



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL – MIDTERM EVALUATION FOR CREATING LINKAGES FOR EXPANDED AGRICULTURAL NETWORKS (CLEAN); Vientiane, Lao PDR

Introduction

The CLEAN Project is a 5-year program implemented by Winrock International and in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Lao PDR. The project is funded by the Food for Progress Program of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The CLEAN Project seeks to 1) increase the productivity of horticultural products through training in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) standards, strengthening plant protection services, and improving the functionality of quality compliance and certification systems, and 2) expand domestic and regional trade through integration of Laotian horticultural products into regional market networks, improved branding of Laotian horticultural products, and increasing producer adoption of GAP standards. Winrock works with market-ready farmers, agro-enterprises, entrepreneurs and traders in two distinct regions: the Bolaven Plateau and the Vientiane Plain.

CLEAN's project activities focus primarily on capitalizing on Lao PDR's comparative advantage in the Greater Mekong Sub Region (GMS) and global markets, where a large middle-class population is willing to pay a premium price for high-quality horticulture products. Secondly, activities aim to increase domestic demand. Improving the marketing infrastructure for exports will help create market efficiencies, enabling the domestic market to grow. CLEAN facilitates private investment in supply chain infrastructure that will reduce transaction costs and post-harvest losses, facilitate the development of market intermediation networks in key Lao PDR markets, and build on other successful market linkage strategies.

Purpose

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to solicit applications from an individual, company, or organization to conduct a Midterm Evaluation for Winrock's CLEAN project in Lao PDR. A key objective of the evaluation is to collect and provide both quantitative and qualitative data to assess progress towards program results, including performance indicator targets established in the cooperative agreement and defined under the Program Monitoring Plan approved by USDA. The findings of the evaluation will be used to identify and inform any necessary adaptations to the planned activity design, implementation, and management, as well as targets. The Midterm Evaluation should be conducted between December 2020 and January 2021. The assessment team will be comprised of the lead consultant and their assistants and shall work in cooperation with CLEAN's Director of M&E and the project's Chief of Party, as well as home office-based resources.

Research Questions

CLEAN's midterm evaluation will focus on the project's implementation progress towards meeting its objectives and goals. The below questions are illustrative ones; the final key evaluation questions will be decided in collaboration with the selected firm or consultant.

QA	Key Questions	Proposed Method
----	---------------	-----------------

<i>Relevance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How accurate have the critical assumptions underpinning the project proven to be in practice? Is the Theory of Change still appropriate for the project goals and objectives? • Are there unanticipated opportunities or challenges that may require revisions of the project strategy or redirection of project resources? • Are MEL tools and tracking systems working well and identifying relevance project impact? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk reviews and staff interviews • Interviews with project beneficiaries
<i>Effectiveness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What factors are facilitating the project's effectiveness? What factors are hindering it? • What should be improved in order to make the project implementation more effective? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document Review • Key informant interviews and beneficiary focus groups
<i>Efficiency</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are intended beneficiaries receiving services as planned? What are their experiences and recommendations? • To what extent is the project being implemented as designed? • Is the project on track to meet with targets? If targets are not being met, why not? If targets are being exceeded, why? Do targets need to be adjusted? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review, beneficiary focus groups and key informant and staff interviews • Beneficiary-based survey (BBS)
<i>Sustainability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the original strategy for the project's sustainability and lasting impact remain feasible? If not, why? Are additional efforts needed, or are other changes to the strategy recommended? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review and staff interviews • BBS
<i>Impact</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has CLEAN's interventions affected targeted beneficiary groups? Are the project's interventions having the expected effect on identified constraints? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review, KIIs, and FGDs • BBS

Collection areas and methodology

Collection area: Data collection will be conducted in five provinces: Vientiane Capital and Vientiane province in the central region; Champasak, Salavan and Sekong provinces in the southern region. However, depending on methodological and technical considerations, budget and timelines, the research firm/consultant and Winrock International can jointly select target districts and villages. The consultant must propose a sampling strategy that will result is a sample representative of the entire project area and is designed to allow for comparison between baseline and midterm evaluation results.

Methodology: Based on the research questions mentioned above, the project anticipates that the

proposals will feature quantitative and qualitative methods suitable for collecting data representative of project participants and probing into the experiences of those involved in the CLEAN project's implemented activities as well as gain recommendations from them. Research firm/consultant is encouraged to propose cost effective research methods to respond to research questions and approaches that will allow triangulation of data are of particular interest. Data collection methodology, including sampling strategy, and an accompanying rationale should be proposed as part of the technical proposal.

The following methods and tools should be used in the evaluation design:

Document review. The assessment team will find it useful to consult a broad range of background documents related to the agricultural sector in the project's ZOI, apart from program documents provided by Winrock.
Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). KIIs are suggested to be conducted with key stakeholders, including Winrock staff and project beneficiaries and stakeholders.
Focus Group Discussion. It is anticipated that the evaluation team will conduct multiple rounds of focus group discussions with Winrock staff, GoL representatives, farmer beneficiaries, farmer's groups and cooperatives. Special attempts should be made to ensure even participation and careful wording of the key questions.
Survey. The evaluation team will carry out a survey of current program beneficiaries including smallholder farmers, agricultural producers, small and medium enterprises and GoL representatives, to collect the required data. The sampling strategy should be consistent with the one used in the baseline assessment and should ensure 95% confidence level. The total number of current program beneficiaries is 2,006; and the evaluator will be expected to conduct a survey representative at the level of each commodity. Additional details about the composition of the survey participants will be provided to the successful bidder.

The selected research firm/consultant is responsible for developing the data collection and qualitative analysis methodology and sampling strategy, but all final decisions regarding methodology will be made in collaboration with CLEAN.

Submission Details

Proposal Submission Deadlines

Proposals must be received no later than 5 pm, Vientiane time on 16 December 2020. Late submissions will not be accepted. Winrock International may request additional documentation after the bid deadline.

All submissions are to be made electronically to Ms. Somphavanh Nakhavong, Monitoring & Evaluation and Learning at Somphavanh.Nakhavong@winrock.org and CC: Mr. Alex Dahan, Chief of Party at Alex.Dahan@winrock.org

Questions Submission Deadline

Inquiries/questions must be received no later than the date and time indicated above and must be submitted via e-mail to Somphavanh.Nakhavong@winrock.org. Winrock will review and respond to all potential offers as soon as possible.

Proposal Documentation

Offerors must submit 2 sets of proposals, including technical proposal and cost proposal in separate files, with all pieces of the proposal labeled clearly.

Evaluation criteria

Each proposal will be evaluated and scored against the evaluation criteria which are stated in the table below. Cost/price proposals are not assigned points, but for overall evaluation purposes of this RFP, technical evaluation factors other than cost/price, when combined, are considered significantly more important than cost/price factors. The technical criteria are set forth below in descending order of importance.

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Points
<p>Technical Approach</p> <p>The extent of the offeror’s responsiveness to the requirements of the Scope of Work in the RFP and understanding of the Scope of Work</p> <p>The appropriateness and validity of the methodology proposed by the offeror</p>	40
<p>Team Qualifications and Management Approach</p> <p>The quality, clarity and responsiveness of the offeror’s overall management approach</p> <p>The proposed research team’s qualifications and background</p>	30
<p>Past Performance</p> <p>The quality of the offeror’s previous work on similar activities</p> <p>The extent to which the offeror has performed similar activities in the past</p>	30

Qualified firms are invited to submit proposal no later than 5 pm, Vientiane time on 16 December 2020. Interested firm should study full TOR before submitting the proposal. Detailed TOR can be obtained by sending email to Somphavanh.Nakhavong@winrock.org with the heading “Midterm Evaluation for CLEAN”