

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE

Research and Evaluation Partner

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Contact information:	Foundation for a Smoke-Free World 575 5th Avenue, 14th Floor New York, NY 10017 USA
Submit questions to:	support@smokefreeworld.org
Submit proposals to:	support@smokefreeworld.org
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Financing amount(total):	USD 1,000,000
Financing duration(initial):	3 years

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Foundation for a Smoke-Free World (the Foundation) seeks to engage in a 3-year preferred collaboration with qualified research partners (the Preferred Partners) to provide rigorous independent program evaluation and decision-focused research support to the Foundation's Agricultural Transformation Initiative (ATI). The Preferred Partners will help nurture and promote the use of rigorous evidence by the Foundation to improve its impact on smallholder tobacco farmers. This engagement thus directly aligns with the Foundation's 2019–2021 strategic framework and will set up the Foundation to validate its approaches and realize true impacts in the coming years. The cost of this 3-year engagement is capped at **USD 1,000,000**.

OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

The Foundation for a Smoke-Free World was launched in September 2017 as an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to accelerating global efforts to reduce deaths and harm from smoking, with the ultimate goal of eliminating smoking worldwide. Since the adoption of the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in 2003, countries that comprise 90% of the world's population have resolved to achieve significant reductions in smoking rates by 2025.

The Foundation's mandate and global efforts in this field promise many positive health impacts. These efforts will invariably entail a reduction in tobacco products and, thus, a reduction in the incomes of tobacco-producing farmers and tobacco-reliant economies. This economic disruption will not be felt uniformly and will disproportionately affect socially and economically vulnerable populations such as women because they represent the majority of the rural poor and the agricultural labor force globally. This creates a unique opportunity to (a) support smallholder tobacco farmers as they transition to alternative crops and livelihoods and (b) catalyze a sustainable and inclusive transition.

Through the Agricultural Transformation Initiative (ATI), the Foundation is working to prepare smallholder tobacco farmers for an era of reduced demand for tobacco. The ATI will use this opportunity to facilitate the establishment of more secure income strategies for farmers and will seek to partner with a diverse set of stakeholders to ensure the success and sustainability of this strategy. The first country of focus for the ATI is Malawi. Some of the activities of the ATI will target the following outcomes:

- Higher, gender-equitable, and more secure income streams for smallholder farmers
- Increased non-tobacco export earnings
- Application of technologies that enhance productivity, reduce costs, enable data-driven production decisions, and facilitate access to profitable and reliable markets
- Improved food security and nutrition for target in-need populations

In facilitating the achievement of these outcomes, the Foundation through the ATI is taking a systems approach and providing several interventions, including grant funding, to strengthen the parts of the agricultural economy that would ensure that farmers who choose to continue in the agricultural production sector do so in a more sustainable and profitable manner.

THE NEED FOR AN INDEPENDENT EVALUATION UNIT

Economic development is a largely experimental field—there are no firm answers. While lessons from successful interventions and countries can be applied in Malawi and regionally, they require adaptation to fit specific geographic, social, and economic contexts. Without rigorous evaluation of past failures and future lessons, the Foundation risks spending time and money on programs that ultimately fail to positively impact smallholder incomes and nutrition. And yet, with families struggling to meet their basic needs and a looming agricultural productivity gap between men and women, action cannot be delayed. The Foundation therefore strives for an “impact-first” environment, balancing the desire to allocate funds towards their most efficient uses, while simultaneously supporting implementers in their ability to test new ideas and learn from failures.

The Foundation anticipates the need for ongoing research support to supplement its own internal Agricultural Science, Technology, and Innovation research team. The selected Preferred Partners will:

1. Provide independent, decision-focused analysis to help inform and support ATI strategy and programs. This requires considering analyses of the gender-based barriers to agricultural development and identifying opportunities for equitable productivity, economic empowerment, and meaningful contributions to the economy. Decision-focused analysis, as opposed to knowledge-focused analysis, is deliberately designed to directly inform the scale-up decisions of funders and implementers.
2. Be responsible for creating policy briefs, research papers, and other materials for either internal or external use. For the latter, the Foundation may solicit expert peer review and stakeholder feedback prior to publication. For example, the Preferred Partners may organize a workshop event to discuss research findings and recommendations with implementers, policy-makers, researchers, and civil society groups to instill broader feedback. In some cases, an independent peer review may be required for publications intended to publicly share the evidence being generated (whether positive or negative as long as it is filling an important knowledge gap).

Contracted research needs are expected to take any of the following forms:

1. Strategic research support

Strategic support will help shape Foundation programs and strategic priorities by leveraging existing evidence to develop theories of change, ensure appropriateness, and benchmark efficiency. This support could take the form of literature reviews, exploratory and diagnostic analyses, cost-benefit analysis, or qualitative research. The work will help the Foundation stay abreast of theory and evidence to help prioritize equitable interventions and focus limited resources. These engagements could be ad hoc (on a rolling demand basis) or strategically staged.

2. Monitoring and evaluation support

The Preferred Partners may be asked to provide monitoring and evaluation support to ongoing Foundation programs. Good planning, monitoring, and evaluation enhance the contribution of the Foundation by establishing clear links

between past, present, and future initiatives and development results. Monitoring and evaluation can help an organization extract relevant information from past and ongoing activities that can be used as the basis for programmatic fine-tuning, reorientation, and future planning. Without effective planning, monitoring, and evaluation, it would be difficult to judge accurately if work is going in the right direction, whether progress and success can be claimed, and how future efforts might be improved. For example, a gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation framework will expose the extent to which a program is achieving improvements in the health and economic well-being of both women and men. This work may take the form of creating and validating logical frameworks, conducting process or performance evaluations, or other methods.

3. Impact evaluation support

The growing prominence of impact evaluation has catalyzed a more sophisticated dialogue about impact and the importance of rigorous measurement to quantify development results. The Preferred Partners may be asked to conduct experimental and quasi-experimental research studies to identify the causal mechanism and the economic and social impacts of some of the Foundation's programs. This type of support will require the Preferred Partners to work directly with the Foundation and program-implementing organizations at the initial stage of program design to ensure the evaluation designs are integrated with program implementation. Depending on the type of program, this could take the form of randomized controlled trials, quasi-experimental methods including propensity score-matching analysis, or other techniques. Of particular interest to the Foundation is to generate credible evidence around pilot-phase programs that have not yet been tested in Malawi for their efficacy, inclusivity, and impact.

FUNDING MECHANISM

The ongoing agreement itself is not associated with any dispersal of funds but is rather an Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract. The Foundation targets to select two to three Preferred Partners in total. The selected Preferred Partners will serve as ongoing contractors to the Foundation and take on new deliverables on an ad hoc basis. The Foundation will issue task orders for the services to be ordered under this contract. The Preferred Partners will be expected to perform the services set forth in each task order in accordance with the terms and conditions of the respective task order and the base IDIQ contract.

Each subsequent task order will adhere to the following expedited process:

1. The Foundation will release a 1- to 2-page summary of specific research need as (a) a closed RFP to the pool of Preferred Partners, or (b) a sole source solicitation when appropriate
2. Interested Partners will submit a 2- to 4-page Concept Note outlining methods, deliverables, timelines, rates, and personnel
3. Once the proposals has been reviewed and selected, the partner will be notified

This is a multiple award IDIQ contract with an overall ceiling of **USD 1,000,000**. The maximum aggregate dollar value of the task orders awarded to all Preferred Partners must not exceed the contract ceiling. This ceiling is not being subdivided among the number of awardees, nor is it being multiplied by the number of awardees.

MAINTAINING PREFERRED PARTNER STATUS

The Preferred Partners will be responsible for providing the Foundation with a full range of services consistent with the requirements described in this section. The Preferred Partners will be entirely liable for timely and satisfactory performance of all work awarded through task orders. Specific requirements under this IDIQ are as follows:

1. The Preferred Partners must provide all required personnel, materials, costs, systems, and supplies, and the means and methods required to plan, manage, supervise, coordinate, implement, and expedite the completion of task order requirements in compliance with the terms and conditions specified in the respective task orders.
2. The Preferred Partners must ensure the quality and consistency of all deliverables and work performed, that task order contract durations and price are not exceeded, and that quality specifications and standards are met. The Partner will retain full responsibility for the performance of the task order scope, quality, timeliness, and deliverables in close coordination with the Foundation.
3. The Preferred Partners are responsible for acquiring any required approvals (country clearances or IRB approval) and coordinating with required entities before starting any work.

Evaluation of the Preferred Partner's performance will be conducted for each task order in accordance with the performance standards set forth in the task order. Each evaluation will be conducted by the Foundation and will form the basis for payments to each Preferred Partner and will form the basis of the Preferred Partner's permanent performance record with regard to this contract. The Foundation reserves the right to revoke Preferred Partner status at any time on the basis of documented performance issues.

GUIDING PRIORITIES

Applicants will be evaluated according to the extent to which proposals demonstrate the following three qualities:

1. Analytic Expertise
 - a. Technical rigor and expertise in a range of quantitative and qualitative research methods
 - b. Ability to draw on PhD- and MBA-level researchers as necessary
 - c. A history of creative or novel research methodologies and problem-solving approaches
2. Subject Matter Expertise
 - a. Experience managing research projects in Malawi and Southern Africa
 - b. Deep knowledge of agriculture and agribusiness development
 - c. Internal capacity for the application of sex- and gender-based analytic tools
3. Organizational Excellence
 - a. Willingness to have a presence in Malawi on a semi-regular or permanent basis
 - b. Flexibility to manage short deadlines and ad hoc requests
 - c. Maintenance of a gender-diverse team composition

- d. Willingness to collaborate with academic researchers on some of the studies
- e. A reputation of being independent and rigorous in undertaking research or analysis
- f. Costs that are in line with industry standards

PROGRAM BUDGET:

The total anticipated budget of this engagement over 3 years is **USD 1,000,000**. Program budget is higher in Year 1 in anticipation of higher upfront research demands as major ATI activities start to launch.

Engagement Component	Funding Amount (USD)
Year 1 Funding (2019)	400,000
Year 2 Funding (2020)	300,000
Year 3 Funding (2021)	300,000
Total Funding	1,000,000

Annex 1: Application Process

Proposals are limited to 10 pages and should describe the applicant’s demonstrated record of technical excellence. As part of the proposal, applicants are required to create a sample task order Concept Note. Proposals should be organized as follows:

- Executive summary (1 page)
- Capabilities statement
 - o Analytic expertise (1 page)
 - o Subject matter expertise (1 page)
 - o Examples of relevant projects (1 page)
- Organizational statement
 - o Organizational structure and flexibility (1 page)
 - o Key personnel (1 page)
 - o Costs (including hourly/daily rates and illustrative project costs) (1 page)
- Sample Concept Note (3 pages)

Sample Concept Note

As part of the proposal, please prepare a 3-page Concept Note in response to the following sample task order, which is indicative of the types of projects that may be funded through this program.

“The Foundation for a Smoke-Free World is seeking proposals from research and evaluation Preferred Partners on a multi-arm impact evaluation of smallholder extension models. The Foundation is currently planning 4 pilot programs that propose to test

commercially driven, technologically enhanced smallholder extension models to improve farmer productivity and profitability in Malawi, improve household incomes and nutritional status, and reduce gender inequity. Though untested, we hypothesize that each program is expected to increase farm incomes by 10% to 30%. These projects are described below.

Project	Total Cost (USD)	Farmers Reached	Geographic Focus(districts)	Treatment Type
#1	110,000	850	Chitipa, Likoma, Mzimba	Household
#2	70,000	700	Karonga, Mzimba, Rumphi	Household
#3	100,000	900	Chitipa, Mzimba, Rumphi	Village
#4	120,000	1,400	Likoma, Mzimba	Village

The Foundation will allocate USD 120,000 for an impact evaluation to determine the impact of the individual extension programs, compare impacts across treatment arms, and determine cost effectiveness.”

In your response, please include, at a minimum:

- Key research questions (including key outcomes and supporting evidence)
- Key assumptions
- Data collection protocol
- Research methodology (including specifications, spillovers, heterogeneity)
- Timeline, deliverables, and costs

Completed proposals should be submitted to support@smokefreeworld.org with the subject line “Research and Evaluation Partner” no later than the stated date.