



Shaping a more livable world.

RFP INVEST-077

**To:** Offerors

**Date:** February 9, 2021

**From:** Procurement and Partnerships Team, INVEST Project; Implemented by DAI Global LLC

**Subject:** Request for Proposals (RFP) INVEST-077: Strategic Marketing and Sales Assistance to Roll Out Solar-Powered Cold Storage Units in Afghanistan

**Due:** **1:00PM EST on March 9, 2021**

Dear Offerors:

Enclosed is a Request for Proposals (RFP) to support the implementation of DAI's INVEST project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). DAI invites firms to submit a proposal for work as part of the USAID/Afghanistan buy-in.

- I. RFP Process and deadlines:** This solicitation will result in the award of one or multiple Fixed Price subcontracts. We anticipate the subcontract value to be \$30,000-\$50,000, but offerors are encouraged to propose competitive pricing based on their technical approach.
- a. Submission of Questions – Questions must be submitted no later than **1:00 pm EST on February 16, 2021** via email to [INVEST\\_Procurement@dai.com](mailto:INVEST_Procurement@dai.com).
  - b. Submission of Proposals – Proposals must be submitted no later than **1:00 pm EST on March 9, 2021** via email to [INVEST\\_Procurement@dai.com](mailto:INVEST_Procurement@dai.com), copying [Leah\\_Day@dai.com](mailto:Leah_Day@dai.com) and [Katherine\\_Tilahun@dai.com](mailto:Katherine_Tilahun@dai.com). The subject line of the email should be your organization name, followed by “Submission under RFP INVEST-077: Strategic Marketing and Sales Assistance to Roll Out Solar-Powered Cold Storage Units in Afghanistan” Please certify in your submission email a validity period of 60 days for the price(s) provided and include your organization's DUNS number. Please limit file submissions to 10 megabytes or less.
- II. Composition of Proposal:** Your organization's proposal should comprise the following submission documents. The Technical Proposal and Price Proposal should be prepared as separate files for independent evaluation, as follows below. Technical proposals should be submitted as a maximum ten (10) slide/page presentation, using a minimum 12-point standard font with one-inch margins. Graphics may be included, so long as text is clearly legible. If text or graphics are of poor resolution, the information provided may not be considered. Submissions in PowerPoint or in PDF are acceptable, although PDF is preferred along with an accompanying PowerPoint document. Price proposals should be submitted in Excel format, and include within the spreadsheet any budget notes.

### **Part 1 – Technical Proposal**

The technical proposal is composed of the following three (3) sections:

1. **Technical Approach** – Offerors will detail their approach to fulfilling the accompanying Statement of Objectives (SOO). The approach will clearly indicate

how the proposed activities will result in the successful completion of all deliverables and milestones.

2. **Institutional Capacity** - Offerors should provide details about the experience, expertise, or capacity of their firm to recommend the proposed approach and complete the work as described. Offerors should detail their contacts in the Afghan agricultural, medical, and/or technology sectors and demonstrate their experience and expertise conducting market assessments and designing tailored marketing campaigns and media strategies for clients in developing countries like Afghanistan. This section should also include past performance information for similar contexts. If a partnering arrangement is being proposed, please provide details about the experience, expertise, capacity, and local presence of the partner firm(s) as well.
3. **Management Plan/Staffing Structure** – Offerors should include details of personnel who will be assigned to activities as proposed in the technical approach, as well as a clear management plan for the development, review, and submission of all associated deliverables, including a milestone schedule. Offerors are permitted to engage in partnering/consortium arrangements if it will aid in providing best value to USAID. If a partnering arrangement is being proposed, please describe the nature of the arrangement, the specific technical value being contributed by each member of the team, and the appropriate management controls to ensure successful delivery. Firms may consider partnering with local firms that bring in complementary skill sets and experience, as well as local knowledge and networks in Afghanistan.

In addition to the above, please include the following. These inputs will not be counted as part of the 10-slide/page limit and the format may be PDF or Word:

- One (1) to two (2) examples of past performance relevant to this activity (limited to two (2) pages per example)
- CV(s) of any individuals proposed in the staffing plan to conduct this activity (limited to two (2) pages per individual)

Note: These inputs (past performance examples and CVs) will not be counted as part of the 10 slide/page limit and the format may be PDF or Word. A cover page will be considered a non-counting page. Offerors should include a cover page and list on it the names of all firms participating in the bid. No additional annexes or documentation are requested.

### **Part 2 – Price Proposal**

The contract type for the presumptive activity will be Fixed Price Subcontract(s), awarded by DAI Global, LLC. Please include your total proposed fixed price along with details for specific deliverable pricing. Offerors must include a cost breakdown of the hourly rates for proposed personnel, any other direct costs, indirect costs, and fees if applicable, with a build-up to their total proposed price or include substantiating price reasonableness documentation/justification. Cost breakdowns included will be utilized to determine price reasonableness. Offerors are expected to use their own cost/budget template; please limit file submissions to 10 megabytes or less.

- III. **Evaluation of Proposal:** DAI will use best value determination for the award of this Request for Proposals. A best value determination means that, in DAI's estimation, the selected offer(s) will provide the greatest overall benefit to USAID in response to the

requirements stated in this RFP. DAI may also exclude an offer from consideration if it determines that an Offeror is "not responsible", i.e., that it does not have the management and financial capabilities required to perform the work required. Proposals will be evaluated against a stated number of factors, including the overall proposed approach, past performance, specific qualifications in the identified sectors and other evidence substantiating the bidder's ability to deliver, including budget and time frame considerations. Specific preference will be shown for firms that demonstrate a consistent presence in Afghanistan, local networks and relationships, and relevant technical qualifications and experience providing strategic marketing and sales support.

**1. Technical Proposal:** The Technical Proposal will be scored and evaluated separately from the cost proposal. Technical panel reviewers will evaluate Offerors on the following factors, consistent with the Offerors' technical proposal. The Technical Proposal will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- a. Technical Approach (40 points)** - Points for this section will be awarded based on the information presented in the technical approach. Points will be awarded to firms describing their thoughtful approach to addressing the statement of objectives. The offeror will be scored based on its presentation of a clear approach per phase/objective as outlined in the SOO, which reflects the requirements of this specific activity but also incorporates the offeror's competencies. Points will be given for the following areas:
  - i. Ability to research, profile, and assess target markets and demand for the product;
  - ii. Methodology proposed to provide tailored marketing strategies that address the specific needs of each target market;
  - iii. Outline of strategy to identify potential customers and sell at least ten units as part of a short-term sales plan.
- b. Institutional Capacity (35 points)** – Points for this section will be based on information presented in the corresponding section and any submitted case studies. Preference will be given to firms and/or consortia that have past performance in timely and successful delivery of similar services and/or relevant experience in Afghanistan. The offeror must demonstrate the following, as appropriate (or relevant) to their technical approach:
  - i. Local knowledge and access to sources of information to complete the assessment and marketing strategy as described;
  - ii. Demonstrated commitment and relevant experience in conducting market assessments as well as developing and executing targeted marketing strategies;
  - iii. Relevant networks and relationships in Afghanistan's agricultural, medical, and/or technology sectors;
  - iv. If a partnering arrangement is being proposed, please provide details about the experience, expertise, capacity, and local presence of partner firm(s).
  - v. Additionally, offerors should demonstrate their ability to maintain a consistent local presence in Afghanistan given COVID-19 international travel restrictions and/or propose alternatives to execute the marketing strategy remotely.
- c. Management Plan/Staffing Structure (25 points)** - Points for this section will be based on the qualifications of proposed staff, clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of each proposed staff and each proposed firm (if firms are

partnering), and the demonstrated efficacy and clarity of the management plan. Proposals should provide a clear management plan in narrative form for the development, review, and submission of all associated deliverables, including a proposed milestone schedule. If the offeror is submitting a proposal along with partners, the proposal should describe the nature of the arrangement (i.e. added technical value), the division of labor among the partners, and the appropriate management controls to ensure successful delivery. The Offeror should include:

- i. Management plan for proposed activities, including clearly defined technical roles for each partner (if applicable);
- ii. Timeline and deliverables that will result in objectives of SOO being met;
- iii. Experience of staff in providing technical assistance as appropriate to the technical approach proposed. Please include all relevant CVs for proposed staff (maximum 2 pages per staff person).

2. **Price Proposal:** Price will be evaluated separately from the technical approach, with due consideration for realism, price reasonableness, and allowability consistent with US government cost principles. Evaluation for this section will be dependent upon all information presented by the Offeror in their deliverable table, budget with cost breakdowns, and any relevant supporting cost information, as well as its alignment with the proposed technical approach.

**IV. Offeror's Agreement with Terms and Conditions: Please visit the [INVEST Procurement Forecast](#) website for RFP Terms and Conditions.**

The completion of all RFP requirements in accordance with the instructions in this RFP and submission to DAI of the technical and price proposals will constitute an offer and indicate the Offeror's agreement to the terms and conditions in this RFP and any attachments hereto. DAI is not required to accept and/or evaluate proposals that do not conform to the instructions of the RFP, and additionally, DAI may reject all proposals and not award a subcontract for this RFP. DAI reserves the right to award a subcontract without discussion and/or negotiation; however, DAI also reserves the right to conduct discussions and/or negotiations, which among other things may require an Offeror(s) to revise its proposal (technical and/or price). By submitting an offer, Offerors agree to comply with the general terms and conditions for an award, including Representations and Certifications compliance. Offerors must provide full, accurate, and complete information in response to this solicitation. By submitting an offer, Offerors certify that they have not/will not attempt to bribe or make any payment to DAI employees in return for preference. Issuance of this RFP in no way obligates DAI to award a subcontract, nor does it commit DAI to pay any costs incurred by the Offeror in preparing and submitting the proposal. DAI reserves the right to award a subcontract to one organization or to issue multiple awards to different organizations based on the results of our evaluation.

Thank you,  
**DAI INVEST Procurement and Partnerships Team**  
[INVEST\\_Procurement@dai.com](mailto:INVEST_Procurement@dai.com)

**Statement of Objectives RFP INVEST-077**  
**USAID INVEST: Mobilizing Private Investment for Development**  
**Solar-Powered Cold Storage Units, USAID/Afghanistan Buy-In Activity**

**Introduction**

Through INVEST, USAID/Afghanistan seeks to unlock the potential of the private sector to drive inclusive growth in countries around the world. Increasingly, private investors and businesses are looking to emerging markets for better returns and new market opportunities. However, encouraging private investment and activity in high-impact areas important to USAID such as agriculture, financial services, infrastructure, energy, clean water, health, and education requires new forms of collaboration between USAID and the private sector. This means proactive engagement and collaboration throughout every stage of program cycle and integrating collaboration across USAID sectors to catalyze more market-based approaches for sustainable outcomes.

In support of its efforts to mobilize private investment within the agency, the USAID Office of Private Capital and Microenterprise (USAID/PCM) awarded the INVEST contract to DAI in September of 2017. Through INVEST's flexible buy-in mechanism, USAID Missions and Operating Units can access an unprecedented network of firms and individuals that have the range of technical expertise needed to identify opportunities and effectively mobilize private capital toward development priorities. Using a lean approach tailored to high potential opportunities, relevant parts of the network will come together to research, develop, and build specific solutions that align private capital with development needs.

**Background**

INVEST is working in collaboration with USAID/Afghanistan to further integrate Afghanistan's economy into international markets and reduce dependence on foreign aid on its journey to self-reliance. To do so, INVEST's focus has been on export-promotion and expansion by increasing international private investment across economic sectors in Afghanistan. Through a multi-phased, \$15 million buy-in, INVEST is building business-to-business linkages between Afghanistan and foreign investors and partners. Sector-specific transaction advisors and firms are matchmaking and closing deals in civil aviation/airport services, mining, marble, finance, carpets, gems, jewelry, and more.

The frequent and ad-hoc closures of the international borders, which have only been exacerbated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have increased the risk of produce spoilage, in general and throughout the 2020 harvest. There is clear need for cold storage units with low operating costs to reduce the risk exposure of medium and large-scale agribusinesses in Afghanistan, decrease the ratio of wasted food, and enhance Afghanistan's food security. Also, the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines in Afghanistan will require mobile and reliable cold storage that can operate without electricity grid connection, particularly in getting the vaccines to rural areas. Availability of and access to these cold storage units will be paramount to the success of the vaccine rollout over the coming months.

In response to this market gap for affordable, portable, and reliable cold storage, INVEST has worked with a local manufacturer to assess the economic feasibility of building 20-foot shipping containers into small, easily movable cold storage units powered by photovoltaic (PV) solar panels as a source of electricity for cooling. The initial analysis shows that the increased capital expenditure for this technology will be offset by the electricity costs associated with the traditional units in approximately 3 years. This offers an economical, mobile, and rapidly deployable solution for traders, large agricultural companies, farmers' collectives, international aid agencies involved in vaccine distribution, the health system, and the Afghan government.

This approach presents an excellent alternative to traditional grid and generator powered units, financially and operationally. To this end, the USAID/Afghanistan Office of Economic Growth is

utilizing the INVEST mechanism to facilitate the scaling up of production of these units for the domestic market.

### **Implementation Objectives**

This activity aims to support the rapid market roll-out of these units by providing strategic marketing and sales assistance to the local Afghan partner, tailoring messages and marketing strategies for the identified target markets as needed. The strategic marketing and sales firm will have three broad objectives: i) undertake a detailed assessment of these target markets (i.e. agricultural product traders, large food production companies, farmers' collectives, agricultural produce exporters, the health sector (public, private, and donor-funded), the Afghan government, and other potential users identified in the assessment); ii) identify the best messaging approaches for each target market as well as the right media strategies/marketing mix to reach these customers; and iii) forecast and set concrete sales goals for each market segment and develop detailed plans to achieve them. At the conclusion of the activity, the firm is expected to market and sell at least ten units or more depending on the sales target proposed.

INVEST is looking for a firm, or combination of firms, that has experience conducting market assessments and designing tailored marketing campaigns and media strategies for participants in the agricultural sector, the health sector, and/or for technology products. The firm(s) should have extensive work experience and relevant contacts throughout Afghanistan from one or all of these sectors. INVEST anticipates this activity to last approximately six (6) months. However, INVEST expects offerors to propose a timeframe that is representative of their proposed technical approach and marketing and sales roll-out plan. INVEST encourages firms to present an adaptable strategy reflective of the Covid-19 environment. The firm(s) will report to the INVEST Afghanistan team based in Washington, DC. Flexibility in staffing as the project evolves is important.

### **Activity Structure**

The successful offerors will support the three following objectives:

- I. **Market assessment:** Conduct a market assessment, with input from the cold storage manufacturer as needed, to provide details about the target markets including relative market size and geographic concentration within Afghanistan; assessment may also include information about potential target markets and demand in other Central Asian neighboring countries.
  - a. The firm(s) carrying out this assessment should have existing contacts in the Afghan agricultural/food, medical, and/or technology sectors.
  - b. The assessment should include detailed information on the purchasing decision process of customers, purchasing power, interest in investing in new technology, intended use of units and estimated capacity utilization, current use of cold storage in their business model (if any) or other substitute products used, quantified value of this product to their business, key obstacles to achieving greater profitability, current business purchasing behavior, sources of information about new products, etc.
  - c. The assessment should include the estimated size of these target markets, number of potential customers as well as estimated demand for number of units (including the financial value).
  - d. Detailed information on competitors, Afghan as well as regional, in the cold storage market including unit price and operating costs.
  - e. The assessment should include any required certifications or other documents that the company might need for the different target markets and/or for international sales. In addition, international markets identified should include information on applicable

customs duties for selling in those markets and information on logistics and transport of the units to those markets.

- II. **Marketing strategy:** Based on the assessed target markets, the firm(s) should provide tailored marketing strategies for each to address the specific needs identified (supported by data from the assessment). Strategies for some target markets may overlap while others may require entirely different approaches. Marketing strategies should include:
- a. The most effective marketing messages per each target market to address the specific needs found during the assessment;
  - b. Sources of information guiding consumption habits and detailed strategy on the suggested media mix for cost-effective customer acquisition;
  - c. Identification of interest in the product and barriers to adoption;
  - d. Approaches to market the product to the different target markets and information on how they intend to use the product;
  - e. Any need for customization for large potential customers;
  - f. Comparison with competitors and substitute products;
  - g. Description of how this product would better serve the target markets' needs;
  - h. Price sensitivity of target markets; and
  - i. Marketing budget for the company to evaluate each marketing strategy, including expected sales to be generated, potential customers to be reached, etc.

- III. **Sales:** Based on data from the market assessment and the marketing strategies, the firm(s) should outline short-, medium-, and long-term sales goals for each segment. These should involve input from the company's management.
- a. Short-term (3-6 months) sales goals for each target market should also have timelines for achieving these goals, details about number of units to be sold (no less than ten) and estimated total revenue.
  - b. The sales phase should also include recommendations for the company regarding the features of the units, the pricing, updates to the marketing message or channels, and other relevant information gathered from the sales process.
  - c. The firm(s) should also outline medium-, and long-term sales goals including detailed timelines with milestones of unit sales and approaches for each segment.

The successful offeror should propose an overview of different marketing strategies and provide several options for how they will identify, assess, and address the marketing needs of each target market.

Deliverables may include:

- Rapid assessment report and preliminary market sizing estimate.
- Detailed marketing strategies with information on all marketing approaches suggested for cost-effective customer reach for each target market.
- Marketing and promotional materials such as presentations, brochures, a website, search engine optimization for the website, and social media campaigns.
- Detailed sales goals and timelines for roll out and implementation including minimum units placed; this should include a short-term strategy for an initial placement of orders and medium and long-term strategies for the company.
- Sale of Goods documentation detailing at least ten units sold throughout the course of the activity

**Role of INVEST Project**

INVEST will work closely with USAID/Afghanistan and the selected partner(s) during all stages of this work. DAI will subcontract the selected partner(s) directly and provide review and oversight throughout the life of the activity in accordance with INVEST’s lean management approach. DAI will administer weekly check-ins (as needed), reporting, deliverable review prior to client presentation and approval, and manage an ongoing ME&L framework.

- Partner Onboarding: DAI will work closely with USAID/Afghanistan to provide the successful firm(s) with all necessary context and information in order to avoid duplication of efforts.
- Project Implementation: The selected partner(s) will implement the work as prescribed by the work plan(s). DAI will provide management support and ensure regular check-ins/reporting including a bi-weekly progress report to be submitted to DAI.
- Ongoing Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning: DAI will define indicators in the subcontract and collect and review M&E data from subcontractors for requisite reporting to USAID. DAI will conduct data quality assessments as necessary.

**Illustrative Implementation Timeframe\***

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Onboarding & Work Planning	1-2 weeks
Marketing Assessment	2-4 weeks
Technical and Marketing Advisory Support on Production	3-6 months
Sales Plan by Target Market	3-6 months
Confirmation of units placed with customers (based on sales goals)	6 months

\*INVEST expects offerors to propose an implementation timeline that is representative of their proposed technical approach and management plan.

**Contract Type and Budget Ceiling**

DAI anticipates awarding a fixed price subcontract. The anticipated budget is in the range of \$30,000-\$50,000.