



SCALE Evidence of Impact Technical Support: Request for Research Proposals

Issue Date: May 29, 2019

Closing Date: July 31, 2019 11.59 EDT

This is an amended re-issue of the RFP SCALE released on 27 March 2019. The RFP has been amended to extend the deadline and to permit ALL implementing partners to apply for this opportunity, regardless of funder.

SCALE (Strengthening Capacity in Agriculture, Livelihoods & Environment) is a five-year initiative funded by USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP) to enhance the impact, sustainability and scalability of FFP-funded agriculture, natural resource management and off-farm livelihoods activities in emergency and development contexts. Implemented by Mercy Corps in collaboration with Save the Children, SCALE partners with food security implementers and the broader research community to capture, generate, apply and share knowledge to foster more resilient agricultural systems and enhance income opportunities for the world's most vulnerable.

SCALE's activities include providing technical oversight and guidance to support two implementer-led evidence of impact studies. The purpose of this Request for Research Proposals is to disseminate information about this technical support and to solicit applications for Evidence of Impact studies from interested partners working on food security activities relevant to the FFP community. This document describes the research objectives, explains the technical focus, lists the qualifications needed of applying organizations and the criteria for evaluating applications, and provides information on funding, application format, and other relevant details.

Note: No direct funding will be awarded to the successful applicant. This request process is solely to solicit research proposals from interested implementers. After a research proposal is selected, SCALE will identify a consultant and/or research organization with the skills necessary to assist with conducting the chosen study and will cover those costs directly (up to a maximum of 50,000 USD). The selection of this/these technical specialists will be made in discussion with the successful applicant.

Contact information

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Visit our website: www.fsnnetwork.org/scale

Sign up to receive updates and event invitations from SCALE: <https://bit.ly/ztQHWoG>

Disclaimer: This SCALE Evidence of Impact Technical Support is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of the SCALE Award and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Objectives

The objective of SCALE's Evidence of Impact Technical Support is to enable food security implementing organizations to build the evidence base for practices and approaches that have the potential to enhance the impact, sustainability and scalability of emergency or development FFP-funded agriculture, NRM and off-farm livelihood activities.

SCALE plans to support two Evidence of Impact studies over the lifetime of the Award. Research proposals will be gathered through two separate application processes, taking place in 2019 and 2020. In each round, SCALE will cover the costs of up to \$50,000 for technical oversight and guidance to assist the successful applicant in carrying out their research. SCALE support can include connecting partners to research consultants or institutions that can assist with design, data collection, tool development and analysis, and may be remote, in-country or a combination of both, depending on award needs.

SCALE anticipates that practical work will be carried out by partners currently working on an emergency or development program that implements (or plans to implement) the technology or approach identified, with oversight by a technical consultant and/or university or research organization. Programs will leverage field resources to implement and monitor activities on the ground, in collaboration with SCALE-provided external support. As such, interested programs must demonstrate the capacity and availability to serve as a research partner.

The intervention of interest should be geared toward existing best practice skills or approaches that have the potential to reach scale, rather than focusing on testing new approaches. The findings of the research should be applicable to a wide audience of practitioners.

Award Description

Type and Number

SCALE plans to cover the costs of research support for one Evidence of Impact study under this current call. A second call for proposals will be released in 2020 and will cover the costs of research support for one additional research project, focused on a different subject matter.

Funding Available

SCALE will cover the costs of up to \$50,000 of research support for the successful study. The final funding level will depend on context, relevance, quality, needs, availability of funding and competing priorities.

Duration of Research Support

The duration of this support may be up to 1 year from the date of award.

Post-Award Reporting

Reporting requirements shall be based on the successful applicant(s)' proposed deliverables schedule outlined in the proposal.

Technical Focus

This request for proposals focuses on interventions at the intersection of **agriculture and the management of water resources**. Illustrative Evidence of Impact subject areas could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Water harvesting and use in agriculture
- Permagarden or kitchen garden approaches designed for efficient water use
- Semi-arid or arid farm/NRM management
- Agricultural extension services related to efficient water use in agriculture
- Social & behavior change communications (SBCC) related to water management for agriculture
- Resource governance and peacebuilding around shared water use as it relates to agriculture/NRM
- Impact measurement of water retention and/or quality
- Gender integration in resilient agriculture programming

Illustrative research might include, for example:

- A comparison study of multiple crop production systems to determine their relative impact on soil health and water retention
- Piloting of an SBCC strategy to encourage uptake of water harvesting techniques in a refugee camp or dryland area
- Evaluation of a governance approach to manage water conflict between agriculturalists or pastoralists and other users
- Testing the most effective means of encouraging uptake of water management approaches in semi-arid areas

Selection

Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must be organizations that are currently implementing a development or emergency program. (Note: This RFP has been amended since its original release; this call is open to ALL partners regardless of funder).

Process and Schedule

Applications will be evaluated by SCALE and members of the SCALE Technical Committee in accordance with the criteria below. The three applicants with the most highly rated applications will advance to the second round. The SCALE team will send the shortlisted candidates a set of questions related to their applications and any concerns that emerged during the review. Applicants will respond via an interview with the SCALE team and/or in written form. SCALE reserves the right to request a revised application. The successful applicant will be notified following the second round of review.

This request for proposals is open from the date of issue and will close at 11:59 pm EDT on 31 July 2019.

Application Package

A complete application package should consist of a proposal narrative and indicative budget with a budget narrative. The proposal narrative should be submitted in Word (.doc or .docx) or PDF format, and should not exceed 10 pages. The budget should be submitted in Excel (.xls or .xlsx) and should include a budget narrative tab.

See Attachment A: Technical Proposal Requirements

See Attachment B: Budget Guidance

Submission of Applications

Applications (including proposal and indicative budget) must be submitted electronically to:

Kristin Lambert, SCALE Agriculture Advisor at klambert@mercycorps.org with a copy to

Andrea Mottram, SCALE Director at amottram@mercycorps.org

Evaluation Factors and Criteria

Applications will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation process set forth below. One award will be made to the responsible applicant whose application best meets the requirements. Reviewers will evaluate and rank all applications independently and uniformly in writing, based on the selection criteria. SCALE reserves the right to determine the resulting level of funding for research support to the successful applicant.

Evaluation Factors

- a. Contributes to SCALE’s overarching goal: To enhance the impact, sustainability and scalability of FFP-funded agriculture, natural resource management, and off-farm livelihood activities in both emergency and development contexts
- b. States objectives clearly and measurably
- c. Builds the evidence base for the target subject area, i.e. interventions related to agriculture and the management of water resources
- d. Adds to food security knowledge base, locally, nationally, or regionally, with focus on value add to Development Food Security Activities or emergency awards
- e. Produces results that are potentially useful to multiple implementers in multiple countries
- f. Responds to direct, field-driven needs
- g. Demonstrates that applicant organization (and partners) have the necessary technical, financial, and operational capacity to complete the proposed research within the award time frame. The role/need for external research assistance is clearly described.

Evaluation Criteria (Maximum points of 100)

1. Applicant Background (Maximum 15 Points)

- a. Currently implementing a development or emergency program aimed at enhancing food security

- b. Clear program activities and objectives that are in line with proposed research, and present opportunity for application of findings
- c. Recent experience and capacity relevant to the specific research activity being proposed

2. Contribution to SCALE program goals (Maximum 20 Points)

- a. Research adds to food security knowledge base, locally, nationally, or regionally
- b. Research will result in learning relevant to multiple implementers in multiple countries
- c. Research contributes to an enhanced understanding of interventions at the intersection of agriculture/NRM and water management

3. Research Plan Description (Maximum 35 Points)

- a. Shows a clear link between the described gap in the body of knowledge in the food security community, and the objectives of the proposed project or activity
- b. Directly relates to the target subject area described above
- c. Describes the activities to be implemented, how and by whom, and the proposed timelines for each major objective/deliverable/milestone
- d. Identifies substantive, active roles for any partners, including clear role and need for SCALE-funded research consultant or institution
- e. Clearly demonstrates the applicant's capacity, interest, and availability to serve as a research partner. This may include logistical support (drivers, vehicles), social connections (introductory visits to communities and/or partner organizations), and staff time (e.g. to collect, analyze and/or ground truth data).

4. Activity assessment process and documentation (Maximum 10 Points)

- a. Includes a clear and feasible study plan
- b. Describes the process that will be used to ensure the proposed research activity's technical quality
- c. Provides a knowledge end-product that can be shared with multiple implementers globally, including through the Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Network

5. Cost proposal (Maximum 20 Points)

- a. Degree to which costs are allocable, reasonable and allowable
- b. Clear and concise budget narrative

Issuance of the SCALE Evidence of Impact Technical Support: Request for Research Proposals does not constitute a commitment on the part of SCALE nor does it commit SCALE to pay for the costs incurred in the submission of a proposal. SCALE reserves the right to select the successful applicant based on initial submissions; hence, applications should be submitted on the most favorable terms, in line with the evaluation criteria. Furthermore, SCALE reserves the right to select multiple successful applicants, to reject any or all submissions received, and to negotiate separately with an applicant, if such action is considered to be in the best interest of SCALE.