeria and promoting West Africa's regional and international trade. Toward this end, the Trade Hub Activity is jointly established and funded by USAID/Nigeria, USAID/West Africa, USAID/Côte d'Ivoire, USAID/Senegal, and other USAID Missions.

The Activity comprises two main components:

- (i) design and administration of a Competitiveness Fund for private sector partnerships and
- (ii) technical assistance (TA) that directly supports, coordinates, and engages with qualifying recipients (i.e., partners and grantees) to achieve USAID's trade and food security objectives. The purpose of the Activity is to improve the competitiveness of West African farmers and firms by increasing productivity, investment, and adoption of improved technologies.

The Activity is expected to achieve these objectives as measured by the following mandatory USAID standard and custom indicators:

- Value of exports in targeted agricultural and non-agricultural commodities;
- Value of new private sector capital investment in the agriculture sector or food chain leveraged by Feed the Future implementation (EG.3.2-22);
- Value of new private sector investment in non-agricultural targeted sectors leveraged by USAID implementation;
- Creation of new jobs in project assisted firms;
- Value of new financing to clients in targeted sectors;
- Value of smallholder incremental sales generated with USG assistance (EG.3.2-19);
- Percentage of hectares of land under improved technologies or management practices with USG assistance in Zone of Influence or ZOI (Custom).

## Development Hypothesis

### Nigeria

Nigeria's agriculture is characterized by poor quality inputs, minimal use of technology, low yields and productivity due to inadequate knowledge of agriculture best practices, and minimal value-added processing. Low crop yields lead to low income and poor nutrition for smallholder farmers. The Activity's development hypothesis presumes that the inadequate use of technology, low private sector investments in smallholder farming, inadequate knowledge of agriculture best practices, and lack of value addition activities constrain agricultural productivity and profitability. IF the Activity can strengthen the capacity of agricultural sector business service providers (including private firms, research institutions, and other stakeholders), expand the use of improved farming technologies, and increase private sector investment to improve productivity and profitability of smallholder farming, THEN Nigeria's agricultural competitiveness will be strengthened, contributing to broad-based and inclusive growth.

### West Africa

West Africa's trade is characterized by a reliance on imported staple foods, a low degree of intra-regional trade, and reliance on extractive and raw commodities rather than value-added exports. IF the Activity can build successful partnerships with leading buyers and processors that expand production quantities and improve quality through upgrading of producers, THEN West Africa will successfully increase trade and investment and contribute to broad-based economic growth and resilience through increased job

creation and improved incomes. Complementary policy work addressing trade barriers and regional market integration is undertaken by USAID/West Africa under different activities.

The theoretical framework underpinning the Trade Hub is clear and direct. Grants and technical assistance that addresses key productivity and profitability constraints in priority value chains will improve private-sector competitiveness, which will, in turn, contribute to broad-based and inclusive economic growth and resilience. In Nigeria and Senegal, the Trade Hub activities will focus on agricultural VCs while activities in the rest of West Africa will focus on trade. The Trade Hub theories of change (TOCs) specific to Nigeria as well as to the rest of West Africa, are presented below and depicted in Figure 3 on the following page.

**Nigeria TOC:** IF the capacity of agricultural sector business service providers (including private firms, research institutions, and other stakeholders) is strengthened, IF the use of improved farming technologies is expanded, IF participation in agricultural markets is increased, and IF private sector investment to improve productivity and profitability of smallholder farming is increased, THEN Nigeria's agricultural competitiveness will be strengthened, contributing to broad-based and inclusive growth.

**West Africa TOC:** IF successful partnerships with leading buyers and processors that expand production quantities and improve quality through upgrading of producers are built, THEN West Africa will successfully increase trade and investment and contribute to broad-based economic growth and resilience through increased job creation and improved incomes.