

Consultancy Opportunity -- Terms of Reference

Development of an Agriculture and Biodiversity Informatics Portfolio

Deadline for submission of bids: August 2, 2024

1.0 Summary

The JRS Biodiversity Foundation is seeking consultancy services to support in the development of an agriculture and biodiversity nexus portfolio for the foundation's 2024-2028 strategy. This is a remote assignment to be completed within a six-month timeframe and reporting directly to the JRS Executive Director.

2.0 About JRS Biodiversity Foundation

The JRS Biodiversity Foundation is an independent grantmaking foundation based in the United States with an endowment that awards grants to increase the access to and use of biodiversity information in sub-Saharan Africa. The mission of JRS Biodiversity Foundation is to increase access to and use of data and information that contributes to greater biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa. You can read more about the foundation here: <https://jrsbiodiversity.org/about-jrs/>

Through its 2024-2028 strategy, JRS seeks to advance biodiversity informatics and improve conservation decision making by connecting data to knowledge use related to key thematic areas including pollinators, freshwater biodiversity, agriculture and cross-cutting areas such as capacity-building and protected areas. Agriculture is a new thematic area that the foundation seeks to better understand linkages with biodiversity to aid the implementation of the strategy.

3.0 The assignment and scope of work

The JRS Biodiversity Foundation seeks to widen its investment portfolio to include advancing the role of biodiversity informatics in the agriculture sector with the aim of enhancing biodiversity conservation. This is informed by a prior internal study that identified the agriculture sector as posing among severe, multiple risks that threaten biodiversity conservation in Africa.

This consultancy assignment will be delivered through the following three scopes of work:

3.1 To examine mapping, ranking and assessing identified risks posed by the agricultural sector to African biodiversity and to explore opportunities to apply biodiversity informatics to offset risks.

This consultancy will help the Foundation increase knowledge of the nexus of agriculture and biodiversity conservation in sub-Saharan Africa to explore ways in which bioinformatics could inform its development (*bioinformatics includes data capture and collection, curation, management, analysis, synthesis, dissemination and communication*). Better access to data could prove valuable to stakeholders such as policymakers, civil society, and the agricultural sector. Focus should be on agricultural development trends which impact biodiversity and how these can be meaningfully mitigated or avoided through bioinformatics, i.e. derived knowledge, its application and dissemination.

3.2 Identification and mapping of key organizations/initiatives already involved in offsetting these risks. These will include organizations/initiatives that align to the foundation's interest in biodiversity informatics and those that might have an interest to invest in biodiversity informatics. The organizations/initiatives will be both implementing and funding partners. In this area of work we aim to understand the trends in mitigating agricultural risks to biodiversity to inform future JRS grant investments in the area of biodiversity conservation within or proximate to agricultural developments.

Mapping will identify the geographies and trends of current or imminent agricultural risks to biodiversity in Sub-Saharan Africa that can be meaningfully mitigated or avoided through the enhanced application of biodiversity informatics, including current approaches by donors acting in this area, opportunities for bioinformatics' access, gaps in current biodiversity data, and information needed to impact policy decisions.

3.3 Considering the presence and impact of other partners, analyze an eventual niche for JRS investments in support of agricultural biodiversity informatics in order to advance biodiversity conservation in Africa.

The consultancy will provide a variety of recommendations for the foundation to consider regarding where opportunities lie with regards to advancing agricultural biodiversity informatics in Africa to either reinforce ongoing investments from other partners, and/or venture into new opportunities that have been overlooked. Importantly, this area of work will identify potential partnerships in which JRS could leverage support to advance its investments in the sector.

4.0 Delivery of the assignment

The consultant will submit a work plan concurrent with signing the contract. The work plan should include a timeline of deliverables and a preliminary list of experts per region that (s)he will consult with, noting the focal geographies of research and other elements supporting key deliverables etc.

5.0 Expected outputs and deliverables

The major output of this assignment will be an expert report addressing each of the above three areas of work, including recommendations, an executive summary, and a PowerPoint presentation for the board of trustees. The report will include among other sections, a synthesis of trends and risks to biodiversity from agricultural development in key regions of Africa and will summarize present efforts from other partners to mitigate these risks, noting especially where biodiversity informatics have been applied to inform policy and practice. In addition, the report will include an identification of meaningful modalities, geographies and potential donor partnerships that could be leveraged to meet JRS objectives and goals. An annex will include persons/institutions consulted and any mapping visuals that describe the agricultural sector in Africa with a comprehensive description of potentially impactful action areas that are key to mitigate risks, influence policies and sustain African biodiversity.

Key deliverables foreseen include:

1. Inception report including a detailed workplan, timelines and foreseen structure of the draft and final reports.
2. Draft report for feedback with the Executive Director and members of the board
3. Final report and PowerPoint presentation for the full board

6.0 Requirements

Potential bidders for this consultancy should submit the following (as one pdf document) with their technical proposal detailing the following:

- (a) Profile of the consultant(s)/team highlighting experience relevant to this assignment;
- (b) understanding and statement of interest in this assignment;
- (c) the proposed methodology of delivering the above assignment;
- (d) a tentative workplan for completing the work within a six-month timeframe;
- (e) Resume/CV(s) of the consultant(s) highlighting the specific skills and competences from each relevant to this assignment (maximum 5 pages each and added as an Annex); and
- (f) a financial proposal and budget indicating the expected range and ceiling number of working days required for the assignment, consultancy fees, and payment details.

7.0 Qualifications for potential bidders

Prospective bidders may be individuals or teams (in a firm) with experience in the agriculture-biodiversity sector, notably in business development, leveraging support for agroecological program management at a global and pan-African level. They should be knowledgeable about the trends, actors and the funding landscape in the agriculture-biodiversity sector on the continent.

- a) At least ten years' recent and cumulative experience in agriculture and biodiversity programming on the African continent;
- b) Business development acumen especially working at the intersection of science, practice and policy and with funding agencies;
- c) Experience in research, impact analysis, and philanthropy focusing on multiple Sub-Saharan African countries is essential;
- d) Excellent written English with demonstrable experience preparing written project reports, articles, analyses or proposals is a must; additional languages, especially French fluency will be highly preferred;
- e) Experience in multiple African regions is welcomed and encouraged;
- f) Relevant higher education degrees in the individual or team members e.g. in conservation sciences, agricultural sciences, biodiversity informatics, business development, programme management etc.

8.0 Submission of Bids

Prospective bidders should submit materials in a single pdf document to: jrsexecdirector@gmail.com by August 2, 2024 for consideration.