

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Biotechnology Technical Assistance for Africa

Application Submission Deadline: September 1, 2023

Summary

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, Agricultural Economic Development, announces this funding opportunity to support the Technical Agricultural Assistance Program by issuing new awards. This opportunity is available to State cooperative institutions or other colleges and universities in the United States, as defined at 7 USC 3103 and is intended to help achieve the objectives of Biotechnology capacity-building for Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal, and Zambia, which are to provide technical assistance to agricultural officials and scientists on the application of biotechnological tools for the enhancement of food security.

A. Program Description

To boost agricultural productivity and yield to meet the increasing demand for food in Africa, more efficient approaches to produce food are required. The full potential of new breeding tools such as genome editing needs to be explored and utilized in addition to conventional technologies in countries and regions of Africa where knowledge on the benefits of genome editing and genetic engineering (GE) technologies is still lacking. The USDA Foreign Agricultural Service intends to support workshops and trainings in collaboration with African universities or research institutions, to improve understanding of these approaches by agricultural officials and scientists on the African continent.

The purpose of this USDA/FAS pilot Biotechnology and Biosafety Forum is to enhance awareness and knowledge in Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal, and Zambia among agricultural officials and other government officials, host-country farmers, farmer association officials, and scientists, on what are biotechnological tools and how their adoption can enhance food security.

The recipient of this award will collaborate with USDA/FAS in the design and implementation of in-person workshops/collaborative training events in Africa, in the selection of the venue of the workshops, selection of participants including country/government officials and scientists, key speakers and stakeholders, identify methods of evaluation of participants' increase in knowledge on biotechnology topics, and in the identification of indicators to measure success.

Program Objectives:

Through in-person educational workshops and collaborative trainings in Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal, and Zambia with participation of host country government officials, technical experts, scientists, and other stakeholders on food security:

1. Build awareness and knowledge of these participants on:

- What is biotechnology?
- What are biotechnological tools of genome editing and genetic engineering?

- What are the benefits of utilizing biotechnology tools, incorporating those tools and innovative breeding techniques and production techniques to improve agricultural productivity and yield.
- Key considerations for enabling the science- and risk-based adoption of agricultural biotechnologies/ genetically engineered or genome edited, to include applications in plants and animals.

2. Share information and increase awareness among participant so that they make informed choices/decisions through the safe use and application of gene editing tools, and other plant breeding innovation methods that are important for greater crop resilience under climate change and other environmental effects.

3. Provide knowledge on the current trends and activities surrounding biotechnology and its benefits thereby enhancing the scientists and policy makers input to the review process of relevant laws and regulations concerning biotechnology and biosafety.

4. Identify key actions that can create an enabling environment for research and judicious and safe application of biotechnologies.

Additional background information:

Kenya summary background: On October 3, 2022, Kenya's newly elected president lifted the 10-year ban on importation and cultivation of genetically engineered (GE) agricultural products. This decision opens a path to importation of GE agricultural commodities and domestic production of GE crops in accordance with Kenya's existing regulatory structure. However, on November 28, 2022, Kenya's High Court issued an order blocking implementation of the directive to lift the ban until December 15, 2022, as part of a legal challenge (Kenyan Peasants League vs State Law and Cabinet Secretary of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries). The GOK has appealed the court's decision. Outreach to educate the public on the benefits of agricultural biotechnology is expected to be highly effective at this juncture.

Mozambique summary background: The Government of the Republic of Mozambique (GRM) is eager to commercialize genetically engineered (GE) crops. The country has long had a biotechnology and biosafety regulatory framework and a national biotechnology authority, the Mozambican Inter-institutional Group for Biotechnology and Biosafety (GIIBS). The Ministry of Science, Technology, and Higher Education is close to approving the use of GE maize, after successful field trials. However, changes in key leadership have delayed implementation. However, Mozambique has not been able to get across the final thresholds of the regulatory process, and GE products, including seeds, are still not approved for commercial sale, import, or use, largely due to a lack of information to inform next steps in the policymaking process. Regionally, misinformation and misperceptions about biotechnology threaten, not only the acceptance of U.S. agricultural and food products derived from biotechnology, but also food security in southern Africa.

Senegal summary background: Senegal passed biotechnology and biosafety laws on June 14, 2022. While legislative bodies in the region are taking steps to allow the entry and commercialization of GE products, public perception of agricultural biotechnology tends to be

distorted due to disinformation. Future market acceptance will depend on efforts to inform and educate the public about the safety and benefits of agricultural biotechnology.

Zambia summary background: The Zambian government recognizing the need for the safe adoption of biotechnology established the National Biosafety Authority (NBA) through the Biosafety Act No. 10 of 2007. The mandate of the National Biosafety Authority is to regulate the research, development, application, import, export, transit, contained use, release or placing on the market of any genetically modified organism whether intended for use as a pharmaceutical, food, feed or processing, or a product of a genetically modified organism. The Authority ensures that any activity involving the use of any genetically modified organism or a product of a genetically modified organism prevents any socio-economic impact or harm to human and animal health, or any damage to the environment, non-genetically modified crop and biological diversity; sets and implement standards for the assessment, evaluation and management of any potential risk involving the use of any genetically modified organism or product of a genetically modified organism. Therefore, the country has built a Functional Biosafety Regulatory System. The biosafety and biotechnology workshop/collaborative training is aimed at further contributing to enhancing /strengthening a biosafety regulatory system in Zambia. Hence, there is need to strengthen and build capacity in the regulators, policy makers and scientists so that they make informed choices/ decisions in the safe use and application of biotechnology for farmers. This will eventually contribute to improved livelihoods through poverty reduction, enhanced food security, and increased income generation.

Funding Opportunity Number

USDA-FAS-10960-0700-10-23-0024

Assistance Listing Number

10.960 Technical Agricultural Assistance

Authorizing Legislation

National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, PL 95-113, as amended, 7 USC §§ 3291, 3319a.

B. Federal Award Information

Total Available Federal Funding:	\$240,000.00
Anticipated Number of Awards:	1
Cost Share/Match Requirement:	None/Not Required
Projected Period of Performance Start:	September 29, 2023
Projected Period of Performance End:	September 27, 2024

Extensions to this program are permitted, subject to approval.

Type of Assistance Instrument: USDA/FAS anticipates that a Cost-Reimbursable Agreement will be funded pursuant to this funding opportunity.

This type of agreement allows for a collaborative relationship between USDA/FAS, the selected recipient, and other collaborating partners. The particular scope and depth of this collaboration may vary throughout performance, depending on the needs of the activity and the desires of the participants.

C. Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants:

State cooperative institutions or other colleges and universities in the United States, as defined at 7 USC 3103.

All applicants must have an active registration in the U.S. Government System for Award Management (www.sam.gov) before the application submission deadline of the announcement; applicants with inactive, expired, pending, or excluded listings will be deemed ineligible. Exceptions, waivers, or extensions will not be considered. Please contact the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact, if you have questions about this requirement.

Cost Share/Match Requirement: None/Not Required In-kind contributions are generally allowable towards meeting any cost share/match requirement.

Ineligible activities: If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks or activities, that portion of the application will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible for funding.

D. Application and Submission Information

This announcement contains all information necessary to apply to this funding opportunity.

Submission Dates and Times

Application Submission Deadline: September 1, 2023 at 5:00pm EDT (UTC -04:00)
Applications received after this time will not be accepted. Applicants are advised to make their submissions 1-2 days before this deadline in case of computer problems.

Anticipated Funding Selection Date: September 22, 2023

Anticipated Award Date: September 29, 2023

Content and Form of Application Submission

A complete application package must include:

- Standard Form SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance, showing the Unique Entity Identifier, and signed by the applicant.

- Standard Form SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs, showing the budget categorization. Applicants are advised to consult 2 CFR 200 Subpart E for guidance on proper categorization of cost items. An improper categorization will not itself be grounds for a determination of ineligibility but may delay approval and/or adversely impact the application's scoring.
- Applicants are responsible for ensuring adequacy and sufficiency of such documentation.
- A detailed budget and narrative, in which cost items are quantified and described in sufficient detail to enable USDA/FAS to independently determine that the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable for the project and consistent with applicable regulations.
 - If indirect costs are included in the budget, attach a copy of the latest indirect cost rate agreement negotiated with a cognizant federal agency. If a negotiated indirect cost agreement does not exist, please attach a description of the basis for the indirect cost calculation.
 - As part of the budget narrative, please include illustrative budgets for the venue; accommodation; transportation; catering; speaker fees; marketing; and other activities.
 - Provide a detailed budget table that utilizes cost item categories and includes appropriate cost savings where available.
- A project narrative or plan of operation including-
 - Description of your technical approach for achieving the goal and each of the objectives of the program.
 - List of the in-person educational workshops and collaborative trainings planned for each country.
 - Description of the structure and content (including languages to be used) for each of the educational workshops and collaborative trainings.
 - Description of how you will include biotechnology and biosafety subject matter experts (SMEs) from African institutions and other related scientists as collaborators.
 - Collaborate with a host-country government or African regional university or relevant biotechnology research institutions.
 - Description of how you will recruit participants and select speakers.
 - Description of the experience and expertise of project staff who will conduct the workshops and collaborative trainings.
 - Description of how you will evaluate the success of the of workshops and trainings.
 - Description of experience conducting relevant activities in Africa
- Documented evidence that the applicant has organized and carried out workshop or related biotechnology training events on the African continent. Applicants that do not have any relevant or available past performance and indicated that in their application will receive a neutral score for these factors (a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). Applicants that did not provide any response for these items, may receive a score of 0 for these factors.
- Applications should be complete and free of spelling and grammatical errors.
- Standard Form SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, if applicable to the applicant

Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant is required to:

- (i) Have an active registration in SAM before submitting its application;
- (ii) Have assented to the federal assistance certifications in the SAM platform;
- (iii) Provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) in its application; and
- (iv) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

SAM.gov registration requires several weeks to process and cannot be expedited; prospective applicants should therefore ensure that registrations are submitted timely.

SAM.gov Registration Instructions

Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will create an account using login.gov¹ to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining Unique Entity ID (UEI), a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned an entity by SAM.gov, and requires assertions, representations and certifications, and other information about your organization. Please review the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) for details on this process.

Entities outside the United States (defined at 2 CFR 200.1 as “[foreign organizations](#)” and “[foreign public entities](#)”) must obtain a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) Code prior to SAM.gov registration. An NCAGE is required for all foreign entities prior to registering in SAM.gov. You can complete the registration once you enter the NCAGE. You can submit your request for an NCAGE Code by going to the NATO Support Activity (NSPA) NCAGE Request Tool at [CAGE/NCAGE Code Request](#) which contains detailed instructions.

If you have done business with the Federal Government previously, you can check your entity status using your government issued UEI to determine if your registration is active. SAM.gov requires you renew your registration every 365 days to keep it active.

Please note that SAM.gov registration is different than obtaining a UEI only. Obtaining an UEI only validates your organization’s legal business name and address. Please review the [Frequently Asked Question](#) on the difference for additional details.

Organizations should ensure that their SAM.gov registration includes a current e-Business (EBiz) point of contact name and email address. The EBiz point of contact is critical for Grants.gov Registration and system functionality.

Contact the [Federal Service Desk](#) for help with your SAM.gov account, to resolve technical issues or chat with a help desk agent: (866) 606-8220. The Federal Service desk hours of operation are Monday – Friday 8am – 8pm ET.

¹ Login.gov a secure sign in service used by the public to sign into Federal Agency systems including SAM.gov and Grants.gov. For help with login.gov accounts you should visit [http://login.gov/help](https://login.gov/help).

Intergovernmental Review

Not applicable.

Funding Restrictions

Generally, funds may not be used in any manner that is prohibited by applicable regulations, including 2 CFR Part 200, 2 CFR Part 400. Awards issued pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity may only be used for the purpose set forth in the award, consistent with the statutory authority for the award. Capital expenses, such as the purchase of equipment, not entirely attributable to this award, must be pro-rated.

For example, agreement funds and other support may not be used for matching contributions for other federal grants or cooperative agreements, lobbying, or intervention in federal regulatory or adjudicatory proceedings. Federal employees are prohibited from acting as an agent of the applicant in any capacity (paid or unpaid) on any proposal submitted under this program. Also, federal funds may not be used to sue the Federal Government or any other government entity.

Compensation for personal services: Employees, consultants, or other personnel, including those of subrecipients, and regardless of the method of engagement, may not exceed the pro-rata equivalent of GS-15 on the General Schedule (2023, \$152,771 per \$585.33 per day, or \$73.17 per hour). Non-monetizable fringe benefits, such as health insurance coverage, are not included to this ceiling.

Indirect Costs: In general, costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective but not readily assignable to specific awards, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved, are considered indirect costs. These may include facilities not specific to individual projects, enterprise-wide services such as IT, and enterprise management. For cost-reimbursable agreements, indirect costs may not exceed 10% of direct costs, as stipulated at 7 USC 3319a.

Other Submission Information

Applications should be submitted through the ezFedGrants system at <https://grants.fms.usda.gov/>

Applicants who require assistance with any USDA-managed computer system should reach out to the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact, at least 5 business days in advance of the application submission deadline. Applicants should provide as much detail as possible to facilitate resolution of the issue.

E. Application Review Information**Review and Selection Process**

In all cases, the agency will conduct an initial responsiveness review of all applications submitted to determine:

- 1) the application was submitted on time as specified in this announcement (See Section D. Application and Submission Information);
- 2) the applicant is eligible (see Section C. Eligibility Information);

3) all the required forms and documents are submitted no later than the Application Submission Deadline specified in Section D. Application and Submission Information, Content and Form of Application Submission.

If an applicant is determined to be ineligible or an application is determined to be incomplete, the agency will notify the applicant prior to commencing with evaluation of applications, usually within 5 business days of the Application Submission Deadline. An applicant that feels such a determination is made in error may request reconsideration, highlighting evidence supporting their claim, by email to the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact, within 3 business days of notification.

The agency will convene a review panel, which may include both federal and non-federal reviewers, to review the eligible applications against the evaluation criteria described below. The reviewers will ensure that the applicant is capable of delivering the programs/activities as described in the announcement based on the applicant's project narrative and assign a score and provide summary comments based on the evaluation criteria identified below. The review panel will make a recommendation list to the selecting official, who is not a member of the panel.

The selecting official may select applications out of rank order in consideration of strategic program priorities, such as geographical distribution, incorporation of minority-serving institutions, or congressional directive. Selection determinations are final and cannot be appealed.

Prior to selection, the agency may contact the highest-ranking applicants to seek clarification and to negotiate technical and programmatic aspects of the application. If an application includes a subaward, FAS may request to speak with all parties included in the application to ensure sufficient planning and coordination has taken place prior to making an award.

Evaluation Criteria

Each eligible application will be evaluated according to the criteria set forth below. Applicants must directly and explicitly address the evaluation factors in their application.

Technical Approach and Evaluation Plan (50 points)

Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which their project narrative fulfills the objectives of the work as outlined in Section A. This includes the strength of proposed approach on the following elements:

- i. Establish workshop goals and outcomes to meet the biotechnology capacity-building objectives.
- ii. Provide detailed workshops goals and delineate how outcomes will be accomplished.
- iii. Outline approach on participant engagement, interaction and knowledge sharing during workshops.
- iv. Outline recruitment plan of workshop leaders, key speakers, moderator, interpreter, and other stakeholders in the host country.
- v. Describe how to include biotechnology and biosafety subject matter experts (SMEs) from African institutions and other related scientists as collaborators.

- vi. Collaborate with a host-country government or African regional university or relevant biotechnology research institutions.

Budget (25 points)

Applicants will be evaluated on the reasonableness, cost-effectiveness, and adequacy of the proposed budget to accomplish the project, along with the extent and quality to which the budget documents are detailed, organized, in-scope, and appropriate, including:

- i. Applicant's demonstration that the proposed budget is appropriate for the number of activities, type of activities, and number of participants.
- ii. Applicant's use of a detailed budget table that utilizes cost item categories and includes appropriate cost savings where available.

Past Performance (15 points)

Applicants will be evaluated on the strength and quality of comparable activities including workshops or any biotechnology related training events they have conducted previously, with activities of comparable technical and/or geographic scope given greatest consideration. In cases where the relevance may not be obvious to a reviewer, applicants should make the connection clear. Applicants that do not have any relevant or available past performance and indicated that in their application will receive a neutral score for these factors (a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). Applicants that did not provide any response for these items, may receive a score of 0 for these factors.

Overall Quality (10 points)

Applications will be evaluated on comprehensiveness, completeness, and correct spelling and grammar.

Integrity in Performance

Prior to making a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency is required by [31 USC 3321](#) and [41 USC 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.

F. Federal Award Administration Information

Federal Award Notices

Successful applicants will be notified of the status of their application/award by email. This notification is not authorization to proceed, and such notification should be construed as provisional.

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All successful applicants for all grant and cooperative agreements are required to comply with the applicable General Administrative Terms and Conditions, which can be found at https://www.fas.usda.gov/grants/general_terms_and_conditions/default.asp

. The applicant is presumed to have read, understood, and accepted these terms when accepting a USDA/FAS award. Applicants with questions about the applicable terms should contact the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact.

The applicable Terms and Conditions will be for the last year specified at that URL.

Before accepting an award, the applicant should carefully read the award package for instructions on administering the 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.

Applicants must ensure that they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the subaward and executive total compensation reporting requirements established at [2 CFR 170](#), unless they qualify for an exception from the requirements, should they be selected for funding.

Reporting

Financial Reports, using form SF-425, Federal Financial Report (FFR), must be submitted quarterly, for the periods ending March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 30, within 30 days of the end of the reporting period. A final financial report must be submitted within 120 days of the end date of the agreement.

Performance Progress Reports must be submitted quarterly, for the periods ending March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 30, within 30 days of the end of the reporting period. A final performance progress report must be submitted within 120 days of the end date of the agreement. The recipient may use any appropriate format for performance progress reports, provided the report includes:

- a) a comparison of actual accomplishments to the for the period;
- b) The reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate; and
- c) Additional pertinent information including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs.

Recipients are encouraged to include photographs and other supplemental material in performance progress reports. For awards in which the total lifetime value exceeds \$500,000, additional reporting may be required as described in [Appendix XII to 2 CFR 200](#).

Monitoring

USDA/FAS through its authorized representatives, has the right, at all reasonable times, to make site visits to review project accomplishments and management control systems and to provide such technical assistance as may be required. During site visits, USDA/FAS will review recipients' files related to the program.

As part of any monitoring and program evaluation activities, grant recipients must permit USDA/FAS, upon reasonable notice, to review assistance agreement-related records and to interview the organization's staff and clients regarding the program, and to respond in a timely and accurate manner to FAS requests for information relating to the program.

Closeout

Within 120 days after the end of the period of performance, or after an amendment has been issued to close out a grant, whichever comes first, recipients must submit a final FFR and final progress report detailing all accomplishments and a qualitative summary of the impact of those accomplishments throughout the period of performance. After final reports have been reviewed and approved by the agency, and any residual amount due to the recipient or due to be returned to the agency, the award is subject to closeout. Acceptance of final reports by the agency constitutes a closeout of the award with no further notice or obligation to either party. This acceptance will indicate the period of performance has expired, and any remaining funds will be deobligated. Records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the final reports are submitted.

G. Federal Awarding Agency Contact

For all inquiries, contact:

Name: Andre Ntamack

Email Address: andre.ntamack@usda.gov

Hours of Operation: 9am-5:00pm (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time

H. Other Information**Budget Revisions**

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 written approval from the agency. The total budget amount may not be increased without a bilaterally executed amendment to the award.

Post-award program income

In the event program income becomes available to the recipient post-award, it is the recipient's responsibility to notify the USDA/FAS Program Manager to explain how that development occurred, as part of their request for guidance and/or approval. If approval is granted, an award modification will be issued with an explanatory note in the remarks section of the face page concerning guidance and/or options pertaining to the recipient's approved recipient's approved request. All instances of program income shall be listed in the progress and financial reports.