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**Highlands Resilience Activity**

**NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY**

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| **Date of Issuance** | 11th October,2024 |
| **Deadline for Questions** | Information session will be conducted on Friday 18thOctober 2024,18th December and 18th of March 2025. This will be conducted online, if interested to participate, please do send a request to: [hrainnovations@mercycorps.org](mailto:hrainnovations@mercycorps.org) |
| **Closing for Date & Time for Applications** | June 30th, 2025: **Closing Time:** 11:59pm |
| **(6) Target Regions and (36) Woredas** | **Amhara** (Bugna, Gubalafto, Habru  Raya Kobo, Lasta, Estie, Sede Muja, Guna Begemider);  **Oromia (**Deder, Fedis, Goro Gutu, Jarso, Kombolcha, Tullo, Chiro, Oda Bultum, Gemechis, Mesela);  **Tigray (**Endamekoni, Alaje, Hintalo, Wojerat, Samre, Seharti, Enderta);  **Sidama** (Aleta Chuko, Dara, Dale),  **Central** (Mirab Badawacho, Shashogo, Soro);  **Souther**n (Yirgachefe, Wenago, Boloso Bombe, Boloso Sore, Kindo Koyisha) |
| **Target Population** | Production Safety Net Program Households |
| **Anticipated Funding Limit** | Subject to availability of funds, arrange of 5,000- 100,000 USD with co-investments requirements from the potential applicants (Subject to renewable based on, need and performance) |
| **Anticipated Performance Period** | The anticipated performance period for the award is one year (12months), |

1. **OVERVIEW:**

Highlands Resilience Activity (HRA) is a 5-year (2023-2028) USAID funded Feed the future program that aims to facilitate inclusive, diverse, and connected markets that enable 120,000 Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP)households in the 6 target regions and 36 woredas to sustainably reach the graduation threshold. HRA’s strategy focuses on system strengthening, which is crucial for PSNP households, and ensuring that they have sustained income, all-year-round nutritious food, and risk-diversified livelihood paths. The HRA consortium under the leadership of Mercy Corps include Sidama Development Association (SDA); Action for Development); Hundee-Oromo –Grassroots Development Initiative; Mahibere Hiwot for Social Development (MSD); Mums for Mums; Village enterprise and First Consult brings together expertise to work through pro-poor, inclusive, nutritious and shock responsive resilient markets. The program has seven intermediate result areas with integrated activities across the targeted geographic areas. Below are the HRA intermediate result areas.

1. Increased productivity and competitiveness of targeted PSNP on-farm Enterprises
2. Increased productivity and competitiveness of Targeted PSNP off-farm enterprises
3. Increased employment and wages labor among Targeted PSNP clients
4. Improved Diets, particularly among women and young children
5. Improved Market Systems and Commercialization
6. Increased private investment and Finance in Highland communities
7. Client Responsive Public and private social services improved and expanded

**II) OBJECTIVE OF THE NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY:**

The purpose of this Notice of Funding Opportunity is to solicit Expressions of Interest (EOI) from prospective private and civil society organizations that are eager to innovate or expand services that contribute towards achievement of the above result areas. **The Notice of funding opportunity is to ensure all interested and qualified organizations and entities have a fair opportunity to compete and qualify for funding.** The expression of interest should among others focus on business models or approaches that strengthen the following:

* Access to quality inputs and services through a last-mile agricultural and livestock inputs and service supply chain networks for PSNP HHs; This includes all other innovations that would increase on-farm productivity for PSNP’s
* Access to tailored and accessible agricultural extension and advisory services.
* Customized, innovative and accessible financial service solutions for PSNP HHs.
* Skills and employment opportunities for PSNP women and youth in HRA target areas.
* Access, supply and consumption of year-round nutritious foods for PSNP households.
* Participation in pro-PSNP market systems.
* Increasing social accountability and delivery of basic social services mainly in the health and education sectors to PSNP households.
* Gender Youth and Inclusion responsive solutions.

Applicants are encouraged to propose innovative yet sustainable, gender sensitive and inclusive approaches to addressing the issues stated above and producing results to meet the Activity’s objectives. In developing the approach and concept, applicants should review the extent to which the proposed business model will address issues stated above and produce verifiable results that contribute to the Activity’s indicators. Applicants are also encouraged to demonstrate value in embedded or bundled business models that benefit PSNP households with inclusive opportunities for Women, Youth, People Living with Disabilities (PLWD) and other marginal groups.

**Illustrative Results**

* Number of PSNP HHs accessing farm input
* Number of PSNP HHS accessing credit services
* Number of PSNP HHs linked to competitive output markets
* Number of PSNP HHs who have access to agricultural extension services
* Number PSNP HHs youth linked to skills and employment opportunity
* Number of PSNP HHs who have access to year-round nutritious foods
* Number of PSNP HHs who have increased income
* Number of PSNP HHs who have increased access to basic social services mainly in the health and education sectors to PSNP households

**III) ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

Mercy Corps is interested in partnership with market actors who fulfill the following **ELIGIBILITY** criteria and are willing to customize their business model to meet the various demands of PSNP Households. To be considered for this funding, applicant(s) must meet the following minimum eligibility requirements

* Should be legally registered with valid and current renewed business licenses.
* Business who has established business models in providing and supplying quality and inclusive products and services to the market
* Commitment/interest to innovate services and business models appropriate to PSNP target participants
* Commitment to share information related to the service and the business operation with mandated local government bodies and the Mercy Corps.
* The ability to cost share (in kind or cash) in the proposed initiative with a contribution of up to 50% of the total budget is desirable. Applicants that demonstrate strong ownership inform high-cost share commitments shall have high chances for success.
* Demonstrate presence in at east one HRA target regions or demonstrated willingness to adopt a business model that is appropriate for PSNP households which is tailored to the needs of marginal groups in the target regions.

**NOTE:**

***Prior experience with USAID, other US Government entities or Mercy Corps is not required for eligibility. Mercy Corps encourages applications from all potential new partners.***

***As stated in FAR 4.1102 (a), prospective applicants for amounts above $25,000 must register in the US Government system for award management (SAM), which can be found here:*** [***https://sam.gov***](https://sam.gov)***. SAM registration shall not be required for in kind awards and those below USD 25,000. Applicants will be required to demonstrate and show co-investments towards their proposed business applications and models***

**IV) EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST AND APPLICATIONS**

This solicitation will involve a multi-tiered evaluation process.

**Expressions of Interest:** During the first phase, applicants are required to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) summarizing the proposed business model activities, overall goal and objectives, illustrative activities, and expected results. The EOI should clearly and concisely explain the proposed business model/approach purpose, relevance, activities and expected results in support of the objectives of the Highlands Resilience Activity as set forth above. All EOIs must be submitted in the Expression of Interest Format included below.

EOIs may be submitted to the Activity at any time within the closing date and time as specified in this solicitation.

The Mercy Corps shall evaluate EOIs submitted in response to this Noice of Funding Opportunity on a rolling basis. The EOIs will be evaluated based on defined criteria, listed under section (V) below.

**Full Applications:** Upon evaluation of EOIs, Mercy Corps will invite organizations that submitted EOIs to a co-creation and or provide feedback for consideration in submission of a full application.

**Application:** The application template is provided below and must be completed. Completed applications will be accepted English and must be no more than ten (10) pages in length (not including budget, proof of registration, or other required attachments). A soft copy of the application form will be emailed to interested applicants on request to this email [hrainnovations@mercycorps.org](mailto:hrainnovations@mercycorps.org)

**Areas not eligible for funding:** Financial support for purchase of the items deemed as restricted items by USAID. Restricted items include used machinery and equipment and other USG surplus machinery and equipment).

**Submission process:** Interested applicants should submit in an enclosed envelop (hard copy) to the Mercy Corps offices below or soft copy of the Application and required documentation through: hrainnovations@mercycorps.org to:

* MC Ethiopia Country office: Hayahulet, Near Gulla gul, Telephone number +251.111.110.777; or through email [hrainnovations@mercycorps.org](mailto:hrainnovations@mercycorps.org)
* MC Mekelle office: Hadinet sub city Hadinet Kebele around 200-meter east direction of central statistical agency; Telephone, 091472 2022/0914746576/0962513538
* MC Woldiya Office: Near North Wollo Health Department Office; Telephone: +251 334 317 224.
* MC Oromia office: Dire Dawa, Greece camp behind Dire Dawa public library telephone: +25125131220/21.
* Hawassa office: Piaza, Nib Bank building 5th floor Telephone; +251912049258/+251985412885.
* MC Central office: Hosaena town, Along B2 road to Addis Ababa, Infront of Mariam church next to Kana restaurant. Telephone; +251 911915142.
* MC Sodo Office: Ethiopian Catholic Sodo social and development coordination compound; Telephone: +251913184052.

Please also be sure to include all the requested documents listed in the Application Form template format (Annex 1)

**V) SELECTION CRITERIA**

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| **Category** | **Allocated Points** |
| A. *Feasibility of design & Technical Approach*   * Viability of the proposed technical approach (i.e., the proposed technical approach can reasonably be expected to produce the intended outcomes). * Contribution of the proposed approach to HRA’s objectives and expected results. | 30 |
| B. *Impact on Target Group*   * Does the approach correspond to the needs of the PSNP households and directly benefit them? * Ability to enable targeted actors to earn reasonable and sustainable returns based on a clearly articulated business case. | 20 |
| *C. Management & Programmatic Capacity*   * Capability to undertake and accomplish the proposed activities and business models | 15 |
| D. Sustainability/Commercial viability   * Ability to build and strengthen the capacity of small-scale traders and farmers. * Can the activity be sustained by the organization beyond the grant? * Ability of the applicant to jointly invest in the proposed activity/business model | 15 |
| E. Inclusivity   * Does the proposed activity incorporate a gender component or represents a strong commitment to including women, youth, disabled and other vulnerable groups as beneficiaries? | 10 |
| F. Past Performance   * Evidence of previous or ongoing business or activity related to the above? | 10 |
| G. Cost Efficiency | n/a |
| Overall Rating (out of 100 points) | 100 |

**VI) AWARD ADMINISTRATION**

Successful applicants will be awarded on an ongoing basis after a successful pre-selection through evaluation, co-creation and due diligence process have been completed. Non-successful applicants will be notified within a one-month period upon submission of application.

**Conditions**

Issuance of this solicitation in no way constitutes a commitment by Mercy Corps HRA to execute any agreement or to pay any costs incurred by any applicant in applying.

Please note that Mercy Corps/ HRA will fully respect the confidentiality of all companies involved in the program. If selected, HRA will establish an agreement with the company/institution that describes the objective of collaboration and that clearly defines each party’s respective responsibilities, roles, and obligations. Successful applicants must be willing to share information with HRA regarding their performance, and HRA will conduct interviews with clients / customers to gather information on impact and to monitor progress.

**Annex 1**: Application Form.

