Request for Proposals (RFP)

Mid-Term Evaluation

For the
Creating an Environment for Cooperative Expansion (CECE) Project

Funded by
USAID's Cooperative Development Program (CDP)

Implemented by
National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International (NCBA CLUSA)

RFP Number: 2021-01
Closing Date: May 7, 2021
Closing Time: 5:00 PM EST

1. Request for Proposals Overview

This Request for Proposals (RFP) seeks proposals from qualified individuals interested in conducting a Mid-Term Evaluation for USAID's Cooperative Development Program (CDP)-funded Creating an Environment for Cooperative Expansion (CECE) project implemented by NCBA CLUSA. This request calls for short-term technical assistance from an individual with demonstrated abilities to design and implement evaluations and research studies and collect data from multiple stakeholder types such as cooperatives, local support organizations like apex organizations, and government officials. The purpose of the mid-term evaluation is to assess 1) project accomplishments in relation to goals and objectives and early signs of project effectiveness; 2) sustainability efforts; 3) document best practices; and 4) recommended actions for mid-course correction.

2. Project Background

Project Name	Creating an Environment for Cooperative Expansion (CECE)
Project Duration	August 15, 2018 - August 14, 2023
Project Countries	Guatemala, Peru, Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, Ecuador
Donor	United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
Implementing Organization	National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International (NCBA CLUSA)
Project Goals	Improve enabling environments, Enhance support to cooperatives, Improve business performance of cooperatives

The CDP Program is funded by USAID's Bureau of Development, Democracy and Innovation (DDI) Local, Faith-Based and Transformative Partnerships (LFT) Hub in Washington, DC, with concurrence from each

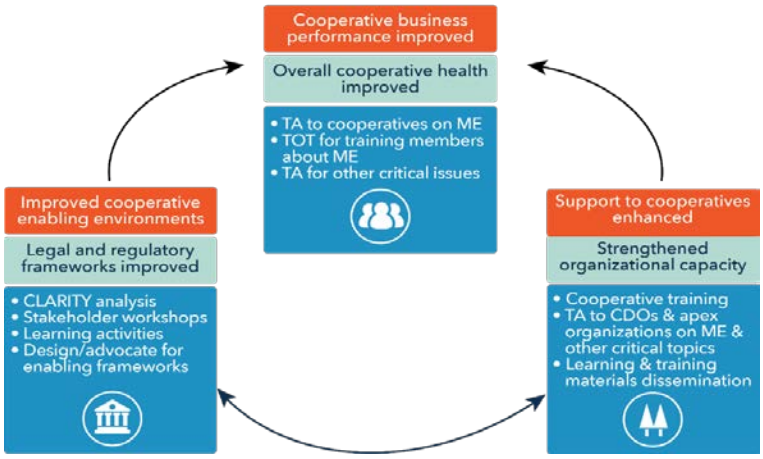
country USAID Mission. The CECE project team has staff in each country and is coordinated by a US-based management team.

The CECE project works in Guatemala, Peru, Kenya, Tanzania, and Madagascar to: 1) improve cooperative enabling environments; 2) strengthen local organizations' capacity to support cooperatives; and 3) strengthen individual cooperatives' business performance. Additional work has been authorized in Ecuador to promote cooperative enabling environments.

These goals are further elaborated into the following objectives:

1. Improved cooperative business performance
   a) Member equity increased
   b) Cooperative governance improved
   c) Cooperative management improved
   d) Market performance improved
2. Improved cooperative enabling environments
   a) Improved access to services and resources
   b) Legal and regulatory framework improved
3. Enhanced development community's support to cooperatives
   a) More effective programming for cooperatives
   b) Increased dissemination of learning
   c) Strengthened collaboration among CDOs and the development community

To achieve these distinct yet complementary goals and objectives, CECE's activities are focused on: improving the legal and regulatory framework for cooperatives, building the capacity of local support institutions to provide quality cooperative development services, and providing targeted technical assistance to cooperatives including a focus on member equity when possible with more advanced cooperatives. CECE's illustrative activities and expected results are shown in Figure 1:



Problem Statement/Development Challenge

Cooperatives cannot thrive and benefit their members and communities without a strong business model and supportive environment. In the countries where CECE works, there is: 1) an inhibiting legal and regulatory framework, 2) lack of effective in-country cooperative development support organizations, and 3) inadequate cooperative governance and management.

CECE's following activities seek to address the problem statement:

I. Improving the Cooperative environment

At the national level, CECE's country work plans for improving the cooperative enabling environment are designed with key partners, including government officials leading cooperative reform. We analyze each country's legal and regulatory environment, using tools developed through the Cooperative Law and Regulation Initiative (CLARITY); share findings through stakeholder workshops, working groups and publications; and co-create action plans with stakeholders and project partners. The CLARITY results provide an evidence-based framework for governments and other stewards of cooperative law. These stakeholders may choose to host broader workshops to validate findings and share results to guide needed revisions. Cooperative learning events (CLE), either separately or as part of the stakeholder workshops, can provide trainings on critical elements of cooperative success.

NCBA CLUSA has completed cooperative law analyses using CLARITY tools and organized consultation and dissemination workshops in all five core countries, and recently began working in Ecuador on a cooperative law and regulation review. Follow up actions are different in each country based on stakeholder interest and needs.

II. Strengthening local cooperative development networks

CECE strengthens local cooperative support organizations and networks so they can provide ongoing technical assistance to cooperatives, facilitate cooperative-to-cooperative linkages, and promote the cooperative business model. Support from strong institutions can attract investment in cooperative development, and cooperatives inspire higher confidence from businesses interested in sourcing from low- and middle-income countries if supported by quality service providers. We connect local partners with the network of institutions and organizations already working on cooperative development, including apex organizations, consulting firms, financial institutions, training organizations, and colleges and universities. CECE develops work plans in partnership with local organizations to meet their needs in cooperative development, including legal and regulatory reform, member equity, and to support cooperatives in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. CECE staff serve as facilitators, supporting these networks to provide quality services to cooperatives and serving as resource.

CECE also connects with other donors and projects working with cooperatives and producer organizations. The goal is to build the capacity of cooperative development partners who can support ongoing cooperative development needs.

III. Improve cooperative business performance

To improve cooperative business performance, CECE works with approximately 60 agricultural cooperatives in a variety of value chains (dairy in Kenya, coffee and cacao in Peru, etc) to strengthen their capacity through coaching, training, and peer-to-peer learning exchanges. This coaching and training is provided by project staff and local partners. We have conducted organizational assessments using ScopeInsight and NCBA CLUSA assessment tools and other qualitative assessment instruments that informed coaching plans and targeted technical assistance.

3. Purpose and Scope of the Mid-Term Evaluation

The purpose of this Mid-Term Evaluation is to provide an internal review of progress towards mid-term targets and objectives. Specific objectives of the mid-term evaluation are to:

1. Assess project performance
2. Assess sustainability efforts

3. Identify and recommend midcourse corrections
4. Document best practices and lesson learned

The mid-term evaluation will assess project activities within the six project countries using an appropriate mix of document review, data collection, virtual interviews, and possibly virtual focus groups. A baseline survey was conducted in October 2019 and provides baseline indicator measurements for CECE's outcome indicators. Access to CECE's baseline assessment report and corresponding data collection tools will be made available to the selected evaluator.

The selected evaluator will collaborate with NCBA CLUSA staff and take the lead in developing an appropriate methodology and corresponding data collection tools (including sample sizes) for conducting the evaluation. The evaluator will produce a draft evaluation design for NCBA CLUSA and USAID's review, and should integrate feedback as appropriate. Next, the evaluator will lead coordinating enumeration and data collection during implementation, data cleaning, qualitative data coding and analysis, as well as developing an evaluation report. The evaluator will submit the evaluation report to NCBA CLUSA for review and approval and will integrate all feedback as appropriate. Finally, the evaluator must handover all raw primary datasets in a machine-readable format such as MS excel or CSV for NCBA CLUSA's records.

Table 1 shows potential mid-term evaluation questions organized by the generally recommended evaluation categories that includes components such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability in addition to measuring goal achievement, impact, best practices, and lessons learned.

The following questions represent illustrative or potential evaluation questions only, and the selected evaluator will work with NCBA CLUSA to finalize a smaller set of evaluation questions.

Table 1: Potential Evaluation Questions

Evaluation Component	Evaluation Question
Goal Achievement	1. To what extent have project goals been achieved to date? Which activities have contributed to the successful attainment of the project goals? 2. Which activities have been successful in meeting their targets? To what extent have the targets under each objective and activity been met? 3. Which activities failed to reach their targets and why? Include analysis of factors that delay/prohibit adequate progress towards results.
Effectiveness	4. To what extent have CECE's interventions contributed to the attainment of project specific objectives? 5. Has the project led to the planned activities? Has it achieved the expected results to date? 6. What adaptations, if any, were made to the project's implementation process to achieve project objectives and targets? 7. What were the noticeable changes in behavior and practices of cooperative organizations that may have led to change? a. Governance and management b. Market performance c. Member equity d. Enabling legal and regulatory frameworks for cooperatives e. Adaptation to COVID-19 8. What factors facilitated both intended and unintended positive changes

	(this includes project staff and resources)? 9. What factors both intended and unintended were responsible for stagnation of negative effects? 10. What programmatic approaches may have contributed in creating enabling environments? 11. What programmatic approaches may have contributed in enhancing local cooperative development community support?
Sustainability	12. To what extent have cooperative leaders and members, private sector, and local government entities been involved in the operation of the project? 13. Can the practices and/or techniques introduced by the project be maintained locally? How have these techniques and technologies been passed on and their use maintained? What are the conditions necessary for local stakeholders to adopt these practices and/or techniques? 14. What factors are likely to hinder sustainability in relation to the project? 15. What project activities are likely to contribute towards sustainability and is there evidence that project activities or benefits will be sustained after the project ends?
Best Practices and Lessons Learned	16. What lessons learned can be documented at this point to inform implementation of the program until completion? 17. What best practices can be shared with stakeholders and donors?

4. Evaluation Approach and Methodology

The selected evaluator will collaborate with NCBA CLUSA staff to refine and prioritize evaluation questions, and then develop and document an appropriate approach and methodology for the evaluation that offers relevant answers to the evaluation's objectives and key questions. The methodology should include but not be limited to: document review; key stakeholder interviews, survey questionnaires, expert consultations, case studies, and direct observations. The evaluator will develop and pilot test appropriate field data collection methods and tools, consulting the baseline survey questionnaire to ensure comparability. The evaluator will be responsible for revising the data collection tools based on learning from pilot testing. Given the COVID-19 situation, travel for the evaluator is not currently being considered so data collection will be done virtually by the evaluator and with support from CECE in-country teams.

The evaluator will review relevant records and data from NCBA CLUSA's field activities. The evaluator may consult other documentation from NCBA CLUSA's Headquarters Office. The evaluator will work with the project's field teams to collect data to represent a wide area of implementation. The evaluation will also take gender and youth disaggregation into consideration when choosing participants to sample. Select cooperatives as well as their records and activities will also be available for observation. The evaluator will identify any data gaps for further investigation.

The evaluation methodology will be approved by NCBA CLUSA prior to commencing the data collection phase of the evaluation. The evaluator will liaise closely with relevant NCBA CLUSA staff during the development of the evaluation methodology and implementation.

The selected evaluator will implement the following activities:

A. Undertake a literature review of relevant documents from country reports, national policies and regulations, special studies carried out by other agencies, and project documentation;

B. Gain a full understanding of the project operations, implementation schedule, and project indicators;
C. Develop evaluation design using a mixed methods approach. This will include review of secondary data sources i.e. data from the project web-based M&E system, and project activity record systems. Design appropriate data collection tools for data collection from cooperatives, credit unions and their members. The evaluator will:
   i. Identify a representative sample of cooperative members and/or their representatives to be interviewed/surveyed from all five countries;
   ii. Pre-testing, editing, translation, finalization, and reproduction of interview/survey instruments (final data collection tools to be approved by NCBA CLUSA);
   iii. Integrate qualitative data collection methodology and tools;
   iv. Apply statistical techniques for designing, analysing, and reporting quantitative data;
D. Develop data collection guide(s) specifying data collection and management structure, field schedules, and data quality assurance methodology.
   v. Coordinate, train, orient, and supervise field interviewers and enumerators as necessary;
   vi. Coordinate field data collection using pilot-tested tools to address objectives of this study and apply quality assurance;
   vii. Clean, code and analyze qualitative and quantitative data;
   viii. Perform quality assurance during design, testing, fieldwork, data entry, data analysis and reporting;
   ix. Organize all raw data collected into an anonymized database, to be shared with NCBA CLUSA
   x. Report the study results in appropriate tables, charts, and narrative;
   xi. Present findings, conclusions, and recommendations (in both written report and PowerPoint formats).

Table 2: Illustrative Evaluation Methods

Actor/Partner	Selection Method	Data Collection Method
Direct and indirect clients	▪ Use project's local partner listing as a sampling frame ▪ Treat each country as a stratum ▪ Determine the sample size for each country utilizing appropriate sample size estimation formula. ▪ Select sample randomly from each stratum.	▪ Structured survey to capture quantitative information ▪ M&E report and other project document review ▪ Focus group discussions and ▪ Key Informant Interviews to capture qualitative information.
Cooperatives	▪ Quantitative Data ▪ Use cooperative listing as a sample frame ▪ Treat country as a stratum ▪ Determine the sample size utilizing appropriate sample size estimation formula. ▪ Apply stratified random sampling methods to select participants from each country. ▪ Qualitative Data ▪ Use of availability and snow-ball sampling method to select focus group participants.	▪ Document reviews ▪ Case Studies ▪ Structured survey to capture quantitative data ▪ Focus group discussions and Key Informant Interviews to capture qualitative information.

Government officials and institutions	▪ Purposeful and availability sampling method	▪ Document reviews ▪ Key informant interviews
Local Cooperative Support Organizations (cooperative apexes, unions, etc, local implementation partners, etc)	▪ Quantitative data ▪ Census instead of sample as the number is manageable. ▪ Qualitative data ▪ Availability and snow-ball sampling method to select focus group participants	▪ Document review ▪ Structured survey to collect quantitative data ▪ Focus group discussions and Key Informant Interviews to capture qualitative information

5. Data Analysis

Data will be analyzed at the country and project levels. The country-level analysis will include exploration and explaining emerging themes and concepts within each country. Project level analysis will involve synthesizing the emerging themes and concepts and explanatory factors from all countries together. The evaluator will lead the development of a qualitative codebook using deductive coding, inductive coding or a mix of both approaches, integrating feedback from NCBA CLUSA.

Quantitative data will be analyzed using appropriate statistical analysis tools. The analysis will involve descriptive analysis that will be presented in tabular/chart formats. Within country and across country analysis will be conducted for each indicator and participant category. The evaluation team will develop a code book that will include codes for location, participant type, questions, and response categories.

All the field notes will be transcribed first in the local language and then translated in English. Analysis of qualitative data will follow data cleaning and coding of qualitative transcripts. The evaluation team will develop draft findings from qualitative data coding, and present to the NCBA CLUSA team for validation. Upon validation, the evaluation team will finalize data coding, and then analyze the data to develop findings. Next, the evaluation team will draw subjective conclusions, and co-develop recommendations with NCBA CLUSA based on perceived themes among the analyzed data. As appropriate, data will be presented in visual format that will help conclusion drawing and verifications.

6. Addressing Limitations

Due to the complexity of the different project components, locations of the project, and COVID-19 travel restrictions, the MTE will be conducted using a hybrid approach with an external evaluator and CECE field team support for data collection. Opportunities for errors and bias exist. The evaluator is expected to be aware of such complexity and note this in a limitations section of the evaluation inception report and final evaluation report. The evaluator will develop strategies to minimize possibilities of errors or bias. The evaluator will develop quality control systems, including developing detailed data collection guides and overseeing field data collection.

This evaluation will heavily rely on secondary data reported in semi-annual and annual reports. The quality of this performance data will affect the accuracy of projected trends. The evaluator should check the validity and reliability of performance data before analyzing it, and note any limitations to NCBA CLUSA.

Primary data collected from partners/clients may reflect the opinions of the most dominant groups without capturing the perceptions of less vocal groups. The evaluator should take this into account and ensure to the extent possible that all parties freely express their views.

7. Expected Deliverables

Deliverables under this assignment will include the following:

1. Draft and final Inception Report to provide a plan for fieldwork with a description and schedule for all activities. It will also include all tools to be used for data collection, including surveys and questionnaires.

    a. Development of an adequate sampling design and sample size calculations;
    b. A thorough discussion of the methodology including: strengths and weaknesses, participatory approaches used to involve key stakeholders, justification and description of any statistical analysis undertaken, and software used. The discussion of any random sampling used should include details on how the random respondents were identified and invited to participate.
    c. Key questions related specifically to the programmatic technical areas of focus.
    d. Limitations
    e. Quality Assurance Plan
    f. Work plan and detailed outline of the evaluation with key questions, major tasks, responsible parties, outputs, and specific schedules prior to initiation of the evaluation. The work plan will be approved by NCBA CLUSA prior to implementation;
    g. Data Collection and Analysis Tools: Survey instruments, data collection instruments, and completed questionnaires;
    h. Data analysis plan detailing anticipated coding methods, statistical techniques for quantitative data, and proposed software for qualitative data coding;
2. Qualitative and quantitative data codebook;
3. Cleaned quantitative and qualitative datasheets in a machine readable format;
4. List of participants from interviews including name, organization, and occupation, and place of residence;
5. Raw and cleaned notes and transcripts from interviews;
6. Draft Evaluation Report (Including performance indicators Annex)
7. Electronic copy of the Final Mid-Term Evaluation report. The report will contain the following sections (draft and final versions);
    a. Executive Summary;
    b. An introduction containing the objectives of the Terms of Reference (ToR) and a brief description of the program;
    c. Background of physical, geographic, cooperative agricultural, and socio-economic conditions surrounding the project;
    d. Evaluation methodology;
    e. Data limitations;
    f. Findings by summary and by project locations (including narrative, charts, and tables);
    g. Conclusions
    h. Responses to Objectives with reference to survey data and analysis;
    i. Table of responses to Key Questions with references to supporting survey data and analysis;
    j. Lessons Learned;
    k. Recommendations;
    l. Annexes:
        - Evaluation ToR
        - Composition of the team
        - List of key informants, focus group participants
        - References

- Indicator Performance Tracking Tables (IPTT)
- Survey tools
- List of acronyms

8. A presentation of the evaluation results and an electronic version of the final PowerPoint presentation based on the Evaluation report;
9. Some specific impact quotes from the various stakeholders from interviews and focus group discussions. Quotes should contain identifying details about the speaker i.e. youth or women cooperative members, government officials, local partner staff, etc.

8. Audience and Intended Use

This evaluation will help measure project performance to date and the effectiveness in achieving its stated goals. Performance results, lessons learned, and the success of the supported activity are to be shared with USAID to guide project implementation for the remaining years of the activity and to inform future activity design. The intended audience for the report will include the project's key stakeholders e.g., USAID, program participants, and local and national government. Other audiences may include individuals and groups who are not necessarily engaged in project activities but may benefit from the findings disseminated by NCBA CLUSA.

9. Evaluation Management and Coordination

The mid-term evaluation will be conducted by an individual outside NCBA CLUSA with support from the project's field teams and additional field-based data collectors as needed. Given the COVID-19 limitations and restrictions, the NCBA CLUSA in-country teams will provide logistical support to the evaluation team including inviting stakeholders to meetings, making transport and accommodation arrangements, and recruiting enumerators (when and if needed). The M&E Team from NCBA CLUSA HQ will manage the overall quality and delivery of the Mid-Term Evaluation.

The evaluator will present methodology and findings to NCBA CLUSA. The NCBA CLUSA HQ M&E Director will review and approve the deliverables. The evaluation report will be finalized after approval from the USAID CDP. The evaluator will draw his/her own conclusions free from organizational or political pressure.

Table 3: Approximate Timelines of Events

Activity	Estimated Date of Completion
Advertising of TOR	Early April 2021
Review and selection of candidates by procurement Committee	Early May 2021
Sign agreement with selected consultant	Mid May 2021
NCBA CLUSA and selected evaluator discuss evaluation	End of May 2021
Finalize inception report and data collection tools	Mid-June 2021
Pilot data collection tools in the field	Early July 2021
In-country data collection	Mid-July 2021 – End of August 2021
Data analysis	End of August-End of September 2021
Draft report submitted to NCBA CLUSA	Early October 2021
In-Country feedback on report	End of October 2021
Finalize Evaluation for NCBA CLUSA	Mid-November 2021
NCBA CLUSA sends report to USAID	End of November 2021

10. Conditions of Application

Interested applicants are requested to submit the following (typed no smaller than 12-point font) in the specific order below to be considered for this award:

A. Technical Proposal

The technical proposal (not exceeding 5 pages) should reflect how the candidate will undertake all tasks described in the Terms of Reference. The applicant will provide a detailed plan of specific activities including a timetable for carrying out the assignment as well as the data collection and analysis activities. In addition, it will detail the statistical approach.

Applicants should include a resume as Annex I and a USAID biodata 1420 form as Annex II to the technical proposal, which will not be counted towards the page limit.

B. Cost Proposal

The applicant should propose a realistic cost estimate for this assignment, including a breakdown of the budget and justification of expenses for the evaluator. The budget should include the evaluator's daily rate, level of effort, anticipated communications costs, and other applicable costs such as software and supplies. Given COVID-19 travel restrictions, no travel is anticipated for the evaluator. Therefore, interested applicants should not include travel, transportation, per diem, lodging, visas, inoculations, etc in the budget. The maximum amount will not exceed $40,000 USD but competitive budgets will receive a higher score.

C. Qualifications and Experience

Applicants must demonstrate experience in carrying out similar evaluation and data analysis assignments by listing awards/projects/assignments involving similar or related work in the last three years and providing three references with contact information. Applicants should have experience providing these services on USG-funded projects, preferably USAID, and have experience in the agriculture sector, ideally with cooperatives.

11. Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Score
Quality of technical approach and methodology	**(40 points)**
Demonstrated experience and technical skills	**(30 points)**
Completeness and realism of proposal (including schedules,)	**(10 points)**
Cost realism, budget justification and effectiveness. Given it meets these standards, competitive budgets will receive a higher score.	**(20 points)**

12. Submission Due Date

Submissions must be in English and typed single-spaced. All pages must be numbered and include the RFP reference number and name of applicant on each page. Proposals must be emailed to NCBA CLUSA at the following address: vbrown@ncba.coop.

All submissions are due on May 7, 2021 by 5 pm Eastern Standard Time, 2021. Submissions after this date will NOT be considered.

NCBA CLUSA reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted and/or make changes to the terms of reference/geographic areas before work commences.