



**USAID** | **NIGERIA**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

USAID/Nigeria COVID-19 Food Security Challenge

**Request for Applications 2021**

**Primary Point of Contact:**

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**Subject: Nigeria Request for Applications 2021**

<b>Date RFA Issued:</b>	April 12, 2021
<b>Clarification Questions Due Date and Time:</b>	April 23, 2021 5:00 PM WAT
<b>RFA Closing Date and Time:</b>	May 9, 2021 5:00 PM WAT

**Subject: Request for Applications (RFA) 2021 for USAID/Nigeria COVID-19 Food Security Challenge**

Dear Prospective Applicants,

Pursuant to the authority contained in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, the USAID Catalyst Project, implemented by SSG Advisors d/b/a Resonance, with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), invites eligible applicants to respond to the COVID-19 Food Security Challenge Request for Applications (RFA) 2021.

As part of the Feed the Future initiative, the USAID/Nigeria COVID-19 Food Security Challenge seeks to spur, recognize, and reward outstanding business plans from both commercially viable youth-led enterprises and mid-stage enterprises in Nigeria that can rapidly expand their activities to improve food production and/or food security, thus improving the resilience of vulnerable households to the negative impacts of COVID-19. The Challenge will:

- Youth-led (up to age 29) companies: Provide \$1.25 million through 15-30 awards of \$25,000 to \$75,000 in funding investment and technical assistance to commercially viable youth-led (up to age 29) companies to expand their activities to improve food production and/or food security. Preference will be given to youth-led applicants who leverage funds.
- Mid-stage companies (any age group, businesses that have an existing customer base of more than 1,000 people): Provide \$1.75 million through 10-15 awards of \$75,000 to \$150,000 in funding and technical assistance to commercially viable mid-stage companies in Nigeria that can rapidly expand their activities to improve food production and/or food security. Mid-stage applicants must provide 50 percent in leveraged funds.
- Increase food and agriculture system productivity and enhance efficient production along the value chains to unlock agricultural production that has been limited by COVID-19's impact on food production, processing, and distribution in Nigeria.
- Develop and promote innovative local food-based models, including local production, processing, and marketing of highly nutritious foods for the prevention and/or treatment of wasting/acute malnutrition.
- Promote climate and environmental resilience and biodiversity through the sustainable, holistic management of natural resources and ecosystems.
- Promote socially responsible marketing/advertising to increase demand for safe, nutritious foods and other nutrition-related commodities and services.

The Challenge will target Nigerian women and men, smallholder farmers, and others working in all parts of the agriculture value chain that have been negatively impacted by COVID-19. Specifically, the

Challenge will provide funding and technical assistance to companies that work with medium- and small-scale farmers with five hectares or less, including women and youth, and larger commercial holdings with contract farming and out-grower schemes with smallholder farmers.

Challenge funding may also be awarded to companies that work further along in agricultural processing or distribution. Preference will be given to applicants supporting the Feed the Future Focus States (Kaduna, Kebbi, Niger, Delta, Ebonyi, Cross River, Benue, Borno, Gombe, Adamawa, and Yobe).

To be eligible for an award, the applicant must provide all information as required in this solicitation and meet eligibility criteria in [Section III](#). Eligible companies interested in applying should read this funding opportunity thoroughly to understand the application process, the type of intervention sought, submission requirements, and the evaluation process.

Applicants will be judged on their understanding of the problems within the sector, the potential social impact of their innovation, the viability of their business model, and their ability to target Nigerian women, Nigerian men, and smallholder farmers working in all parts of the agriculture value chain that have been negatively impacted by COVID-19. See [Section II](#) for the evaluation criteria.

Awards made through this Request for Applications may be in the form of grants or other instruments as appropriate, depending on the nature of the applicant and at the discretion of the Challenge.

**RFA:** The Request for Application can be downloaded from the [Challenge website page](#).

**DUE DATE:** Full applications shall be received **no sooner than April 13, 2021** and **no later than May 9, 2021 at 5:00 PM West African Time (WAT)** via the [online application platform](#).

**QUESTIONS:** Prospective applicants who have questions concerning the contents of this Request for Applications must submit them in writing no later than **April 23, 2021 at 5:00 PM WAT** to [NigeriaCOVID19challenge@resonanceglobal.com](mailto:NigeriaCOVID19challenge@resonanceglobal.com).

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of Catalyst, nor will Catalyst, Resonance, USAID, or any of its funding partners pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of applications. Further, Catalyst reserves the right to reject any or all applications received. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Sincerely,

[Stephen Rahaim](#)

Chief of Party, USAID Catalyst Project  
Resonance, USAID Contractor

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADS	Automated Directives System
AIDAR	Agency for International Development Acquisition Regulations
BoP	Bottom of the Pyramid
CFR	Code of Federal Regulation
CO	Contracting Officer
DDI	Development, Democracy, and Innovation
DUNS	Data Universal Numbering System
EMMP	Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan
ESG	Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance
EST	Eastern Standard Time
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulation
GFSS	U.S. Government's Global Food Security Strategy
GoN	Government of Nigeria
IEE	Initial Environmental Assessment
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MEO	Mission Environmental Officer
NICRA	Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement
OFAC	Office of Foreign Assets and Control
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PD	Program Description
PDF	Portable Document Format
RF	Results Framework
RFA	Request for Applications
SF	Standard Form
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WAT	West African Time

## Commonly Used Terms and Definitions

Within the context of this RFA, potential applicants should be aware that these definitions apply to the following commonly used terms:

Apparently Successful Applicant(s)	The applicant(s) recommended for an award after technical evaluation, but who have not completed the pre-award due diligence process or been awarded a grant or other type of award yet. Apparently Successful Applicant status does not constitute an award commitment on the part of USAID or Resonance.
Award	A form of implementing mechanism through which Resonance or USAID transfers funds to an implementing partner, generally selected through a competitive process and resulting in a grant or other agreement.
Awardee	The company selected to receive funding under this Request for Applications.
Bottom of the Pyramid	A socioeconomic group that consists of four billion people who live in relative poverty with annual incomes below \$3,000 in local purchasing power.
Business Model	The way an enterprise creates, delivers, and captures value profitably.
Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)	Environmental, Social, and Governance factors to evaluate the level of overall sustainability of companies, especially criteria related to gender integration, water management, natural resource management, climate resilience, and poverty reduction/Base of the Pyramid (BoP) impact.
Food Security	When all people at all times have both physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life.
Food Value Chain	The full range of participants and activities that move agricultural goods from a farmer's field to the end consumer. Activities within the food value chain include input production or supply (e.g., seed, fertilizer, feed), irrigation, production (e.g., planting crops, raising livestock), storage, transport, processing (e.g., sorting, drying, grinding, packaging), wholesaling, marketing, retailing, and waste management.
Innovation	The development and application of unconventional, new and/or modification of existing technologies, tools, products, services, or processes.
Intervention	Awardees' planned activities intended to increase the availability and accessibility of quality agricultural inputs and the use of innovative

	technologies by smallholder farmers to address COVID-19 related food security challenges.
Market Driven	Market driven means investment, production, and distribution are determined by supply and demand and reflected in freely set prices.
Leveraged Funds	Refers to resources mobilized from non-U.S. Government sources. Leveraging includes resources that third parties bring to the program without necessarily providing them to the recipient of the USAID award. These parties may include the host government, private foundations, businesses, or individuals. The recipient is not responsible for meeting the leveraging amounts/resources and leveraging is not subject to audit.
Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs)	Micro enterprises are non-subsidary, independent firms with ten or fewer employees, including smallholder farms. This category also includes activities that support the individuals' or households' day-to-day survival, meaning there is limited potential for the business to grow beyond improving and sustaining a livelihood, but does help move the beneficiaries out of extreme poverty.
Online Application Platform	The <a href="#">online application platform</a> defines the website that all applicants will use to apply to the Challenge solicitation.
Peer or Scientific Review	Peer review is a process of evaluation involving qualified individuals from the relevant field.
Request for Application (RFA)	A general announcement for soliciting proposals.
Scaling	Expanding, adapting, and sustaining successful technology or process solutions at the product level or above, in different places and over time, to reach a greater number of people in a financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable manner.
Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)	SMEs are non-subsidary, independent firms with potential to grow, create new jobs, and/or provide goods and services to others. <sup>1</sup> This includes firms that would be considered start-ups.  Note: USAID does not have a formal definition for SMEs. Given the diversity of contexts in which USAID works, what is considered a SME can vary. Apply

<sup>1</sup> <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=3123>



	the most appropriate definition given the context and size, but as a general guideline, a small enterprise typically has 11-49 employees and a medium enterprise has 50-249 employees.
Sustainable Scale	A technology/solution and associated business model, which is financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable to unlock growth in new and larger markets.
Target Area of Operation	The target area of operation defines the primary geographic location and/or market for project implementation and impact.
Very Poor	Individuals living below the international poverty line (currently \$1.90/day) or living in the bottom 50 percent below the poverty line established by the national government of the country in which those individuals live.

## Section I. Program Description

### I. Introduction and Background

Nigeria is facing a food security crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 global pandemic and its effects on the food value chain in the country. The pandemic has significantly disrupted already fragile agricultural value chains across the country, including people's ability to produce, process, and distribute food. The disruption to agricultural productivity and markets has a knock-on negative impact on livelihoods, especially among the most vulnerable households. Agriculture is the mainstay of the country's economy, employing approximately two-thirds of the total labor force and contributing 24 percent of the national GDP.<sup>6</sup> Nigeria is the world's largest producer of cassava, yam, and cowpea, yet due to low crop productivity, the country is a food deficit nation and depends on grain, livestock products, and fish imports to meet local demand.<sup>7</sup> Of an estimated 71 million hectares of cultivable land, only half is currently used for farming.

The Government of Nigeria's (GoN) prioritization of agricultural development as a path toward increasing economic growth, including the unveiling of the APP or "Green Alternative," presents an opportunity for USAID to support transformative change in the country's agriculture sector that will improve nutritional outcomes and increase the sector's contribution to GDP growth.

The goal of the Feed the Future initiative, under the U.S. Government's Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS), is to work with the GoN to reduce poverty, promote inclusive and sustainable agriculture-led economic growth, improve nutrition, and strengthen household resilience to shocks. This goal is achieved through collaborations and partnerships to increase agricultural productivity, expand market participation, deepen the resilience of vulnerable households, improve the business enabling environment, and increase access to finance and technology. Current Feed the Future activities in Nigeria link farmers to markets in targeted value chains (aquaculture, cowpea, maize, rice, and soybean) and increase competitiveness, incomes, and employment. The portfolio in Nigeria comprises over eight activities, some of which operate in challenging, non-permissive environments, including in the northeastern region of the country. In addition, USAID/Nigeria has multiple ongoing activities with the West Africa Trade and Investment Hub.

Despite the importance of the agriculture sector and USAID/Nigeria's ongoing activities, COVID-19 has worsened pre-existing small- and medium-sized farmers' struggles to overcome significant obstacles. Some of these obstacles include:

- Limited access to quality agricultural inputs
- Limited access to financial services
- Poor post-harvest processing technologies
- Ineffective and inefficient pest and disease control measures that lead to low yields
- Post-harvest losses
- Weak market linkages

- Poor market infrastructure (including lack of market information to ensure transparency within market systems)
- Poor transportation of agricultural produce and raw materials
- Sub-standard commodity storage and handling
- The continued marginalization of women and youth
- The impacts of climate change
- Ongoing impact of conflict
- Poor access and consumers' demand, purchase, and consumption of safe nutritious foods and healthy diets.

## USAID Catalyst Project Background

The USAID Catalyst project is led by Resonance and managed by the Innovation, Technology, and Research (ITR) Hub in the Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation. The objective of the project is to provide support and technical assistance to the design and implementation of innovation and challenge programs within USAID/ITR and partner USAID Missions, Bureaus, and Independent Offices. Catalyst provides a suite of staffing, technical assistance, and implementation capabilities to USAID that will bolster its efforts to design and implement innovation and challenge funds. This is provided through four workstreams: 1) Sourcing and Due Diligence; 2) Technical Assistance and Acceleration; 3) Partner facilitation, communication, and engagement and program design support; and 4) Monitoring, evaluation, and learning. Catalyst also awards and manages innovation grants for multiple USAID innovation programs.

## 2. Problem Statement

Nigeria is facing a food security crisis compounded by the COVID-19 global pandemic and its effects on the food value chain in the country. The pandemic has significantly disrupted already fragile value chains across the country, including people's ability to produce, process, and distribute food. The disruption to agricultural productivity and markets has a knock-on negative impact on livelihoods, especially among the most vulnerable households.

As such, USAID/Nigeria, as part of the Feed the Future Initiative, is seeking to partner with youth-led companies and mid-stage companies (with an existing customer base of more than 1,000 people) that are already working in food production, processing, and/or distribution. **USAID is requesting that these partners help farmers and other stakeholders in the food value chain increase agricultural productivity and food security within the next year to mitigate the effect of COVID-19 on Nigeria's food value chain.** These partners may be new to USAID or existing partners that have a novel approach to address this crisis. Note: Novel approaches proposed by existing partners must neither be currently nor recently funded by USAID/Nigeria or the West Africa Trade and Investment Hub.

Through rapidly deployed funding and relevant technical assistance, the USAID/Nigeria COVID-19 Food Security Challenge will help Nigerian SMEs increase the availability and accessibility of quality agricultural inputs and the use of innovative technologies by smallholder farmers. By increasing agriculture value chain productivity, smallholder farmer incomes, and food security, the COVID-19 Food Security Challenge will help reduce the negative impacts of COVID-19 on Nigeria's Food Security. The Challenge funds may be awarded to organizations performing the following functions, including, but not limited to, promoting digital platforms such as digitized logistics, improved power/agriculture nexus solutions, increased on-farm mechanization, enhanced skills development/youth employment in agricultural value chains, expanded urban farming, and developing innovative locally available, affordable, and scalable food-based models for prevention or treatment of malnutrition in Nigeria.

### 3. Challenge Goal and Focus Areas

The USAID/Nigeria COVID-19 Food Security Challenge seeks applications from eligible mid-stage and youth-led companies. See [Section III](#) for the full eligibility criteria. As stated in the cover letter, the Challenge anticipates making \$1.25 million available to support youth-led companies and \$1.75 million available to support mid-stage companies. We have purposefully designed this RFA with the understanding that the financial and non-financial needs of applicants vary greatly.

The Challenge aims to:

- Increase food and agriculture system productivity and enhance efficient production along the value chains to unlock agricultural production that has been limited by COVID-19's impact on food production, processing, and distribution in Nigeria.
- Increase income for Base of the Pyramid (BOP) women and men in both rural and urban areas.
- Provide youth-led and mid-stage companies the technical assistance and capital they need to sustainably scale solutions to meet the requirements of the Challenge.
- Promote climate and environmental resilience and biodiversity through the sustainable, holistic management of natural resources and ecosystems.
- Develop and promote innovative and local food-based models, including local production, processing, and marketing of highly nutritious foods to prevent and/or treat wasting/acute malnutrition.
- Promote socially responsible marketing/advertising to increase demand for safe, nutritious foods and other nutrition-related commodities and services.

#### 3.A: Priority Thematic Areas

The Challenge seeks innovations that address the priority thematic areas below. Innovations supported by the Challenge could include, but are not limited to following themes. These themes apply for both youth-led and mid-stage enterprise applicants.

- o THEME 1: Innovations in food production that maximizes water usage.
- o THEME 2: Efficient use of water resources for food production.
- o THEME 3: Sustainable use of energy and water for increased productivity.
- o THEME 4: Innovations for processing, preservation, and marketing of safe, nutritious foods and/or logistics.
- o THEME 5: Food production with efficient energy use.
- o THEME 6: Leveraging the use of water as multiple means of food production.
- o THEME 7: Innovations to increase consumers' demand, purchase, and consumption of safe, nutritious foods.

### 3.B: Cross-Cutting Critical Barriers

While a broad range of complex factors have contributed to COVID-19's negative impacts on the food value chain, this Challenge looks to overcome the barriers that inhibit the adoption and use of agriculture technologies in Nigeria. These include, but are NOT limited to:

1. The lack of cost-appropriate technologies for use in low-resource settings.
2. Insufficient user-centered design in technology development.
3. Poorly developed supply chains.
4. Lack of distribution networks.
5. High up-front investment costs for farmer's adoption of new technologies.
6. Absence of proper financing tools to fund the expansion of companies selling innovative products or services.
7. Limited end-user (and/or farmers) access to finance to promote uptake of innovations.
8. Insufficient information and training to farmers and other end users regarding how to use available technologies/innovations.
9. Cultural norms/beliefs and access to and control over assets and patterns of power and decision-making that could prevent equal participation between men and women.
10. Institutional and organizational barriers faced by innovators, as well as their customers/end-users.
11. Insufficient planning for unintended environmental and social consequences.

**Both youth-led and mid-stage applicants will be expected to describe which barriers their innovation will address in their application.**

### 3.C: What We Are Looking For

- a) We are seeking applications for youth-led and mid-stage companies that: **Operate with a financially sustainable business model as a private company; and are able to**

**demonstrate a revenue track record reaching the targeted populations listed above.** In accordance with lessons learned from legacy Grand Challenge programs, this Challenge is focused on financially viable companies that can demonstrate a commercially proven revenue model.

- b) **Address the COVID-19 food security challenge.** The innovation must address at least one theme and one barrier listed above.
- c) **Have a well-defined plan for expansion to reach small-holder farmers and other actors in the targeted food security value chains.** USAID/Nigeria does not seek to support companies that scale only through the securing of successive grants or subsidies, or that do not intend to scale at all. Successful applicants will have a clearly articulated plan in existence or under development for how the technical assistance and/or grant capital provided by the Challenge will help the company to reach the Challenge's targeted populations listed above.
- d) **Build sustainability into the fabric of the intended expansion.** All innovations must be sustainable. This means that companies expanding the scale and scope of their sale of innovative products and services do so in a way that creates a financially viable model and ideally positive free cash flow and net income. All innovators must prove they can remain financially viable without grant funding after the Challenge has ended. All applicants will be required to submit financial documentation, as well as a description of the company's long-term financial management plan to support the innovation. Equally as important, innovators must also be able to successfully integrate their products and/or services into Nigeria's existing social and institutional ecosystems and provide environmental benefit (or at least cause no net environmental harm).
- e) **Understand the local enabling environment for technology and business innovations.** Applicants must be able to articulate the social, environmental, institutional, legal, and regulatory challenges to sustainable scaling and expanding their innovation and describe how they will overcome those barriers and embed their innovation within these contexts to have the intended immediate impact. Applicants must also provide market research that describes local market conditions.
- f) **Promote user-centered design, not technology for the sake of technology.** Thousands of food-security technologies exist, but are not available to or effectively utilized by target populations. In many cases, this is due to a lack of understanding of the needs of end-users in developing or emerging countries. The Challenge will emphasize the importance of the end-user in all facets of the program.
- g) **Demonstrate direct or strong indirect benefits for the BoP.** The Challenge is focused on alleviating relative poverty through both economic growth and environmental sustainability. Through their expansion, all supported companies need to provide either direct benefits to those that are earning less than half their country's median income through the provision of resources in

form of goods or services that directly benefit them, or should provide indirect opportunities for economic growth, for example, through the creation of jobs and/or through strengthening poor people's opportunities and choice, power and voice, and human security.

- h) **Show how their innovation benefits women.** Women and men use, access, and control natural resources and agricultural inputs in different ways. When these differences are properly understood, targeted actions may be developed to decrease the pitfalls and enhance the potentials of the innovations. By including a gender perspective into business strategies and plans, the potential of an innovation to sustainably scale increases. Addressing gender issues improves the efficiency of the business plans' implementation and the social and environmental benefits or outcomes from the use of water, energy, land, and ecosystem resources. Successful innovations can break boundaries and catalyze transformative changes in people's lives. Investing in women is not only a moral and institutional imperative; it is also a profitable thing to do. The Challenge gives preference to women-focused innovations that highlight the roles, skills, and capacities of women. Innovations should contribute (directly or indirectly) to more equal gender relations by addressing practical needs of women (e.g., positively impact the workload of women) or strategic needs of women (e.g., increase their access and control over production means).
- i) **Have a local presence and develop market-driven partnerships.** Applicants must have demonstrated a history of successfully reaching the Challenge's target customer/end-user segments. All applicants must be registered and authorized by the national government in Nigeria or have at least one registered Nigerian local partner. This local partner could be a commercial partner, joint venture partner, or candidate for a merger or acquisition. We encourage applicants to develop market-driven partnerships that can help bring the innovation to scale. If working with a registered Nigerian partner, the local partner should have a tangible stake in the innovation and its development rather than, for example, a local merchandiser who stocks the product.
- j) **Have a gender-balanced team that can scale up innovation in a sustainable manner.** This can be reflected in the leadership team's (upper management, founders, or key team players) experience in the nexus or relevant sectors. The leadership team should also have complementary skill sets and demonstrate capacity to sustainably enable the firm/company to grow. The Challenge will give preference to women-owned/women-led applicants.

### 3.D: What We Are NOT Looking For

The focus of the Challenge is to support game-changing innovations with a focus on rapid implementation to achieve wide-scale adoption to impact thousands to millions of smallholder farmers and other customers to address the food security related challenges to COVID-19. The Challenge views the following activities as low priority and unlikely to receive program funding:

- a) Traditional development programs utilizing conventional approaches.
- b) Innovations that fail to clearly demonstrate proven demand—meaning a successful track record of sales at prices that customers are able and willing to pay—and these innovations’ contribution to the applicant’s revenue within the context of a viable, ‘going-concern’ business.
- c) Innovations that fail to demonstrate how they can eventually ensure sustainable benefits in line with the development purpose of the COVID-19 Food Security Challenge (e.g., enhanced value of the agricultural chain, promotion of food security, sustainable management of natural [including water] resources and ecosystems, promotion of climate resilience and biodiversity, increased broad-based economic growth in Nigeria, and a focus on impacting women and the poor).
- d) Innovations that fail to clearly demonstrate their positive impact on the poor and on women.
- e) Innovations that fail to demonstrate their positive impact on the environment, or at least that they cause NO negative effect to the environment (including natural resource management, water resource management, climate resilience, and biodiversity).
- f) Projects focused on research and development for a product without a clearly defined market or proven commercial demand. Applicants should demonstrate that an innovation’s unit economics (ability to be sold for more than the cost of production) are positive, and that existing customer traction (through demonstrated sales) suggests strong potential for growth to a minimum of 100,000 customers within a five-year timeframe.
- g) Applicants that do not operate as a legally registered entity (for-profit business or group within a non-profit or academic institution) in Nigeria.
- h) Innovations using highly hazardous pesticides (see FAO/WHO International Code of Conduct) in their operations or who propose to purchase restricted agricultural commodities (USAID ADS312) with Challenge funds.
- i) Large infrastructure projects.
- j) One-off water and/or energy technology installations or pilot projects.
- k) Large corporations for which the sale of relevant products or services does not represent a significant portion of revenue and/or for which expansion of relevant technologies is not a priority objective for strategic growth.

## 4. Challenge Timeline

**Request for Application Launched:** The Challenge will be open for applications for four (4) weeks from April 12, 2021 – May 9, 2021. Application forms can be completed and submitted online through a link on the [Challenge website page](#).

**Question and Answer:** During the application window, the Challenge will host an informational webinar featuring a question-and-answer (Q&A) session where we will be answering questions from



prospective applicants and publicly sharing the answers. The webinar will be held on April 28, 2021 at 2:00 PM WAT. The webinar will also be recorded and posted to the [Challenge website page](#). A Frequently Asked Questions document is also available on the platform.

**Submission Deadline:** Applicants’ submissions are due at 5:00 PM WAT on May 9, 2021. Late entries will not be accepted.

**Eligibility Review:** All applicants will be screened in May 2021 to ensure that they comply with the eligibility criteria in [Section III](#).

**Expert Judging Panel:** A panel of judges selected for their relevant experience and expertise will review all eligible applications. Each application will be evaluated by a minimum of three judges, using the evaluation criteria provided in [Section II](#). Judging will take place in May and June.

**Finalist Interviews:** Finalists will be invited to participate in a phone or video interview with a panel of USAID staff, judges, experts, and affiliated partners. No more than two people can represent an applicant. The interview will include an overview of the most salient aspects of the innovation from the applicant, will give applicants an opportunity to address weaknesses identified by reviewers, and will be followed by a Q&A session that will enable the expert panel of judges to validate responses. See [Section III](#) for more details. Interviews will take place in June 2021.

**Pre-Award and Due Diligence:** All mid-stage and youth-led Apparently Successful Applicants will complete pre-award requirements led by the Challenge. This includes: a pre-award survey to assess the applicants capacity to implement the proposed program successfully and compliantly; budget analysis to ensure all costs are reasonable, allowable, and allocable; an Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) assessment to evaluate the applications potential environmental and climate impact and gender impacts. Interested applicants should begin the SAM.gov registration process at this time. Please see [Appendix 4](#) for more information. The pre-award due diligence process will be completed in July and August 2021.

**Winners Announced:** The winners will be announced at a virtual event with the USAID Nigeria Mission. The winners will be announced by September 2021.

**Challenge Timeline Table:**

Date	Event
Monday, April 12, 2021	Challenge launch - accepting entries
Friday, April 23, 2021	Challenge questions due (submitted by email)
Wednesday, April 28, 2021	Informational webinar for all applicants

Thursday, April 29, 2021	Recorded webinar uploaded & responses to questions posted to FAQ sheet on Challenge website page
Sunday, May 9, 2021	Application submission deadline
May 10-14, 2021	Eligibility screening of all applications
May 17 – 31, 2021	Judging panel review of all eligible applicants
June 1-3, 2021	Finalists selected and notified via email
June 4 –25, 2021	Finalist interviews
June 28-30, 2021	Apparently Successful Applicants notified by email
July 1 – August 6, 2021	Complete pre-award and due diligence processes with Apparently Successful mid-stage and youth-led applicants
August/September 2021	All winners invited to and announced at USAID Nigeria Mission Event
Fall 2021	All winners receive relevant technical assistance
August 2021 - August 2022	Awardees submit M&E information to show impact of the Challenge funds

**[END OF SECTION I]**

## Section II. Application & Evaluation Criteria

We are inviting all eligible applicants to apply. Applications must be submitted through the [online platform](#) by May 9, 2021. Applications must be submitted in English. The application is meant to provide evaluators with in-depth information about how the innovation increases sustainable food production in value chains in Nigeria.

Complete instructions regarding how to submit applications are provided on the [Challenge website page](#). The full application and cost proposal requirements can be found in [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#). Below is an overview of the type of information that will be requested in the application.

### I. General Applicant Information

The USAID/Nigeria COVID-19 Food Security Challenge application requires applicants to enter details about their company. The information is being collected for demographic and promotional purposes only and will have no bearing on the evaluation of the application. The following information will be collected:

#### A. Basic Applicant Information

- What challenge you are applying for: Mid-stage (at least 1,000 existing customers) or youth-led (founder under the age of 29).
- Applicant information: Application point of contact; country where registered; name of partner organizations.
- Type of Innovation: Business Model, technological; both.
- Innovation duration: Proposed project duration in months, not to exceed one year.
- How you heard about the Challenge.
- Amount of Funding Requested
- Amount of Leverage (required at 50% for mid-stage)

#### B. Application Questions

- **Innovation Viability (40%)**: The applicant must describe your innovation in detail; explain the critical barriers related to the COVID-19 food security challenge and how your innovation addresses them; describe your innovation's current and expected end-user; and your expansion and growth strategy in Nigeria.
- **Commercial/Financial Viability (30%)**: The applicant should clearly articulate the names and roles of each member of your team, including partner organizations; indicate how many customers you have, how much the product costs, and your customer growth and sales rates over the past five years; if you have received debt, equity, or grants/prizes previously; and how you would leverage this award.

- **Sustainability (30%):** The applicant must describe how this innovation directly impacts the target population and vulnerable groups; and how your innovation could potentially create additional jobs in value chains or related sectors.

### **C. Application Cost Proposal:**

- Applicants will provide a detailed budget, which will assist the judging panel and USAID in making determinations on awarded amounts. The detailed budget must be clearly linked to specific project activities. All costs should be in United States Dollars (USD). Please use the exchange rate of 1 USD = 409 naira. The budget should detail all direct costs associated with the implementation, as well as proposed leveraged funds. Please include comments on each budget line to clearly explain the cost. The Challenge will assess whether the overall costs are realistic for the work to be performed, whether the costs reflect that the applicant understands the requirements of project implementation, and whether the costs are consistent with the technical application.

### **D. Required Annexes**

- Company Registration.
- Three Past Performance References.
- Detailed Budget and Activity Plan.
- Required Certifications.
- CVs.
- Others as requested.

### **E. Applicant Proprietary Information**

- Applicants must clearly mark any confidential or proprietary content (including intellectual property and trade secrets) that they wish to protect. The applicant will retain ownership of such confidential or proprietary content. The Challenge will protect such marked confidential or proprietary content and will only use it as necessary to administer the Challenge. Applicants must have rights to all the intellectual property in the submission. It is the applicants' responsibility to ensure that they are not infringing on the intellectual property of others.

## **2. Application Submission Rules**

- Applications must be submitted in English.
- Applications must be submitted via the [online application platform](#).
  - If the applicant experiences any difficulty with applying, please contact [NigeriaCOVID19challenge@resonanceglobal.com](mailto:NigeriaCOVID19challenge@resonanceglobal.com).

- Applications submitted via regular mail, facsimile, or email will not be accepted.
- Complete applications must be submitted by the deadline of the Challenge call. No additions or modifications to the applications will be accepted after the submission deadline.
- USAID and Resonance bear no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes associated with electronic submissions.
- If no qualifying application can be verified at the completion of the eligibility screening, the Challenge competition may be reopened, at the sole discretion of USAID and its implementing partner.
- USAID and Resonance will not be responsible for any costs associated with the development of applications.
- Applicants should retain for their records a copy of all information and documentation that they input/upload to the online application platform.

### 3. Evaluation Criteria

There are three evaluation criteria that each application will be scored on. The evaluation criteria apply to both youth-led and mid-stage applications. The judging panel will assess each eligible application across these weighted technical criteria.

**Innovation Viability (40%)**

**Commercial/Financial Viability (30%)**

**Sustainability (30%)**

There are several non-weighted evaluation factors that are important and material to award decisions:

1. **Past Performance:** Past performance information for three past performance references which describe any funding, contracts, or grants that the applicant has implemented involving similar or related programs over the past three years will be required.

Please include the following information: name and address of the organization for which the work was performed; name and current telephone number and email address of responsible representative from the organization for which the work was performed; contract/grant name and number (if any), the period of performance, annual amount received for each of the last three years and beginning and end dates; brief description of the project/assistance activity and key project accomplishments/results achieved to date.

2. **Cost:** In the later stages of review, costs included in the proposed budget will be reviewed to ensure they are allowable, allocable, and reasonable. Budget proposals will also be subject to cost realism analysis. The cost realism analysis will verify the applicant's understanding of the

requirements, assess the degree to which the cost application reflects the approaches in the technical application, and assess the degree to which the costs included in the application accurately represent the programmatic requirements set forth in the application.

3. **Pre-Award and Due Diligence Process:** All Apparently Successful Applicants will be required to successfully complete the pre-award due diligence process prior to receiving any funding. The pre-award survey helps determine whether the applicant's financial management and internal control systems are adequate to manage, control, account for, and report on the uses of the USAID funds. It provides the Challenge with the information needed to evaluate the ability of an applicant to adequately fulfill the terms of an award.
  
4. **Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG):** All Apparently Successful Applicants will work with the Challenge to complete the ESG process and to evaluate the applications potential environmental, climate impact, and gender impacts, as well as overall sustainability of the applicant. The results of the ESG will be used to establish benchmarks to monitor activity implementation. More information about the ESG process can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

**[END OF SECTION II]**

## Section III. Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must meet the following requirements to participate in the USAID/Nigeria COVID-19 Food Security Challenge Request for Applications 2021. All applications will undergo an initial eligibility screening to ensure they comply with the eligibility criteria.

1. **Organization Type:** This Challenge is only open to registered for-profit companies who have a local presence in Nigeria. **We encourage applications from micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs and SMEs) that have not previously worked with USAID.**
2. **Size:** The Challenge is open to all relevant companies regardless of size.
3. **Local Presence:** All applicants must be registered and authorized by the national government in Nigeria or have at least one registered Nigerian local partner. This local partner could be a commercial partner, joint venture partner, or candidate for a merger or acquisition. If working with a registered Nigerian partner, the local partner should have a tangible stake in the innovation and its development rather than, for example, a local merchandiser who stocks the product.
4. **Company Maturity:** All applicants must have a sustainable and financially viable business model for their innovation in the Nigerian food security value chain. The eligibility requirements for mid-stage and youth-led applicants are as follows:
  - 4.1 **Mid-Stage Applicants** must have existing services or products in the Nigerian food security value chain with a minimum of 1,000 existing customers.
  - 4.2 **Youth-Led Applicants** must have a founder under the age of 29; have a pre-revenue or post-revenue business model innovation in the Nigerian food security value chain; and have a working prototype or minimum viable product along with a demonstrated BoP market segment being targeted.
5. **Leveraged funds:** All mid-stage applicants are required to have 50 percent leveraged funds. The external funds may pay for activities that further the growth, development, or commercialization of the innovator's technology. The final amount of leveraged funds will be determined on a case-by-case basis for each applicant. Mid-stage awardees will be required to provide evidence of the commitment of the leveraged funds. **There are NO leverage funds requirements for youth-led applicants, but youth-led applicants are encouraged to demonstrate leveraged funds when possible.**

6. **Eligible to receive USAID funds:** All Apparently Successful Applicants will undergo a responsibility determination prior to award to ensure that they have the technical and organizational capacity to manage a USAID-funded award. **Apparently Successful Applicants must have a DUNS number and be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM).** See [Appendix 4](#) for additional information.
7. **Impact:** Applications must demonstrate a direct, tangible linkage between their COVID-19 response and food value chains. Applications must also demonstrate a direct or indirect benefit to the BoP in Nigeria.
8. **Language:** Applications must be written in English.
9. **Completeness and timeliness:** Applicants will not be assessed if all required fields have not been completed. This applies to any stage of submission and relates to missing documentation that may have been requested. Late entries may not be accepted.
10. **Currency:** All references to a currency in the Challenge should be in United States Dollars (USD). Please use the exchange rate of 1 USD = 409 naira.
11. **Agricultural Commodities:** Applicants are NOT permitted to use Challenge funding to purchase agricultural commodities as defined in [ADS 312.3.3.1](#).

**Note: The public sector and government entities and individuals are not eligible to apply.**

**[END OF SECTION III]**



## **Section IV. Award and Administration Information**

### **1. Award Information**

Awards made through this RFA may be in the form of grants and other award agreements, depending on the nature of the applicant and application. The Challenge will determine the appropriate award instrument for the selections resulting from this RFA. Awards are subject to the availability of funds.

### **2. Period of Performance**

The period of performance for new awards issued through this RFA could be up to one year from date of award.

### **3. Funding Information**

The estimated ceiling for this RFA is USD \$3 million. Subject to the availability of funds, the individual award(s) will range from USD \$25,000 to USD \$150,000. The Challenge anticipates that 20 to 35 proposals will be funded.

The payment terms for each awardee will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis at the time of the award based on the results of the pre-award process and application. The Challenge anticipates disbursing funds after the achievement and approval of milestone deliverables(s). The Challenge will make every attempt to distribute funding to awardees as quickly as possible, in compliance with the award agreement.

### **4. Programmatic Benchmarks and Indicators**

All awardees will work with the Challenge to establish mutually agreed upon technical, financial, and/or ESG benchmarks to assess implementation progress. The ESG assessment completed in the pre-award assessment will serve as a foundation for establishing the benchmarks. The benchmarks will be included in the award agreement. Financial benchmarks may include:

- a) Dollar amount leveraged from public or private sector
- b) Expected total product sales
- c) Expected profit margin by product

Technical benchmarks may include specific technical metrics, such as the quantifiable benefit of the innovation (e.g., increased efficiency, reduced cost), distribution, and adoption. A few illustrative examples are noted below:

- a) Hectares of delta, estuarine, or agricultural land (e.g., fields, rangeland, agroforests) in production because of use of the innovation.
- b) Increased crop yields in dry-land cultivation.
- c) Mass of food produced and/or processed because of use of the innovation.

- d) Number of smallholder farmers and other end-users that experience an increase in income.
- e) New jobs created for both men and women.

## 5. Reporting Requirements

Specific reporting requirements will be stipulated at the time of award negotiation. Reports could include:

- a) A detailed work plan (which will include a monitoring plan)
- b) A clear proof-of-principle demonstration described in the original proposal and documented as part of the final report, including detailed documentation of the technical work accomplished, and success and lessons learned from the project

In addition, awardees will likely be responsible for the following activities and documentation during the life of the program:

- a) Briefing the Challenge on project progress and outcomes
- b) Cooperating with the Challenge to facilitate rigorous program evaluations
- c) Maintaining frequent and transparent communication with the Challenge

## 6. Technical Assistance Support

The USAID/Nigeria COVID-19 Food Security Challenge has identified the lack of strong business models and external investment as significant gaps in the market. As a result, the Challenge will offer technical assistance and business support through a multi-day workshop for all awardees. The technical Challenge will engage awardees in a design process to determine the most important needs to include in this workshop, which may include the following elements:

- Business model/plan refinement
- Networking opportunities
- Partnership facilitation (where relevant and applicable)
- Preparing for investment
- Mentorship opportunities
- Overcoming scaling challenges in agriculture in frontier markets
- Focusing on women as customers

## 7. Intellectual Property

The Challenge's goal is to facilitate the research and development that will lead to innovative, and potentially commercially viable, solutions. Understanding the sensitive nature of submitters' information, the Challenge will work with applicants to protect intellectual property.

Intellectual property provisions applicable to awards are subject to the provisions of the [FAR Supplement \(AIDAR\)](#). When the awardee is a small business firm, FAR clause 52.227-11 and FAR clause

52.227-14 will apply. When the awardee is a large business firm, FAR clause 52.227-14 will apply. The Challenge may include FAR Clause 52.227-16. Additional Date Requirements in the resulting contract if appropriate. The Challenge will utilize the following regulations for intellectual property (IP) issues arising from:

- 1) Patent development, including USAID-funded research, technology development, and technology transfer for commercialization or other distribution;
- 2) The creation and funding of copyrighted material and marks; and,
- 3) The handling of information that includes trade secrets.

17 U.S.C. 101, 105

17 U.S.C. 301 - 305

22 CFR Part 226

35 U.S.C. 100-212

37 CFR Part 401, "Rights to Inventions Made by Nonprofit and Small Business Firms under Government Grants, Contracts, and Corporate Agreements" (implementing the Bayh-Dole Act)  
AIDAR Subchapter E – Part 727

## **8. Title and Rights in Property**

During negotiations, applicants should identify where title to all property types acquired for the Challenge activities is critical to their commercialization efforts. The Challenge will determine whether title to property will remain with applicants for a specified period to be negotiated prior to award. Please note that applicants cannot use Challenge funds to procure real property, such as land or structures.

**[END SECTION VI]**

## Section VII. Appendices

### Appendix I – Full Application Form

#### Eligibility Questions

1. I have read the following disclaimer and would like to proceed with applying to the Nigeria Agricultural/COVID-19 Challenge. *“I understand that the Challenge’s online platform is maintained by SurveyMonkey Apply who is a subcontractor of Resonance, implementing partners of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).”*  
Yes  
No (renders ineligible)
2. Can you confirm that, to the best of your knowledge, you comply with all the eligibility criteria for the challenge?  
Yes  
No (renders ineligible)
3. Are you a company working in agriculture or food security in Nigeria?  
Yes  
No (renders ineligible)
4. Are you registered and authorized by the national government in Nigeria, or do you have at least one registered Nigerian local partner?  
Yes  
No (renders ineligible)
5. If you are applying as a mid-stage applicant, do you have at least 1,000 existing customers/end-users and are contributing at least 50 percent in leveraged funds? If you are applying as a youth-led applicant, are you currently under 29 years of age with a pre-revenue or post-revenue solution in the agriculture sector?  
Yes  
No (renders ineligible)
6. For mid-stage applicants, please upload documentation that verifies you have 1,000 customers. For youth-led applicants, please upload documentation that verifies you are under 29 years of age.  
Document upload
7. Does your intervention address the technical requirements in the RFA and provide a solution that addresses food insecurity and impacts caused by COVID-19?  
Yes

No (renders ineligible)

8. Is it true that your application does NOT include the purchase of agricultural commodities as defined in [ADS 312.3.3.1?](#)

Yes

No (renders ineligible)

9. This platform may collect data of a sensitive personal nature. While we intend to safeguard it to the best of our ability, please affirm that you consent to data collection.

Yes

No (renders ineligible)

10. Please affirm that all content and intellectual property in the submission is your own or that you have explicit permission to use it.

Yes

No (renders ineligible)

11. Can you confirm that, to the best of your knowledge, the information you have supplied is true and accurate?

Yes

No (renders ineligible)

### **Basic Applicant Information**

12. Company name

13. Company address

14. Company point of contact information (name, position title, phone number, fax number, e-mail address)

15. Country where company is registered (upload registration documents)

16. Size of company (for partnerships and consortiums, list the combined total headcount and most recent fiscal year revenues)

17. Names of other companies/organizations/firms that are partnering in the proposal

18. Short, clear description of partner's relevance to applicant's planned expansion. Note: If this is a joint partnership including innovators from low- and middle-income countries, we encourage the partnership to designate the low- and middle-income country partner as the Project Manager.

19. Concise application title

20. States in Nigeria where the proposed activities will be implemented

21. Type of innovation (business model, technological; both)

22. How did you hear about the USAID/Nigeria COVID-19 Food Security Challenge Request for Applications 2021? Select all that apply.

- Twitter
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Email
- Blogs/Articles
- Search Engine
- Word of mouth
- Other

23. What Challenge are you applying for?

- a. Mid-stage Challenge - I represent an enterprise that has at least 1,000 existing customers/end-users (branch to mid-stage application)
- b. Youth-led Challenge - I am currently under 29 years of age with a pre-revenue or post-revenue solution in the agriculture sector. (branch to youth application)

## Technical Questions

### Mid-Stage Award Technical Questions (5,650 words)

#### **Innovation Viability/Potential to Scale to Reach Smallholder Farmers (40%)**

- I. Describe your innovation in detail by addressing the following questions.
  - a. What is your innovation? Please provide a technical description of how your innovation works, especially any proprietary technology. Are there patents or copyrights associated with this technology? **Provide back-up documentation in the form of a PDF of no more than 3 pages.** (500 words maximum)
  - b. How adaptable is your innovation? For instance, is implementation a 'plug-and-play' exercise (i.e., there is only one type of product and customers use it as-is), or does it require specific tailoring or calibration for different use cases and/or customer segments, either during installation or use? (250 words maximum)
  - c. What percentage of your overall revenue is represented by this innovation in the most recent fiscal year? What other products or services does your company offer (brief list only, not descriptions)? If your innovation failed, would your company survive? Please explain. (200 words maximum)
  - d. How was your innovation developed, from the idea stage to commercialization at scale? Where and when was your innovation launched? Has your innovation changed or developed since launch, particularly regarding technology and design? If so, what led to these modifications? (200 words maximum)

- e. Describe the manufacturing process for your innovation. If your innovation is a physical product, do you own the machines required to produce the innovation or does a supplier manufacture it for you? If your innovation is a supplier, do you have just one supplier or do different suppliers provide different parts which you then package together or assemble? If your innovation is a service, do you have an in-house team to make the service available or are their different partners needed to make the service available to the end-users? (200 words maximum)
2. What are the specific critical barriers or problems related to the COVID-19 food security challenge that your innovation addresses? (375 words maximum)
3. Describe your innovation's current and/or expected customers/end-users by addressing the following questions. If you sell to a wholesaler or retailer through a B2B model, please comment on the ultimate customer (e.g., women and men smallholder farmers).
    - a. What are your innovation's current and/or expected customers' profiles? Please include information on gender; age; type of agricultural activity (e.g., primary production, processing); if a primary producer, their average farm size; estimated average income (in purchasing power parity-adjusted current USD); and the general locations/geographies in which the agricultural activity takes place. If you sell to different types of customers, please provide an approximate percentage of each type, delineated by geography and type of agricultural activity (250 words maximum)
    - b. What drives demand for your innovation from these customers? How does it bring them value (e.g., allows higher yields, allows better quality outputs that command higher prices, allows storage and preservation so they are not selling amidst a post-harvest supply glut)? (200 words maximum)
    - c. Do these customers need to modify their existing practices or behaviors to use your product or service? What incentives are there for your customers to use your product or service? (200 words maximum)
    - d. Is there significant risk for customers to switch to your product? If so, how do you manage risk for these customers? (200 words maximum)
    - e. Do you expect customers to purchase your innovation just once, or could you have repeat customers? If you provide a service, how frequently do customers require this service? (100 words maximum)
    - f. What is the retention rate for repeat customers? If you have lost customers, what reasons are cited for not continuing to use your product or service? (100 words maximum)
    - g. Do you solicit feedback from your customers? If so, have you incorporated feedback from your customers into your product or service offering? (100 words maximum)

4. Are there any customer segments that your product does not currently target, but you would like it to? If so, what are the barriers to doing so? What are the weaknesses and risks of your proposed business model innovation? (300 words maximum)
5. Describe the expansion and growth strategy for your innovation in Nigeria by addressing the following questions.
  - a. Please describe the expansion and growth strategy for your specific innovation. What are the key elements and timeframe for your growth strategy? How does this fit into your company's growth strategy overall? Are they the same, or is the innovation only a part of a broader growth strategy? (250 words maximum)
  - b. How do you anticipate your innovation's contribution to total revenues evolving over time? Will it be a greater percentage, the same, or less? (100 words maximum)
  - c. Outside of failing to receive the required funding, what are major potential barriers and obstacles you foresee in implementing the innovation's expansion and growth strategy? (200 words maximum)

#### **Commercial/Financial Viability (30%)**

1. Please provide the names and roles of each member of your management team. (250 words maximum)
2. Have you accepted grants, debt, or equity investments for this business model innovation? If so, please list the name of the funder(s) and the estimated amount. (250 words maximum)
3. How would you leverage the award funding and technical assistance if you won this contest? (375 words maximum)
4. How many customers do you have? What have been your customer growth and sales rates for the last year and last five years (if applicable)? (100 words maximum)
5. How much does your product or service cost for customers/clients in your target market(s)? How did you come up with this price? Is the price dependent or inclusive of a government subsidy? (100 words maximum)
6. Please describe your long-term financial management plan to support the innovation. (100 words maximum)



a. Please upload financial documentation to support this description.

7. What are your projected sources and uses of capital specific to your innovation expansion strategy? (For example, you might say, out of the \$5 million USD we want to raise, we want to \$3 million USD in debt to finance expansion into a new country across all business lines, and \$2 million USD in equity to finance adaptation and production of the innovation specifically for this new market.) (100 words maximum)

### **Sustainability (30%)**

1. How does your innovation directly or indirectly benefit, or impact vulnerable groups and the base of the pyramid market segments agriculture-related sectors, such as women, migrants, low-income communities, and stateless citizens? (250 words maximum)
2. How could your business model innovation potentially create additional jobs in value chains in related sectors, such as food processing, logistics, or the agriculture sector broadly? (200 words maximum)
3. How, if at all, does your innovation directly help farmers become more resilient to climate change or other environmental challenges? (200 words maximum)

### **Youth Award Technical Questions (3,150 words)**

#### **Innovation Viability/Potential to Scale to Reach Smallholder farmers (40%)**

1. Describe your innovation in detail by addressing the following questions.
  - a. What is your innovation? Please provide a technical description of how your innovation works, especially any proprietary technology. Are there patents or copyrights associated with this technology? (500 words maximum)
    - i. Provide back-up documentation in the form of a PDF of no more than 3 pages.
  - b. How adaptable is your innovation? For instance, is implementation a 'plug-and-play' exercise (i.e., there is only one type of product and customers use it as-is), or does it require specific tailoring or calibration for different use cases and/or customer segments, either during installation or use? (250 words maximum)
2. What are the specific critical barriers or problems related to the COVID-19 food security challenge that your innovation addresses? (375 words maximum)
3. Describe your innovation's current and/or expected customers/end-users. If you sell to a wholesaler or retailer through a B2B model, please comment on the ultimate customer (e.g., women and men smallholder farmers). (250 words maximum)

4. Describe your company's expansion and growth strategy for your innovation in Nigeria. What are the key elements and timeframe for your growth strategy? (250 words maximum)

### **Commercial/Financial Viability (30%)**

1. Please provide the names and roles of each member of your management team. (250 words maximum)
2. Have you accepted grants, debt, or equity investments for this business model innovation? If so, please list the name of the funder(s) and the estimated amount. (250 words maximum)
3. How would you leverage the award funding and technical assistance if you won this contest? (375 words maximum)

### **Sustainability (30%)**

1. How does your innovation directly or indirectly benefit, or impact vulnerable groups and the base of the pyramid market segments agriculture-related sectors, such as women, migrants, low-income communities, and stateless citizens? (250 words maximum)
2. How could your business model innovation potentially create additional jobs in value chains in related sectors, such as food processing, logistics, or the agriculture sector broadly? (200 words maximum)
3. How, if at all, does your innovation directly help farmers become more resilient to climate change or other environmental challenges? (200 words maximum)

### **Required Additional Documentation**

- Three Past Performance References
- Detailed Budget and Activity Plan
- Required Certifications
- CVs
- Company SAM/DUNS registration (for award nominees only; to be submitted at finalist stage)

## Appendix 2 – Budget Information Requirements

### 1) **Budget Spreadsheet**

The budget should represent a detailed summary budget. A template for the budget will be provided on the online platform. Applicants will need to complete the template and submit it to the online application platform. The basic definitions for the detailed cost elements are provided below.

### 2) **Budget Notes**

The budget notes should provide information on the basis for estimating each line item, including reference to sources used in substantiating the cost estimate (e.g., organization's policy, payroll document, vendor quotes). Budget notes should be included for each line of the budget.

#### i) **Direct Labor**

Direct salaries and wages for all personnel proposed under the application must be in accordance with the applicant's established personnel policies. To be considered adequate, the policies should be in writing, applicable to all employees of the organization, subject to review and approval at a high enough organizational level to assure its uniform enforcement, and result in costs that are reasonable and allowable in accordance with applicable cost principles. The budget notes should include a level of effort analysis specifying personnel, rate of compensation, and amount of time proposed. Anticipated salary increases during the period of the agreement should be included.

#### ii) **Fringe Benefits**

If the applicant has a fringe benefit (health benefits, payroll deductions, etc.) rate that has been approved by a USG agency, such rate should be used, and evidence of its approval should be provided. If a fringe benefit rate has not been approved by USAID, the application should propose a rate and explain how the rate was determined. The narrative should include a detailed breakdown of all items of fringe benefits (e.g., unemployment insurance, workers compensation, health and life insurance, retirement, FICA) and the costs of each, expressed in dollars and as a percentage of salaries.

#### iii) **Travel and Transportation**

The application should indicate the number of trips, domestic, regional, and international, and the estimated costs. Specify the origin and destination for proposed trips, duration of travel, and number of individuals traveling. Per diem should be based on the applicant's normal travel policies.

iv) **Supplies and Equipment**

Equipment is defined as tangible property charged directly to the award, having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 USD or more per unit, unless the applicant's established policy establishes nonexpendable equipment anticipated to be required to implement the program, specifying quantities and unit cost.

v) **Sub Awards (if any)**

Applicants who intend to utilize sub awardees should indicate the extent intended and a complete cost breakdown, as well as all the information required herein for the applicant. Sub-awards cost applications should follow the same cost format as submitted by the applicant.

vi) **Other Direct Costs**

This could include any miscellaneous costs, such as office rent and utilities, communications, transportations, supplies, public outreach, sub-awards, audits, report preparation costs, passports, visas, medical exams and inoculations, insurance (other than the applicant's normal coverage), etc. The narrative, or supporting schedule, should provide a complete breakdown and support for each item of other direct costs.

vii) **Indirect Costs**

If applicable, the applicant should support the proposed indirect cost rate with a letter from a cognizant U.S. Government audit agency, a Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement (NICRA), or with sufficient information for the Challenge to determine the reasonableness of the rates (for example, a breakdown of labor bases and overhead pools, and the method of determining the rate).

## Appendix 3 – Guiding Principles for Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Adherence

The guiding principles mentioned below are based on the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment (UNPRI). However, these principles have been evolved and customized to align with the Challenge’s vision and goals as follows:

- Principle 1: We will be an active issue manager and incorporate ESG issues into the decision-making process, operating structure, and standard practices.
- Principle 2: We will seek appropriate disclosure on ESG issues by the innovators in which we invest.
- Principle 3: We will promote acceptance and implementation of the Principles related to ESG within the WEF nexus and larger international development ecosystem.
- Principle 4: We will work together with all stakeholders to enhance our innovator’s effectiveness in integrating the principles related to ESG into their business and operational model.
- Principle 5: We will report programmatic activities and progress towards integrating the ESG principles.
- Principle 6: We recognize that the level of ESG integration within organizations might be at a beginner/intermediate/advanced level. As a result, we will work with a “no one size fits all” approach. However, innovators must meet a minimum set of requirements related to gender mainstreaming, poverty reduction, and environmental sustainability to be eligible for support

### Classification of the Challenge’s Innovators

All Challenge awardees will be classified into one of the three levels based on their current level of ESG integration into their business and operational model. The three levels are defined as below:

**Beginner:** A Challenge awardee will be termed as a beginner if they meet the minimum set of ESG related criteria required to enter the program, especially criteria related to gender integration, sustainable natural resource management, sustainable water resource management, biodiversity, climate resilience, and poverty reduction. Apart from meeting the minimum prerequisites, the innovator must showcase commitment to further integrate ESG issues into

their business and operational model. The program will support them in increasing awareness of key ESG issues to help them move from beginner level to intermediate/advanced level of ESG integration.

Intermediate: A Challenge awardee will be termed as intermediate if they **not only** meet the minimum set of ESG related criteria required to enter the program, **but also** showcase tangible progress on ESG issues in terms of implementation and results. They might not meet all the stated criteria and goals of the Challenge and hence there could still be scope for improvement. The program will support them to improve and aim to reach an advanced level of ESG integration.

Advanced: A Challenge awardee will be termed as “advanced” if they meet **all** of the stated ESG related objectives and goals set by the Challenge and not just the minimum set of criteria required to enter the program. The program will help them to scale their impact on ESG issues.

## Appendix 4 – DUNS and SAM Registration Guidance

### Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS)

#### **What is a [DUNS number](#)?**

The Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is a unique nine-digit identification number provided by Dun & Bradstreet (D&B). The DUNS number is specific to each organization. The DUNS number offers a way for the US federal government to support awardees.

#### **Who needs a DUNS number?**

Any organization that wants to submit a grant application to the US federal government.

#### **Does this apply to non-US organizations?**

Yes, this requirement applies to all types of organizations, including foreign, non-profit, and for-profit, as well as for state and federal government agencies.

#### **How do I get a DUNS number?**

To Register for a DUNS number, go to: <https://www.dnb.com/duns-number/get-a-duns.html>.

- Select “USAID contractor/grantee”
- Choose the “Country or territory” where your organization is located; enter your organization’s address
- A list of organizations will appear. If your organization appears select it; if not, click “request new DUNS number”

#### **What do I need before I request a DUNS number?**

Before you call D&B, you will need the following pieces of information:

- Legal Name
- Headquarters name and address for your organization
- Doing business as (dba) or other name by which your organization is commonly recognized
- Physical address
- Mailing address (if separate from headquarters and/or physical address)
- Telephone number
- Contact name and title
- Number of employees at your physical location

#### **How much does a DUNS number cost?**

There is no charge to obtain a DUNS number.

#### **What should we do if our organization has more than 1 DUNS number?**

Your organization will need to decide which DUNS number to use for grant application purposes and use only that number.

### **Who at my organization is responsible for requesting a DUNS number?**

This will vary from organization to organization. This should be done by someone knowledgeable about the entire structure of your institution and who has the authority to make such decisions.

### **Who do we contact if we have questions?**

If you have questions about applying for a DUNS number, go to the [DUNS website](#). You can call (+1-844-238-4790), email, or start a live chat.

### **System for Award Management (SAM)**

#### **What is the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#)?**

SAM is a web-based, government-wide application that collects, validates, stores, and disseminates business information about the federal government's trading partners in support of the contract awards, grants, and electronic payment processes.

#### **Do I have to register for SAM?**

SAM is a required step in order for your organization to be able to apply for federal grants. The information below describes SAM and explains the free registration process.

#### **What to check before registering with SAM?**

Use the [SAM Status Tracker](#) to check your organization's registration status with SAM. You may also contact your grant administrator, financial department, chief financial officer, or authorizing official to identify whether your organization has already registered with SAM. If your organization is already registered, take note of who is listed as the E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC).

#### **How do I register with SAM?**

To register with SAM, go to the [SAM website](#) with the following information:

- [DUNS number](#)
- [Taxpayer Identification Number \(TIN\) or Employment Identification Number \(EIN\)](#)

When you register a new entity in SAM to do business with the U.S. government, SAM requires a [notarized letter](#) stating you are the authorized entity administrator before SAM will activate your entity registration in SAM.gov.

When your organization registers with SAM, you must designate an EBiz POC. The EBiz POC is issued a Marketing Personal Identification Number (MPIN) by SAM, which gives you the authority to designate Authorized Organization Representatives (AOR). The AOR is the staff person in your organization who is allowed to submit applications in Grants.gov.

#### **Need more detailed assistance or instructions using SAM?**

- [System for Award Management User Guide](#)
- [Federal Support Desk](#)



**How long does it take to register with SAM?**

Generally, after completing the online registration and sending your notarized letter confirming the entity administrator, it takes up to two weeks to register with SAM, then 1 business day for updates made in SAM to be reflected in Grants.gov. However, your organization must first have an EIN. If your organization does not have an EIN, you should allow an additional [five weeks to request and obtain an EIN from the IRS](#).

[END]