**Section 1 – General Information**

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| **Solicitation Number:** | 2024-10-059 |
| **Solicitation Type:** | Request for Proposals (RFP) |
| **Procurement Description:** | Identifying service providers (firms) to support agri-food MSMEs to develop and implement social marketing and behavior change communication strategies. |
| **Anticipated Period of Performance:** | January 2025 – January 2026 |
| **Place of Performance:** | 13 Districts in the Hinga Wunguke Zone of Operations |
| **Contracting Party:** | **From**: Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture (CNFA)**For**: USAID**Under**: Feed the Future Rwanda Hinga Wunguke Activity 72069623CA00001 |
| **Release Date:** | November 6, 2024 |
| **Point of Contact for Questions and Offers:** | Name:Title:Address:Email: | Aaron GatabaziProcurement and Operations ManagerKigali-Rwandahingawunguke@cnfarwanda.org  |
| **Questions:** | **Question Deadline**: November 14, 2024 |
| **Instructions**: Questions must be submitted in writing; phone calls will not be accepted. Only CNFA’s written answers will be considered official and carry weight in the solicitation and subsequent evaluation. Verbal information received from CNFA or any other entity should not be considered an official response to any questions.  |
| **Offers:** | **Offer Deadline:** November 20, 2024 |
| **Via:** | [x]  Email | [ ]  Hard copy | [ ]  Email or Hard copy |
| **Instructions:** Reference the Solicitation Number in any response to this solicitation. Offers received after the specified time and date will be considered late and considered only at CNFA’s discretion. Offerors must strictly follow the deadlines provided in this solicitation to be considered for award.  |
| **Offer Validity:** | Offers must remain valid for not less than 60 calendar days after the offer deadline.  |
| **Award:** | An award will be made to the offeror who is determined to be the best offeror per the evaluation criteria and methodology provided herein. CNFA will not issue an award to different offerors, entities, or third-parties other than the selected offeror(s) which submits an offer in response to this solicitation. CNFA anticipates awarding a Fixed price agreement to the selected offeror(s). |
| **Terms and Conditions:** | The resultant award is subject to CNFA’s standard Terms and Conditions as stipulated in Section 6.  |

**Section 2 – Scope of Procurement**

1. **Introduction to Feed the Future Rwanda Hinga Wunguke Activity**

CNFA is an international agricultural development organization that specializes in the design and implementation of sustainable, enterprise-based agricultural initiatives. CNFA implements the Feed the Future Rwanda Hinga Wunguke Activity, a USAID-funded $28M five-year (January 2023-January 2028) initiative with the objective to increase incomes and improve nutritional outcomes by sustainably increasing agricultural productivity and strengthening domestic consumption of and markets for safe, nutritious food products (raw and processed).

The activity applies a market systems development (MSD) approach to strengthen private-sector engagement through co-investments and partnerships to improve agricultural productivity, markets, farmer incomes, and nutrition. Hinga Wunguke has four complementary Intermediate Results (IRs) referred to as activity components: 1) Sustainably Increase Agricultural Productivity; 2) Access to Finance for Farmers and Agribusinesses Increased, 3) Improve Producers’ Market and Nutrition Outcomes, and 4) Strengthen the Enabling Environment to Foster Market Driven Agriculture.

Hinga Wunguke is focusing its interventions on the USAID Feed the Future Zone of Influence (ZOI)districts: Bugesera, Burera, Gakenke, Gatsibo, Karongi, Kayonza, Ngoma, Nyabihu, Nyamagabe, Nyamasheke, Ngororero, Rubavu, and Rutsiro. The Activity is prioritizing value chains with the greatest potential impact on increasing farmer incomes, agri-business profitability, and nutrition outcomes. Its current priority value chains include maize, beans (HIB, French beans, dry & shelled beans), soybean, Irish potato, peas (dry & green), orange fleshed sweet potato (OFSP), carrot, tomato, mango, avocado, and passion fruit.

1. **Scope of Work:**

The formative research conducted by Hinga Wunguke during the inception phase, including baseline studies, market system assessments, and others, shed light on current market trends and highlighted constraints and gaps within specific value chains. To understand the factors (barriers and motivators) affecting the consumption of nutritious foods, Hinga Wunguke conducted a consumer preference and consumption study in six districts. The study showed that availability and affordability are the most important factors affecting consumption, followed by desirability, social norms, and gender dynamics related to intra-household decision-making around food purchasing.

Furthermore, the findings from this study demonstrated that consumers have a low degree of trust towards market actors, and that rural Rwandan consumers are still most likely to eat food that is produced hyper-locally in their own community. As a result, the study suggested that it will be important to pursue three main private sector engagement strategies to increase consumption of nutritious foods: 1) partner with actors to generate market demand for increased production of nutritious crops (i.e., agriculture to nutrition pathway); 2) support business models that will make safe, nutritious foods more available and affordable to rural communities (e.g., product development, social marketing, SBC campaigns, distribution channels); 3) increase producer incomes and access to finance to increase household purchasing power for such food products. There may be market opportunities to address these factors, including by working with food systems actors to conduct last-mile marketing or point of sales activities and to address market inefficiencies that may be driving food costs.

As such, Hinga Wunguke developed an activity-level Integrated Social Marketing and Behavior Change (ISMBC) Strategy, which will promote consumption of select target foods and contribute to an increase in dietary diversity of women of reproductive age, and children aged six to 23 months across Rwanda. The Hinga Wunguke ISMBC strategy is a framework for the Activity level approach, recognizing that the Activity will support partners to develop and implement tailored social marketing and/or behavior change strategies based on their needs. ***Please refer to Attachment 2: Executive Summary of Consumer Preferences and Consumption Study and Attachment 3: Executive Summary of Integrated Social Marketing and Behavior Change (ISMBC) Strategy for more information on the research conducted to date.*** The full study report and ISMBC strategy will be shared with the selected offeror.

In this regard, Hinga Wunguke will work with and through market actors to develop innovative solutions to overcome identified constraints and develop messaging that promotes the adoption of desired behaviors. Social marketing strategies and social behavior change communication (SBCC) will be used as tactics to drive demand and build emotional connections between market actors and consumers to increase consumption of target foods and promote adoption of other desired behaviors.

Hinga Wunguke acknowledges that services for social marketing and behavior change play an important role in market research and consumer insights, brand building and awareness, product promotion, building trust and relationships, and promoting sustainable practices as well as business growth and profitability.

* 1. **Objective:**

The purpose of this RFP is to identify service providers (firms) that can provide tailored, targeted support to market actor partners, including agri-food MSMEs or any other targeted group, to design and implement social marketing and behavior change communication strategies for nutritious food products. Contracted service providers will facilitate Hinga Wunguke partners to build food brands and marketing of their food products especially in underserved communities.  Each partner will require a unique social marketing and/or behavior change communication strategy based on their needs and their food products to contribute to overall objective. The strategy should use the Social-Ecological Model to address various factors on different levels (e.g, individual, community, organizational interpersonal) that influence desired behaviors.

CNFA intends to issue a blanket purchase agreement (BPA) to the selected offeror, with task orders outlining the scope of work for a specific market actor partner.

**2.2. Illustrative Tasks:**

The tasks listed below are illustrative examples of the work that Hinga Wunguke anticipates requiring from the service provider to support market actor partners to generate demand for their food products, increase reach, or promote desired behaviors. While the specific number of market actors will be determined based on received budgets and availability of funding, Hinga Wunguke anticipates providing ISMBC assistance to at least 10 agri-food processors, food businesses, agribusinesses, public agencies, or civil society-organizations. Technical assistance may be provided concurrently or at different times depending on each actor’s readiness for support. Illustrative tasks include:

* **Assess and identify Hinga Wunguke partners’ needs:** The service provider will conduct an assessment of each partner and objectives to understand the products or services offered and identify their needs before developing a social marketing plan or behavior change communication strategy.
* **Conduct consumer market research and willingness to pay surveys**: The service provider may support partners to tailor surveys and conduct market research to understand customer/audience needs, preferences, motivations, and purchasing power.
* **Developing integrated social marketing and behavior change communication strategies for Hinga Wunguke partners:** In collaboration with the partner, and based on the research, the service provider will develop the strategy for the specific product, service, or campaign that incorporates information on the target customers or audience, the proposed approach, messages, and appropriate channels to reach customers/target audience. The service provider will develop the social marketing and/or SBCC strategy for each partner using the Social-Ecological Model (SEM) to address factors and 4Ps (product, price, place, and promotion) when applicable. The partner-specific strategy should outline various marketing and behavior change approaches that are tailored to the food product, which will generate demand for new food products. It should also identify key messages (e.g., radio and print campaigns, visual advertising, banding, etc.) and brand identity. *NOTE: Hinga Wunguke is open to outsourcing the graphic design work required for the execution of marketing strategies. If the selected offeror has graphic design experience, this may be included in the contract. However, it is not a requirement.*
* **Supporting implementation of the developed strategy:** The service provider may be engaged to provide support during all stages of implementation of the strategy, depending on the capacity of the partner and resources available. Hinga Wunguke anticipates this being particularly important when working with partners that are using new marketing tactics or distribution channels to reach new, rural markets and buyers.
* **Developing tools, kits, and best practices based on lessons learned and work conducted under this contract:** The service provider will be requested to develop social marketing and SBCC tools (i.e., survey templates, guidelines) based on work conducted with various Hinga Wunguke partners. The service provider may be requested to provide capacity building training to Hinga Wunguke and partner staff on best practices for designing and implementing ISMBC strategies.

**2.3. Illustrative Deliverables:** will be contingent on specific task orders issued through the contract.

**3. Geographic Code Compliance:** Items offered must comply with USAID Geographic Code 935. For a list of Source/Nationality countries approved within this USAID Geographic Code, refer to ADS Chapter 310, Source and Nationality Requirements for Procurement of Commodities and Services Financed by USAID. Contact CNFA with any questions regarding Geographic Code compliance.

**Section 3 – Evaluation Methodology and Criteria**

CNFA will use a Weighted Trade-Off Analysis, Including Cost Criteria evaluation methodology for this solicitation. Weighted Trade-Off Analysis selects the offeror providing the best overall value to CNFA, considering both price and technical factors, according to the assigned weights provided in the evaluation criteria. The Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) will assess offer acceptability in accordance with the following criteria:

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| **Criteria** | **Criteria Description** | **Assigned Weight** |
| **Firm experience conducting assignments of a similar nature** | Demonstrated firm-level experience in working with the private sector involved in food processing sector in Rwanda.  Demonstrated firm-level experience conducting consumer market research to understand consumer insights and consumption behaviors.Demonstrated experience developing Social Marketing and/or Behavior Change Communication strategies or campaigns that influence customers’ behaviors and attitudes. Demonstrated expertise crafting compelling messages, creating engaging communication materials, and utilizing a variety of channels (e.g., print, digital, social media, TV, radio) to reach target audiences. Understanding of behavior change theories and techniques.Demonstrated knowledge and awareness of the Government of Rwanda’s requirements for food marketing and branding, and developing promotional materials.   | 30 |
| **Qualifications and expertise of personnel** | The firm must share the CVs of staff and/or consultants that will be performing the work: They must demonstrate strong experience in market research, social marketing/marketing, social behavior change communication, branding, and business development. At least five years of working experience in these areas is required. Deep understanding of Rwanda’s food safety and processing policies, including experience working with food regulatory authorities is preferred.  | 25 |
| **Quality of the methodology proposed, demonstrated market research, social marketing strategy development and behavior change communication, brand development and evaluation skills** | Excellent written and oral communication skills in English, as demonstrated by a two-page methodological write-up of the proposed offer.  The firm should develop a clear methodology that demonstrates that the firm clearly understands the assignment and illustrates very well how task orders related to developing and implementing ISMBC strategies will be executed.  | 25 |
| **Budget**  | Reasonableness and allowability of proposed budget relative to the above-mentioned preferred qualifications and SOW.   | 20 |
| **Total** | **100 points** |

**Section 4 – Offer Format Instructions**

Offers in response to this solicitation must comply with the following instructions:

1. Submissions will be accepted in the following language: English
2. Include the following in the offer footer:
	1. Offeror name
	2. Solicitation Number
	3. Page Numbers
3. Offer in the format provided in Annex 1

**Section 5 – Complete Offer**

A complete offer must include the following documents:

1. Well Completed Attachment 1 – Offer Template
2. Copy of the Offeror’s business license – if an individual, a copy of personal identification
3. CV/Resumes for the proposed team to perform the assignments
4. Two similar references

**Section 6 – CNFA Terms and Conditions**

**1. Ethical and Business Conduct:** CNFA is committed to integrity in procurement, and only selects offerors based on objective business criteria such as price and technical merit. CNFA does not tolerate fraud, collusion among offerors, falsified proposals/bids, bribery, or kickbacks. Any organization or individual violating these standards will be disqualified from this solicitation, barred from future procurement opportunities, and may be reported to both CNFA’s Client – as applicable – and the appropriate Office of the Inspector General.

Employees and agents of CNFA are strictly prohibited from asking for or accepting any money, fee, commission, credit, gift, gratuity, object of value or compensation from current or potential vendors or suppliers in exchange for or as a reward for business. Employees and agents engaging in this conduct are subject to termination and will be reported to CNFA’s Client – as applicable – and the appropriate Office of the Inspector General. In addition, CNFA will further inform these agencies of any Offerors’ offers of money, fee, commission, credit, gift, gratuity, object of value or compensation to obtain business.

Please contact the designated Point of Contact on the Solicitation Cover Page with any questions or concerns regarding the above information or to report any potential violations. Potential violations may also be reported directly to CNFA’s Fraud Hotline in writing via email at FraudHotline@cnfa.org or you may make an anonymous report by phone, text, or WhatsApp to the CNFA Global Fraud Hotline at 202-991-0943.

**2. Terms and Conditions:** This Solicitation is subject to CNFA’s standard terms and conditions. Any resultant award will be governed by these terms and conditions; a copy of the full terms and conditions is available upon request. Please note the following terms and conditions will apply:

1. CNFA’s standard payment terms are 30 calendar days after receipt and acceptance of any commodities or deliverables. Payment will only be issued to the entity submitting the offer in response to this Solicitation and identified in the resulting award; payment will not be issued to a third party.
2. No commodities or services may be supplied that are manufactured or assembled in, shipped from, transported through, or otherwise involving any of the following countries: Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Syria.
3. Any international air or ocean transportation or shipping carried out under any award resulting from this Solicitation must take place on U.S.-flag carriers/vessels unless otherwise approved by CNFA.
4. United States law prohibits transactions with, and the provision of resources and support to, individuals and organizations associated with terrorism. The selected offeror under any award resulting from this Solicitation must ensure compliance with these laws.
5. United States law prohibits engaging in any activities related to Trafficking in Persons. The selected offeror under any award resulting from this Solicitation must ensure compliance with these laws.
6. The title to any goods supplied under any award resulting from this Solicitation shall pass to CNFA following delivery and acceptance of the goods by CNFA. The risk of loss, injury, or destruction of the goods shall be borne by the offeror until the title passes to CNFA.
7. The offeror is prohibited from providing certain telecommunications equipment or services as a substantial or essential component of any system, or as a critical technology as part of any system, produced by the following covered companies, and their subsidiaries and affiliates, in the performance of any resulting award: Huawei Technologies Company; ZTE Corporation; Hytera Communications Corporation; Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company; Dahua Technology Company; and any other company as determined by the United States Government. The offeror certifies it will not provide covered telecommunications equipment or services to CNFA in performance of the resulting award. If covered telecommunications equipment or services are offered, the offeror must disclose it.

**3. Disclaimers:** This is a Solicitation only. Issuance of this Solicitation does not in any way obligate CNFA, its project(s), or its client(s) to make an award or pay for costs incurred by potential offerors in the preparation and submission of an offer. In addition:

1. Offerors are responsible for ensuring their offers are received by CNFA in accordance with the instructions, terms, and conditions described in this Solicitation; failure to adhere to instructions may lead to disqualification
2. CNFA may cancel the Solicitation and not award at any time
3. CNFA may reject any or all responses received
4. Issuance of the Solicitation does not constitute award commitment by CNFA
5. CNFA reserves the right to disqualify any offer based on offeror failure to follow the Solicitation instructions
6. CNFA will not compensate offerors for response to the Solicitation
7. CNFA reserves the right to issue award based on initial evaluation of offers without further discussion
8. CNFA may negotiate with offerors for their best and final offer and/or request clarifications from any offeror prior to award
9. CNFA reserves the right to increase or decrease its order for quantities or units with the selected offeror
10. CNFA may reissue the Solicitation or issue formal amendments revising the original Solicitation specifications and evaluation criteria before or after receipt of proposals
11. CNFA may modify the specifications without issuing a formal notice to all offerors when the revisions are immaterial to the scope of the Solicitation
12. CNFA may choose to award only part of the activities in the Solicitation, or issue multiple awards, if in the best interest of CNFA
13. CNFA reserves the right to waive minor offer deficiencies that can be corrected prior to award determination to promote competition
14. Offerors understand that CNFA’s Client(s) is not a party to this Solicitation and the offeror agrees that any protest hereunder must be presented – in writing with full explanations – to CNFA for consideration. CNFA’s Client(s) will not consider protests regarding procurements carried out by CNFA. CNFA, at its sole discretion, will make a final decision on any protest for this procurement.

**Attachment 1 – Offer Template**

*The following cover letter must be placed on letterhead – if applicable – and completed/signed/stamped by a representative authorized to sign on behalf of the offeror:*

**PART 1 – COVER LETTER**

To: Aaron Gatabazi, Procurement and Operations Manager

 Kigali-Rwanda

Reference: Solicitation no. 2024-10-059

To Whom It May Concern:

We, the undersigned, hereby provide the attached offer to perform all work required to complete the activities and requirements as described in the above-referenced Solicitation. Please find our offer attached.

We hereby acknowledge and agree to all terms, conditions, special provisions, and instructions included in the above-referenced Solicitation. We further certify that the below-named organization—as well as the organization’s principal officers and all commodities and services offered in response to this Solicitation—are eligible to participate in this procurement under the terms of this solicitation and under the applicable regulations.

Furthermore, we hereby certify that, to the best of our knowledge and belief:

* We have no close, familial, or financial relationships with any CNFA, its project staff members, or its client (as applicable);
* We have no close, familial, or financial relationships with any other offerors submitting proposals in response to the above-referenced Solicitation;
* We and our principal offerors are not debarred, suspended, or otherwise considered ineligible for receiving US Government funds. We understand that CNFA will not make any award to an entity that is debarred, suspended, or considered ineligible by the US Government;
* The prices in our offer have been arrived at independently, without any consultation, communication, or agreement with any other offeror or competitor for the purpose of restricting competition;
* All information in our proposal and all supporting documentation is authentic and accurate;
* We understand and agree to CNFA’s prohibitions against fraud, bribery, and kickbacks;
* We understand and agree to CNFA’s prohibitions against funding or associating with individuals or organizations engaged in terrorism or trafficking in persons activities.

We hereby certify that the enclosed representations, certifications, and other statements are accurate, current, and complete:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **For:** | **Offeror Name:** | *Offerors must provide entity name, if applicable, here* |
| **Submitted By:** | **Name:** | *Offerors must print name of the authorized person who completed this offer here* |
| **Title:** | *Offerors must provide title of the authorized person who completed this offer here* |
| **Signature:** | *Offerors must provide signature of the authorized person who completed this offer here* |
| **Date:** | *Offerors must indicate the date this offer was completed here* |
| **Organization Information:** | **Phone:** | *Offerors must provide phone number for contact if selected for negotiation or award here* |
| **Email:** | *Offerors must provide email for contact if selected for negotiation or award here* |
| **Address:** | *Offerors must provide address for contact if selected for negotiation or award here* |
| **Website:** | *Offerors must provide organization website, if applicable, here* |
| **Country of Nationality:** | *Offerors must indicate their country of legal organization, ownership, citizenship, or lawful permanent residence here* |
| **Registration or Taxpayer ID Number:** | *Offerors must provide registration and/or taxpayer ID number here* |

**PART 2 – OFFER**

Offerors are instructed to complete this form and place it on the Offeror’s letterhead. Once completed, this form serves as the binding proposal in response to this solicitation and is valid for the period identified on the cover page of this Solicitation. Failure to submit the information required herein may lead to disqualification of the offer.

1. **Technical Proposal**

**1.1. Background**

A 2-page relevant overview of the objectives of the agri-food MSMEs social marketing and behavior change strategies assignment should be included in the proposal.

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| *Offerors must respond to the prompt here.* |

**1.2. Work Plan**

The 3-page proposal should clearly outline how the scope described in Section 2 will be completed and clarify the main specific role of the consultant and his/her team members, if any, and a proposal for when the deliverables will be submitted within the period of performance. Please also be sure to answer the below questions:

* + - If there are requirements to be provided by Client to facilitate the assignment, other than those clarified by the consultant to achieve the objectives, please note this in the application.
		- If Hinga Wunguke needs to avail the needed presented requirements by applicant, if there is compelling justification, then please list it here.

The plan should explain the details of each activity per partner, including those mentioned in the work plan for this work area. The schedule and the person responsible for each activity must be clearly indicated

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| *Offerors must respond to the prompt here.* |

**1.3 Consultant CVs**

The team of consultants proposed by the firm should be attached as an annex to the proposal and should highlight the proposed key staff’s experience in conducting similar assignments, including experience developing and implementing social marketing and behavior change strategies (for the agri-food sector, preferred). Each CV is limited to no more than 5 pages.

* 1. **Total Size of the Submission**

In sum, the offeror’s proposal should consist of a document that includes the Cover Letter, a 2-page background section, 4 pages max of methodology and workplan section about the conduct of the assignment, and a 5-page maximum of CV per person as an annex, as well as a 1–2 page Cost Proposal with references, as described in this section and in section 2 below.

1. **Cost Proposal**

Within the submission, the firm/organizations are instructed to complete the below financial proposal table. The financial proposal should be presented in the national currency of the firm depending on the country of incorporation/registration. CNFA reserves the right to negotiate the proposed budget (rate or percentage) or request clarification at its discretion.

* 1. **Budget**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cost Category | Qualification | Unit | Unit Price | Budget Notes |
| Offerors must propose line-items within the Cost Category; repeat for as many line-items as necessary  | Offeror to must specify the qualification of proposed personnel (Phd, Masters, Bachelor, …) and years of experience | Offerors must provide the unit price here (i.e. day) | Offerors must quote the unit price here (daily rate) | Offerors must describe the purpose of the cost and basis for price here |
| Consultancy fees |   |   |   |   |
| Key personnel 1: i.e Task Team leader |   |   |   |   |
| Key personnel 2: |   |   |   |   |
| Key personnel 3: |   |   |   |   |
| Etc… |   |   |   |   |
| Management fees (put preferred percentage of total consultancy in each work order amount). | N/A | N/A |   | Pls specify percentage for this item |

**Note**: Please specify the percentage of indirect costs or firm management fees that may be billed for each work order (for instance 5%,10%, 20%, etc. of consultancy total fees). All reimbursables such as workshop costs, transport, participants’ accommodation, etc. will be covered by CNFA separately.

1. **Tax Considerations**

Offerors are made aware of CNFA’s tax status in Rwanda. CNFA is tax exempted, therefore offerors are required to submit financial proposal including the due taxes as per tax regime for individual consultant in Rwanda. Offers submitted must comply with these tax considerations.

1. **Bank Account**

Offerors are instructed to complete boxes highlighted in gray:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Does the Offeror have an active bank account? | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No |
| If yes, provide the Offeror name associated with the Bank Account if selected for eventual award.  | *Offerors must provide the name associated with their Bank Account, if applicable, here as below format:* ***Beneficiary Name:******Bank Name:******Bank Address:******Currency:******Account number:******IBAN Number:******Swift/BIC Number:******Intermediary Bank Name:******Intermediary Bank Swift Code:******Intermediary Bank Account Number (if provided, not necessary):*** |

1. **References**

Offerors are instructed to complete the boxes highlighted in gray:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reference No.** | **Reference Name** | **Contact Information** | **Affiliation** |
| 1 | *Offerors must provide name of reference (organization or individual) provided here* | **Name:****Phone:****Email:****Address:** | *Offerors must describe relationship with reference here* |
| 2. | *Offerors must provide name of reference (organization or individual) provided here* | **Name:****Phone:****Email:****Address:** | *Offerors must describe relationship with reference here* |
| 3. | *Offerors must provide name of reference (organization or individual) provided here* | **Name:****Phone:****Email:****Address:** | *Offerors must describe relationship with reference here* |

Attachment 2: **Executive Summary from Hinga Wunguke Consumer Preferences and Consumption Study**

**Introduction**: The Feed the Future Rwanda Hinga Wunguke Activity in Rwanda contracted Three Stones International (TSI) to conduct a Consumer Preferences and Consumption Study to inform the design of private-sector led activities to drive the demand for and consumption of selectfoods targeted by the Activity, including high-iron beans (HIB), orange-fleshed sweet potato (OFSP), soya flour (and soya flour products, including locally mixed flours), fortified flour products, passion fruit, mango, and carrots. This study was planned to inform the development of an Integrated Social Marketing and Behavior Changes (ISMBC) strategy.

**Methodology**: Data collection was conducted in February 2024 in six districts in Rwanda, specifically in Rutsiro, Burera, Nyamagabe, Gakenke, Nyabihu, and Gatsibo. The research aimed to uncover both consumer preferences and consumption behaviors of target Hinga Wunguke foods and food systems actors’ business practices that could potentially affect consumer behavior.

**Findings:** Include the following:

Consumption of target foods:As Hinga Wunguke had already conducted a 24-hour dietary recall as part of the project baseline, this study aimed to better understand the frequency of consumption. Accordingly, participants were asked about their frequency of consumption over the last month (January 2024). Overwhelmingly, the target foods are not consumed frequently, with only 21% of respondents consuming fortified maize flour products at least once a week in the last month, 27% for soya flour, 4% for HIB, 7% for OFSP, 47% for carrots, 26% for mango, and 24% for passion fruit. Nuances around differences in consumption practices by districts and urban versus rural populations are described in the full report (to be shared with selected offeror). Factors affecting consumption of target foods: A comprehensive understanding of the key factors that influence the consumption of healthy diets and target foods is crucial for developing evidence-based interventions. Hinga Wunguke assessed several domains of the food environment including accessibility, affordability, desirability, convenience, availability, and gender dynamics and their potential effect on consumption practices. Overwhelmingly, perceived availability and affordability were the most important factors affecting consumption of the target foods. Interestingly, Hinga Wunguke found that the target foods are largely available in target districts in the 2023 baseline study. However, this study sheds light on how consumers experience and perceive food availability. Specifically, the study found that consumers, particularly rural consumers, see own-production or community-level production as the main and preferred approach for increasing availability and ultimately driving their consumption of the target foods. Furthermore, results show that only 10% of rural consumers visit their nearest weekly markets (sector or district markets), where food availability is high, on a weekly basis. Therefore, these consumers may not feel the target foods are accessible, as they are not available within their typical, rural mobility spaces (e.g., home to farm in rural areas).

Affordability was also repeatedly cited as a critical factor affecting the consumption of target foods. In fact, affordability was listed as the primary reason (over availability) for soya flour, carrots, mangoes, and passion fruit. Importantly, as consumers find the raw versions of the target foods to be expensive, it is not recommended to promote the consumption of value-added versions of the target foods unless they are more affordable than the raw version, as the business case is limited. Finally, consumers frequently cited the nutritional importance of the target foods (and other nutrient-rich foods) as important to them and overwhelmingly reported an interest in increasing their consumption of foods they considered to be healthy, including the target foods. In line with the findings of the ecological factors index in the 2023 baseline study, this study also reinforces that if the primary two factors—availability and affordability—are addressed, then consumers would likely increase their consumption of these foods.

**The high-level takeaways for all studied factors can be found below:**

Private sector business practices and opportunities to drive consumer demand:It is evident that food vendors, wholesalers, and processors care about the quality of their products—including freshness, taste, and size of the product. Furthermore, the findings reveal that these market actors overwhelmingly feel that their products are attractive to customers. However, while quality and attractiveness of foods may be driving factors affecting food purchasing for some consumers, such as those who hold salaried jobs and are higher earners, these are not driving factors affecting consumption from the Hinga Wunguke target audience, who are predominantly lower-income farmers. Food vendors and processors are exploring various strategies to enhance the affordability of their products, such as offering smaller quantities.

However, market actors report a prevailing sense that rural consumers still struggle to afford their products. While some vendors and processors are hesitant about the potential profitability in last-mile markets, there are those who express interest in venturing into this space, which could make target foods more available and accessible to last-mile consumers. The majority of retailers that interact with consumers employ marketing strategies, such as point-of-sale advertising, with more than half incorporating nutrition messages into their marketing efforts.

**Recommendations:** The following recommendations may be considered as approaches to drive local demand for and consumption of target foods.

1. **Go back to the basics - agriculture to nutrition pathways:** Given that availability and affordability were the two most important factors affecting consumption, it is suggested that Hinga Wunguke emphasize opportunities to increase local availability of target foods through consumers’ personal production or production within the community. Furthermore, it is suggested that Hinga Wunguke support income generation activities amongst farmers, as food affordability is a critical factor affecting consumer demand. The findings suggest that the logic behind the agriculture to nutrition pathways is correct in the context that *if* agricultural productivity and/or incomes are increased, *then* the primary population is likely to increase their consumption of the target foods. Discussed further in the ISMBC Strategy.
2. **Consider that increasing the consumption of other foods, outside of Hinga Wunguke’s focus, may be more likely to improve dietary diversity:** The Hinga Wunguke baseline found that the food groups least likely to be consumed in the 24 hours prior to the study were those that Hinga Wunguke does not work with, such as nuts and seeds, milk, meat, poultry, fish, and eggs, with consumption ranging from 5.15% to 20.87% across all surveyed districts. These findings align with World Food Programme’s Fill the Nutrient Gap study, which found that although households are generally considered food secure, a significant portion of their diets primarily consists of staple foods, pulses, oil, sugar, and some vegetables. However, they lack meat, dairy, and fruit (WFP, 2019). This data indicates that in order to increase the percentage of women of reproductive age (WRA) and children consuming a diverse diet, it may be necessary to increase the consumption of foods that are not included in Hinga Wunguke's target foods, as the consumption of these food groups are substantially lower than the other food groups. Discussed in the ISMBC Strategy.
3. **Do not rely on awareness generation activities to drive consumer demand:** As desirability of the target foods is already high, Hinga Wunguke should avoid relying on social and behavior change communication (SBCC) interventions to drive consumer demand and consumption behaviors. The one caveat is with OFSP and HIB, as there is a lack of familiarity with these products. If Hinga Wunguke is to implement SBCC activities, the researchers recommend leveraging the influence of community health workers (CHWs) and other government actors due to consumer mistrust in private sector actors. Nonetheless, given Hinga Wunguke’s scope, the Activity may consider piloting social marketing activities that leverages existing desire to consume the target foods and reminds and reinforce consumers’ nutrition knowledge of and value for the target foods. These initiatives should be carefully tracked to evaluate their impact. Discussed further in the ISMBC Strategy.
4. **Pilot base-of-pyramid (BoP) activities to better reach last-mile consumers:** Considering the strong dependence of rural consumers on local produce and their infrequent visits to larger, established weekly markets (e.g., sector or district markets), accessibility to the target foods and other nutrient-rich foods is likely low. Therefore, there may be opportunities to support select vendors and processors to pilot last mile, point of sale distribution activities to increase the availability and accessibility of these products within rural communities. About one-third of vendors were interested in adapting their marketing, particularly distribution, strategies to reach last-mile consumers and cited needing financial support, largely for transportation costs and increasing their inventory. Further, there may be an opportunity to increase the affordability of select target foods, namely fortified flour products and soya flour. Hinga Wunguke may consider partnering with food vendors and processors to adapt their product and pricing strategies to increase the affordability of their product. Discussed further in the ISMBC Strategy.
5. **Address market inefficiencies to drive down food prices:** It is recommended that Hinga Wunguke investigate opportunities to address market inefficiencies that are resulting in high food prices. For one, all of the interviewed wholesalers reported that high development of collection centers and post-harvest handling and storage (PHHS) infrastructure and technology could reduce transportation costs, reduce food loss, and formalize the sector. Other constraints that private sector actors referenced included inadequate food supply and market fees. Addressing constraints and inefficiencies like these may result in an improved supply of the target foods at more affordable prices. Discussed further in the ISMBC Strategy.

This study provides valuable insights into the consumption practices and factors affecting the consumption of target foods in the study area. The study findings reveal that there is a need to increase the consumption of target foods among the respondents. While participants expressed awareness of the nutritional benefits of these foods and showed interest in increasing their consumption, there are several challenges that need to be addressed.

The findings from this study suggest that a shift away from private-sector-led social marketing strategies to address social and internal factors is required, as consumers do not trust market actors. Rather, it is recommended that Hinga Wunguke first focus on increasing the availability and affordability of the target nutritious foods through increased production and by piloting private-sector led activities that increase the last-mile availability and affordability of the target foods.

Availability and affordability emerged as key factors influencing consumption practices. **The study underscores consumers’ preference towards subsistence farming and meeting their food needs, both current and future, from their own production or from production within the community.** Nonetheless, there is an openness and willingness to purchase foods if they become more available by market actors, but **consumers repeatedly cited that the target foods are unaffordable.**

There may be market opportunities to address these factors, including by **working with food systems actors to pilot last-mile marketing or point of sales activities and to address market inefficiencies that may be driving food costs. However, currently, it will likely not be effective for market actors to use social marketing activities to address social and internal factors that influence the consumption practices of rural, low-income consumers, as these consumers are not currently motivated by desirability.** Rather, market systems should prioritize opportunities to improve food availability and affordability.

Attachment 3: **Executive Summary from Hinga Wunguke Integrated Social Marketing and Behavior Change (ISMBC) Strategy**

Hinga Wunguke uses a market systems development (MSD) approach to facilitate systems changes in relationships and behaviors in market systems of key value chains of nutritious food products, from the production to consumption stage. As an MSD Activity, Hinga Wunguke focuses on facilitation and active engagement with market system actors, including businesses, the Government of Rwanda (GoR), and civil society organizations. Through co-investments, technical and financial support, these partners can be facilitated to adopt and scale up new ideas and adapt successful innovations and practices that improve the production of selected high value agricultural products and consumption of nutritious foods.

This Integrated Social Marketing and Behavior Change (ISMBC) Strategy focuses on Hinga Wunguke’s goal to increase the dietary diversity of women of reproductive age, as measured by minimum dietary diversity for women (MDD-W), and children aged six to 23 months, as measured by minimum acceptable diet (MAD) across Rwanda, by promoting the consumption of selected target foods. The selected priority behaviors, which are the anchor of the ISMBC Strategy, are as follows:

1. Women of reproductive age (WRA) and children six to 23 months increase their consumption of the target foods.
2. Caregivers feed children 6–23 months of age with age-appropriate foods, frequency, amount, quality, and consistency while continuing to breastfeed children.

This ISMBC Strategy presents social and behavior change (SBC) activities that aim to address the factors identified from the Consumer Preferences and Consumption formative research affecting the adoption and practice of these target behaviors. Specifically, the ISMBC Strategy presents opportunities based on the formative research (Consumer Preference and Consumption Study) to drive increased market availability and affordability of target foods and foster consumer demand to drive consumption and ultimately improve nutrition. To lend structure to this approach, the ISMBC Strategy draws from an abbreviated socio-ecological model which reminds us that, in order to successfully promote a behavior, programmers have to understand factors at the structural, social and internal level.

**Overarching Hinga Wunguke SBC Approach**

The initial assumption was that certain pre-existing conditions existed, both within the market and amongst consumers, to implement private sector led demand generation efforts to drive an increase in consumption of the Hinga Wunguke target foods. However, the formative research revealed that there are major structural barriers — namely, the availability and affordability of target foods — that make demand creation and social marketing secondary to addressing these structural barriers. The ISMBC Strategy responds to this finding by first proposing activities that respond to these structural barriers through activities in the food system. Once the structural barriers have been addressed, or alongside activities that aim to address structural barriers, SBCC activities and social marketing strategies can be effective in driving demand and increasing the consumption of target foods. This strategy includes recommendations and pathways for both: first, to address the factors of lack of availability and affordability of target foods, and second, to address the social and internal factors that will still exist once food is available and affordable.

Below are the actions to tackle social (e.g family support, social norms) and internal factors (e.g knowledge, skills) that are still encouraged, despite the focus on overcoming structural barriers. These actions can be carried out concurrently with structural activities or subsequently.



**Recommended activities for the target foods**

The activities suggested below to address the structural factors are done so through working with private sector actors, such as food processors, food retailers, or input suppliers. Similarly, the SBC and/or social marketing activities that aim to address the internal and social factors are largely suggested to be done in conjunction with the structural activities and through the same actors

Table: Potential Approaches and Activities to Address Target Factors

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Factors to address | Priority approach/activities |
| Fortified flour products |
| Structural: affordability, availability | Areas of inquiry to further refine the approach:* Understand target consumers’ willingness-to-pay for fortified flour products
	+ What is the acceptability of whole grain fortified flour products to target consumers?
	+ How much are target consumers currently spending on flours in a month? What would be the cost difference to switch from the mixed flours to fortified flour products?
* What are the opportunities to decrease the costs of fortified flour products? Would food processors be open to different pricing strategies?
* Is there an opportunity to have food processors who sell their products in last-mile markets to be exempt from VAT for that portion of product sold?
 |
| * Availability: Provide technical assistance (TA) to food processors to develop a new product line for fortified flour products
* Affordability: With food processors, investigate opportunities to decrease costs in their operations (improved on-plant efficiencies, distribution, etc.) in order to have costs-savings to reduce prices for fortified flour products
* Affordability: Provide TA to food processors to package the fortified flour products in smaller, more affordable sizes and support them in procuring new packaging materials
* Availability and affordability: Encourage food processors to sell back fortified flour products to the producers that supply them with raw materials. Specifically, encourage food processors to provide an opportunity for producers to buy back the fortified flour products from the processor at a lower rate, as an opportunity for the processor to help improve relationships and trust.
* Availability: Support food processors to develop last-mile agents/retailers:
	+ Provide TA to food processors to diversify their marketing strategies to investigate last-mile retailing opportunities. Potential end-market retailers could include cooperatives/farmers’ groups, food retailers, CHWs, and retailers working with the mixed flour, as these are the flours the Activity’s target consumers are typically purchasing
	+ Support relationship building between food processors and retailers.
 |
| Internal/social: social norms around who fortified flour products are for | * Pair the above market-systems SBC interventions with a campaign that focuses on communicating to last-mile consumers that fortified flour IS for them, breaking down the social norms that these products are only for rich people. Please refer to Annex D to see an example of how this insight can be leveraged to develop a concept and campaign (with potential opportunity for branding).
 |
| Internal: awareness of the availability of smaller packages of fortified flour products | * Create edutainment /community dramas that involve trusted influencers in the community, such as community leaders, CHWs, and mothers, to break down the social norm that fortified flour products are not for rural, low-income consumers AND to raise awareness of their new local availability in smaller, more affordable packages.
 |
| Soya flour, as part of locally mixed flour products |
| Structural: availability | Areas of inquiry to further refine the approach:* What proportion of the vendors and retailers that are selling mixed flours are not selling soya? Is there actually an opportunity to increase the sales point of soya flour by working through these mixed flour vendors?
 |
| * Availability: Facilitate the last-mile marketing of soya flour as part of mixed flours by support vendors and retailers who are selling the flours to also sell soya flour, particularly in Western and Northern provinces (target provinces provided by Hinga Wunguke team)
 |
| Internal: health as a motivator | * Partner with private sector producers or vendors to put a sticker/ star/ symbol/sign next to or on soya flour to denote how it is nutritious (bodybuilding, energy-giving, or protective) when added to locally mixed flours. Launch a social marketing or messaging campaign alongside that articulates what the symbol/star means, so consumers understand to look for it and purchase soya flour. This campaign should clearly demonstrate that this is not a marketing technique of the vendor, as community members do not trust market actors. Instead, it should be clear that this is a campaign sponsored by the Government and Hinga Wunguke.
* Alongside activity #8, support vendors to incorporate messages into their marketing.
* Note: If possible, it is recommended to leverage the influence of trusted actors in this activity, such as CHWs or local leaders, given consumers’ lack of trust in food vendors.
* Opportunity for additional research: Monitor consumers’ trust in food vendors and whether they believe and trust the messages provided by them.
 |
| HIB |
| Structural: affordability, availability | * Availability (and potentially affordability): Support local production of HIB in order to increase availability from own production and availability in the market.
* Last-mile distribution is NOT recommended at this point, as the supply of HIB is low and higher-income consumers are largely the ones purchasing them at the market, which limits the business case for retailers to adapt marketing strategies to reach lower income consumers
 |
| Internal: health as a motivator | * As part of support to input suppliers selling HIB seeds, provide brief training on the messages they can include in their marketing that leverages the finding that health is a motivator for target consumers and encourages producers to grow and consume HIB.
 |
| Internal: familiarity  | * Market or community-level activity with vendors or input suppliers of HIB to provide taste tests so consumers can try the product and learn how it is prepared. Integrate taste tests into the pre-existing monthly cooking demonstrations, particularly if CHW and other trusted influencers are present.
* Facilitate community dialogues in peer groups (men’s groups and women’s groups), at church, or during community meetings or other local gatherings, to discuss methods to prepare HIB. Topics may include how to use HIB in place of regular beans, different methods for cooking with HIB, what pairs well with HIB, or how to prepare complementary foods with HIB.
 |
| OFSP |
| Structural: affordability, availability | Areas of inquiry to further refine the approach:* Is OFSP the same price as regular sweet potato in the market? Or fairly similar? If OFSP is slightly more expensive than regular sweet potato, is health as a motivator a big enough motivator for consumers to swap OFSP for regular sweet potato?
 |
| * Availability (and potentially affordability): Support local production of OFSP in order to increase availability from own production and availability in the market.
* Availability: Encourage pop-up night vendors, who sell in last-mile markets, to carry and sell OFSP.
	+ Note: The area of inquiry above should be considered before and during piloting of this activity.
 |
| Internal: health as a motivator, familiarity | * As part of the support to input suppliers and seedling producers, provide brief training on the messages they can include in their marketing that leverages the finding that health is a motivator for target consumers and encourages producers to grow and consume OFSP.
* Support vendors to be able to explain the differences between OFSP and regular sweet potato and incorporate messages.
	+ Note: If possible, it is recommended to leverage the influence of trusted actors in this activity, such as CHWs or local leaders, given consumers’ lack of trust in food vendors.
	+ Opportunity for additional research: Monitor consumers’ trust in food vendors and whether they believe and trust the messages provided by them.
 |
| Internal: familiarity | * Market or community-level activity with vendors or input suppliers of OFSP to provide taste tests so consumers can try the product and learn how it is prepared. Integrate taste tests into the pre-existing monthly cooking demonstrations, particularly if CHW and other trusted influencers are present.
* Facilitate community dialogues in peer groups (men’s groups and women’s groups), at church, or during community meetings or other local gatherings, to discuss methods to prepare OFSP. Topics may include how to use OFSP in place of regular sweet potato, different methods for cooking with OFSP, what pairs well with OFSP, or how to prepare complementary foods with OFSP.
 |
| Carrots |
| Structural: affordability, availability | Areas of inquiry to further refine the approach:* Are carrots sold by pop-up night vendors? If not, why not? Do they not see the business case for selling in last-mile markets?
 |
| * Availability: Encourage pop-up night vendors, who sell in last-mile markets, to carry and sell carrots.
 |
| Internal: health as a motivator | * As part of the support to input suppliers or integrated into other agriculture activities, provide brief training to relevant private sector actors on the messages they can include in their marketing that leverages the finding that health is a motivator for target consumers and encourages producers to grow and consume carrots.
* Support vendors to be incorporate messages.
* Opportunity for additional research: Monitor consumers’ trust in food vendors and whether they believe and trust the messages provided by them.
 |
| Mango and passion fruit |
| Structural: affordability, availability | * Availability and affordability: Implement agricultural productivity and income generating activities to increase local availability of passion fruit and mangoes and improve food purchasing power.
* There is likely not a business case to sell in last-mile markets to improve food availability, as there is limited demand, nor an opportunity to improve affordability through food processing or other private-sector driven activities.
 |
| Social and internal: health as a motivator and addressing norm that fruits are for kids or when someone is sick | * As part of support to input suppliers selling inputs for mango and passion fruit, provide brief training on the messages they can include in their marketing that leverages the finding that health is a motivator for target consumers and encourages producers to grow and consume these fruits.
* Create edutainment/community dramas that involve trusted influencers in the community, such as community leaders, CHWs, and mothers, to break down the social norm that fruits are only for young children or to be consumed when someone is sick and to encourage regular consumption.
 |
| Other SBC and/or Social Market Activities, not specific to a target food   |
| * Develop an umbrella brand to guide social marketing activities.
* Consider partnering with Gikuriro Kuri Bose, another USAID program currently being implemented in Rwanda, to integrate messages about target foods into their pre-existing trainings and activities with mamas and papas lumieres and CHWs.
* Invite CHWs to be present for other activities, such as market taste test activities or community dialogues to introduce new foods, as well as farmer service center (FSC) and MINAGRI and private-sector extension activities aimed to support improved production of the target, nutritious foods.
 |