

# CfP: Agricultural Information Exchange Platform

## Questions and Answers

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## Technological innovation & MVP Development

**Where is the priority or focus - is it the technology and innovation - aiming to find that architecture/approach that is scalable and reusable (regardless of content/language/topic) or is it the use case & impact on the specific context?**

We think that our contribution with this initiative is support technological innovation in agricultural information exchange platforms but do not believe that this is in opposition to use cases and impact in specific context. Solutions that later scale will need to first prove themselves in the specific context and should always be developed with the end users while we hope that the architecture supports the later scaling and reuse.

**What is your expectation when cohorts improve and extend existing applications?**

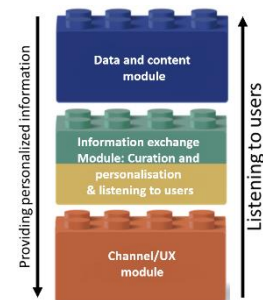
The criteria are the same for newly developed and improved and extended existing applications (see the CfP for the criteria). We expect a clear further development of the existing application, and that the extension is made available openly and as a Digital Public Goods (DPGs). The latter also implies that we will look at whether the extension is interoperable with other applications. In addition, the extension needs to include innovations overcoming the challenges (e.g. inclusivity, learning, interactive communication and feedback) associated with this CfP.

**Would those applications be required to be open sourced too?**

We require that everything that is developed under the grants is made openly available and if feasible as Digital Public Goods (DPGs) given that DPGs require a certain maturity, and the DPG AI standard is currently developed. While we advocate for an open and DPG-based approach, we do not require that existing application which are not modified substantially under the grant are open sourced. We, however, will require that what is developed under the grants is interoperable with other applications as well (see also the architecture stream).

## The call envisages creation of an MVP. How does that apply when extending existing applications?

MVP in this case refers to the extension of the application (e.g. an MVP of a machine translation system, a personalization engine or a speech technology module allowing for spoken interaction), although the information exchange platform should be covered in full by the existing application and its extension. We also will implement an architecture workstream to create a *minimum viable* and *shared* architecture for the information exchange platform to support the interoperability and exchange of modules of the information exchange platform (see the graphic from the call below for a first, very general architecture).



## Do you have content already available to test the MVP or will this need to be developed to test the MVP?

We won't provide content for the MVPs. This would either need to be developed or provided by partners within the cohort. Please note though that we will prioritize funding for technological innovation and not dataset or content creation which should be limited and only where otherwise the development of the MVPs would not be possible.

## A lot of data would be available with the government and its agencies. Will this program be able to facilitate connections with the government or its agencies to enable access to these data?

We are working with government partners and are happy to facilitate contacts where appropriate and helpful but cannot ensure that any specific data is being available. Therefore, your proposal should either make sure to have access to datasets of interest through cohort partners or outline a workaround that simulates the availability or circumvents the unavailability of those datasets for the development of the MVP.

## Could you clarify in more detail what you mean by “open and modular architecture”, e.g. does “open” mean “open source” or simply a conceptual way of combining solutions that is public and others are aware of? By “architecture” does this refer to an explicit software stack architecture that has already been devised or sketched, or something more general?

With an *open and modular* architecture, we mean that the system architecture is modular and expandable, based on open standards and open APIs. This includes add-ons that utilize open standards or open API's to be integrated with existing modules. We are also committed to Digital Public Goods and therefore will support the development of open resources but in principle the architecture could be applicable to open and closed resources. The detail of this architecture is still to be defined with the cohorts and the wider community, but we do not assume it to include specific software or technology stacks.

## Are there any non-functional requirements including Authentication, Authorization and Audit (AAA), data governance and data protection?

As we want to develop MVPs, AAA requirements are not in the focus of this call. Once the innovations built into the MVP are proven, issues like AAA, etc. could be addressed. We require however compliance of the MVPs with relevant data protection and privacy regulations (e.g. not violating policies like informed consent in case of PII, etc.). If you process PII's, the data needs to be processed responsibly in compliance with local and/or international regulation like GDPR. At GIZ, we provide responsible data guidelines for orientation.

**For the MVPs, what kind of devices are being targeted such as Android phones, iOS phones, desktop/laptop, basic mobile phones to enable the access of information exchange platform by end users? Can we initiative assumes that farmer also have smart phone access?**

We are envisioning that this information exchange could be omni channel so that it can be adapted to the end user preferred modality. For instance, our research has indicated that small scale farmers are more likely to have a feature phone in Bihar and a portable radio in Kenya. Feel free to contribute any additional research to identify the digital skill and hardware availability of the end user. Please note, however, that we are especially targeting low literacy and low digital skill farmers.

**Can the platform be built on Cloud?**

Yes.

## End User and Community Orientation & Use Cases

**The scope/size of MVP. I mean how many farmers are supposed to take part, how many crop specific questions, how many daily question limits etc.?**

The primary goal of this initiative is to develop MVPs and through those proof the underlying concepts. The scope of the MVP is determined by this goal. We expect that these MVPs are developed with the users and based on user feedback. To gather representative feedback, we assume that a critical number of farmers should interact with the platform but are not prescriptive on an exact number. We do not expect large scale adoption throughout this project but aim at this at a later stage. The level of adoption of the MVPs by farmers will be a good indicator to show which MVPs most lend themselves for further scaling.

**Is there any specific or listed major crop related services that should be covered?**

No, we make no prescriptions in this regard.

## Gender

**Related to “How do you intend to cater for the needs of women as well as low-literacy and low digital skill groups? Which risks do you see for the end users and how do you intend to mitigate them?” Is the second part of the question on the risks to end users referring specifically to women and low literacy/low digital skill groups or all end users?**

We consider marginalized groups like low literate, low digital skill farmers and extension intermediaries to be our target group, also with an emphasis on women. Accordingly you

should include risk mitigation measures for such target groups, but you can include risks for all end users (including stakeholders in the extension/advisory value chain).

### **The Call for Proposals references “Women and Other marginalized groups”. Who are they?**

We want to reach specifically women, low literate and low digital skill farmers and extension officers with this project, but this also includes anyone who belongs to other marginalized groups beyond and intersecting with gender. We encourage you to investigate existing dimensions of marginalization in your proposal as well as during the implementation, especially in cases where we need to be especially careful because of increased risks for those groups.

## **Impact orientation, evidence and user feedback**

### **How would the effectiveness of the solutions be measured, aside from field trials? Is there any plan to also fund, in parallel, an evaluation of impact, cost benefit analysis, process evaluation?**

There are no additional funds earmarked for impact evaluations since this MVP development is experimental. We want to proof concepts as the main objective. However, we encourage you to include metrics of adaptation, where feasible, impact on relevant indicators like productivity, household income, etc. into your proposals and/or clear (qualitative) methods by which you want to gather the necessary end user feedback to inform the MVP development process. We are not prescriptive regarding the specific measurements.

### **Can we plan for user research in the MVP phase timeline/budget to better target a user group, understand preferred languages, channels of communication and scope the content?**

Yes, we encourage end user engagement and research very much. We want cohorts to develop the MVPs with the end users and closely engage with farmer communities to understand the context, evaluate the perceived benefit and proof early concepts (like local language interaction modalities, two-way communication etc.) for increased end user adoption. We also encourage you to make use of existing research and experiences among partners as much as moving quickly towards testing assumption about the user group based on concrete demos and first iterations of the MVPs (e.g. based on mock-ups, wireframes, etc. for a start).

## **Local representation & Geographies covered**

### **Do I need a partner in Kenya if I work in Bihar or in Bihar if I work in Kenya?**

You can also apply with concept only focusing on Kenya or Bihar although we encourage you to seek partners and concept that span both geographies. We also would encourage you to consider scaling to the other geography further down the line. In the end, we aim to build solutions to can be applied beyond the original geography and domain.

**Would we be able to adapt the proposal if we identify a new cohort partner after the approval in a region not originally covered? (So apply for India and extend to Kenya if feasible)?**

We expect the cohorts and proposals to be finalized at the ideation workshops, therefore yes, this can be done until then. Afterwards, we are ready to accept changes throughout the MVP development process if reasonable although we do not expect to be able to provide additional financial support beyond the funds originally provided.

**Daily rates: As we are based out of Europe, our daily rates maybe different to our counterparts in Kenya or India – do you have any criteria for alignment on that?**

We do not have criteria on daily rates but our focus on local partners in India and Kenya also we encourage you that the development of the MVP is not predominantly driven out of other the Global North. We also are committed to fair payment.

**If we would like to propose to work in both Kenya and India, Is the idea to have the same solution in 2 different locations or can we suggest 2 different solutions in each location? Is it acceptable to submit two separate applications as a lead applicant, one for India and one for Kenya, or do you expect lead applicants to submit a single proposal covering both geographies?**

We aim for solutions that in the end scale beyond those geographies and agriculture as a domain. Therefore, we encourage you to design solutions that cover both geographies, potentially as separate instances of the same solution. However, we appreciate the differences between Kenya, Bihar and India in general and therefore allow separate applications that clearly reflect those differences but would ask you to submit only one application if the differences are marginal and the main difference is the geography covered.

## **Openness of the developed resources**

**Could you advise specifically on how closed source proprietary technology or content that has already been developed should/could be made of use of within the scope of this Information Exchange Platform? If MVPs do build on closed source proprietary technology foundations, how do you envision the reuse and recombination of these MVPs?**

We encourage partners to build systems that are reusable and therefore build on open resources and Digital Public Goods (DPGs). However, we acknowledge that there might be pivotal closed resources pieces that offer an opportunity for solving the challenges outlined in the Call for Proposals and therefore do not rule out the use of such resources principally. As we also require that everything that is developed under the grants is made openly available and if feasible as Digital Public Goods (DPGs), those resources should not be mandatory for the functioning of the information exchange platform (e.g. an open dataset or open AI model could also be used to use instead). If proprietary modules will be modified substantially within the MVP development, we ask that these modules will be open sourced (see also question above **“Would those applications be required to be open sourced too?”**).



## Long term sustainability and clear ownership of the MVP

### What are the business models that are currently used or planned for these types of Platforms?

There are various business models for existing agricultural information and advisory services, but we are not in a position to give an overview. Such resources exist online. We are also not prescriptive regarding the type of business model for the platform, as long as the underlying technology developed under the grants is open source and the business model allows to overcome the challenges outlined in the CfP and to serve smallholder farmers.

### How do we define the long-term sustainability and success of the MVP? market acceptability and scale-up; or government acceptance for scale-up; or both; or neither?

We define long-term sustainability by continued use of the (probably further developed) MVPs, i.e. market acceptance and use. We assume that this requires a secured long-term funding model. Up-take by the government is one potential avenue towards such a sustainable funding model and use of the MVPs. However, this is conditional on the interest of the government to take over the MVP. We understand long-term success of the initiative as seeing up-take of the technology developed here to serve low-literacy and low digital skill groups in other geographies and domains in 5 to 7 years.

### Is there a government entity also partnering in the cohort, to oversee the application of solution delivery and/or to extend the use case for a larger geography?

We are involving our government partners in Kenya and Bihar and will establish steering committees to ensure their input into the overall process. This does not necessarily preclude government entities from becoming part of cohorts although no direct involvement is planned from our side so far. We also will involve government representatives in the ideation workshops and in the overall project steering. Governments will play a role in terms of long-term sustainability and ownership and may increase their engagement depending on the maturity of the MVPs.

### How do you hope for the proposed solution to be pushed to the masses involved in the agricultural sector? Can we expect help from government channels in the respective countries? Who will be responsible for farmer adoption or onboarding into the platform?

This initiative aims at the development of MVPs, therefore mass adaption is beyond the scope of the funds available and would be pending further funding sources and successful results from the MVPs. We are working with government partners and are happy to facilitate contacts where appropriate and helpful but cannot ensure any specific access to channels. During MVP development, the cohorts are responsible for user testing and user feedback, and any onboarding and adoption that is required for this.

### Who will own the platform after development and who will maintain the Data Security and protection agreement with Govt and other respective participants of this program?

We don't have prescribed ideas or models in terms of operation, business or data governance. Accordingly we appreciate early ideas from the cohorts on how the platform is sustained in the long term (financially and operationally). However, we don't expect final answers at the proposal stage.

## Process

**I submitted our submission via your KoboToolbox submission form but did not receive a confirmation email. Did you receive our submission?**

Yes, we should have received your submission if you received no error message. KoboToolbox does not send out confirmation emails, but we still received your submission. If you have any doubts or would like a further confirmation, please contact us.

**How will match making take place?**

We collect information on all partners who have expressed their interest in finding other partners including their capacities and what they look for. We will then introduce partners who have matching capacities. We will also invite a limited number of individual actors or cohorts who lack additional expertise or local partners but otherwise offer important and rare capacities to the workshop. We won't additionally seek partners beyond our network and partners who contacted us. Therefore, **please also feel welcome to submit proposals on your own or with a limited number of partners.**

However, we would like to note that we perceive this as complementary to your efforts to create cohorts and not at a replacement of such efforts.

**How do private sector actors and tech companies can get involved?**

Private sector actors and tech companies can get involved as partners in the cohorts. Under GIZ rules, public benefit projects of private sector actors and tech companies are principally eligible for grants. Please note though that we expect that what is developed under the grants is made openly available and potentially published as DPGs (see also below). In addition, special regulations apply in India that would need to be reviewed. If becoming part of a cohort is not feasible or interesting, we warmly invite private sector actors and tech companies to join the open sessions to create an open architecture for agricultural information exchange platforms and other open platforms for exchange. We also warmly invite everyone to get in touch with us if they would like to serve in an advisory or otherwise supportive function.

**Is there likely to be a similar call for other countries?**

No, for now we will focus on Kenya and India but we welcome approaches that also utilize and adapt approaches and local innovation from other countries. However, we intend to create MVPs that allow scalability across domains and across geographies.

**Grant Management: For this consortium, we would be the project managers – do you have any specific requirements that the grant recipient needs to fulfill?**

We will conduct a due diligence check that includes sanction checks as well as administrative capacities. During the implementation of the grant, our procurement and reporting rules will apply, and we will check with you whether you have all necessary capacities to implement these. Further information can be found at [Financing: Contract management and contract processing \(giz.de\)](#) and [Annex 3a Financial Guidelines for Grant Recipients 10\\_2022.pdf \(giz.de\)](#).

**The CfP calls for a cohort but appears to be structured to have a lead organization. When it comes to the budget, if a lead organization was to be working with two partners (for example) should these be reflected as sub-grantees in the budget?**

Indeed, the call is structured in that way for simplicity. While we will also look at options to allow for other arrangements within cohorts, please add budgets for partners under sub-grantees for the submission if they constitute a minor share of the budget or aggregate across the categories if the budget is shared equally across the partners. Please add an explanation under “Is there anything else that you would like to share?” if you deem it necessary.

**Is there any supporting information/justification to the budget estimates required?**

In general, we do not require a detailed justification for your estimations at this stage. If you are selected and invited to the workshop, we would request a more detailed budget with further information. If you think that there are specific parts of your budget that need explanation, please add this in the section “Is there anything else that you would like to share?” or in the other sections where appropriate.

**Do you suggest and/or encourage that further supporting documents are shared within the text-based application on Kobo toolbox, e.g. diagrams, wireframes, videos? If so, how do you suggest these are added? Are there any supporting documents that you would deem necessary?**

There are no necessary additional documents, but we welcome if you share supporting material in a limited extent. (We might not be able to review the material if it is too extensive.) For the moment, we would suggest sharing that material via links to external resources.

**Do you expect that cohorts be split and up and re-arranged in the workshop? If so, how do you envision this process working formally for selected re-arranged cohorts, e.g. will proposals need to be entirely re-drawn?**

Yes, we consider the option that cohorts might re-arrange or join forces during the workshop. During and after the workshop, there will be time to re-draft proposals to reflect those changes before a final decision is taken.



### When do you expect the project to start?

We will decide on shortlisted proposals beginning of June and invite shortlisted cohorts and selected individual actors to our ideation workshops in India and Kenya that will take place on 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> of June in Patna, Bihar and 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> of July in Nairobi. We expect to provide subgrants to the final 4 cohorts to develop the MVPs in August. Accordingly, the MVP development work is supposed to start in August.

### There are many content providers. Is there any restriction to the number of partners in a cohort?

No, there is no restriction to the number of partners in a cohort. Just note please that the funding is limited to around ~360k EUR/400k USD which would need to split among the partners in a cohort.

### Do we need to form a cohort at the time of submitting the proposal or we can create it as we proceed into the program?

We encourage you to form a cohort by the time your submission, but the matchmaking and cohort formation process will continue until and during the ideation workshops. To those workshops, we also will invite individual actors and smaller, unfinished cohorts if they provide very promising ideas or rare capacities. **Therefore, please also share a submission on your own or with just a few partners.** However, note though that due to the timeline, there will only be limited time to form and revise concepts after the submission.

### Can we do partnership with private agencies before submitting proposal?

As stated under the question “**How do private sector actors and tech companies can get involved?**”, involvement of private sector actors is principally possible, please observe only the special regulations on FCRA certificates in India. Regarding any contractual relationships, please note that there is no funding commitment by GIZ or BMGF based on the proposals that you share.

### Are there specific regions identified in Bihar or Kenya that need to be supported?

No, we have no geographic requirements within the State of Bihar or Kenya.

### When will the matchmaking take place, and how soon before the close of call for proposals?

A first matchmaking among partners that have contacted us directly has already been taken place. We will conduct further matchmaking during the remainder of the ideation process.

### Who would be best placed for the ideation workshops - tech or program teams?

We plan for up to 5 participants per cohort at the ideation workshops and assume that representation of both the tech and the program side would be optimal. We foresee parts of the workshop focused on use case (i.e. the area of program teams), on technical aspects and architecture (i.e. the area of technical teams) as well as exchange formats among cohorts where both teams would be valuable. Whether these teams come from the same organization or different ones depend on the cohort. If the participation of representatives from both teams is not feasible, we would recommend participation by those teams that most

easily can speak on behalf of the other. We will also provide hybrid options albeit these from experience are sub-optimal for participation and exchange.

**At what stage can we expect to receive the full grant amount? Is it after we are invited to the workshops or only after the submission of a final proposal, something that was just mentioned during the Q&A?**

The full grant amount will be made available when the ~4 cohorts are selected after the ideation workshops and the grant making is finalized. We will provide travel support to the ideation workshops if needed.

**What are the entry criteria for the workshops, will all the vendors who are interested invited or only the selected vendors?**

We will select about 5 to 10 cohorts and some individual actors per workshop to invite based on the criteria outlined in the CfPs.

**Would an organization based in Kenya also have to travel to the India ideation workshop in order to attend both? Will the Kenya workshop be in Nairobi?**

We would invite cohorts to the workshops where they will work. In case a cohort works in both geographies, the cohort is invited to both and if that is not feasible, we will discuss where your participation is best placed. The Kenya workshop will take place in Nairobi, the India workshop in Patna, Bihar.