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Graduate Funding Opportunities for Agricultural Development in Burkina Faso, West Africa

A request for proposal by Verbree International

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Verbree International (VI) is a not-for-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) designation committed to dryland agricultural development. Operations have begun in Burkina Faso, West Africa, a dryland country currently ranked by United Nations Development Program as the third poorest in the world. The country has been politically stable since 1987 and is receptive to long-term development work.

Our goal is to teach methods that help rural impoverished families in Burkina Faso improve and diversify their sources of income in the areas of agriculture and livestock.

This request for proposal (RFP) will provide up to \$3000 USD to fund 2-year assistantships for those who are enrolled in a masters or doctoral program in agronomy, animal science, or a related field. The goal of this program is to: 1) assist in training students to be professionals in the areas of rural agriculture or livestock extension; 2) conduct field research to evaluate new techniques and/or varieties in rural areas; and 3) educate rural farmers or herdsman in basic principles and/or proven techniques pertaining to agriculture or livestock.

Student Eligibility

- Burkina Faso national
- Bachelors degree in agronomy, animal science or a related field.
- Currently accepted as a masters or doctorate candidate at a nationally recognized academic institution.
- French-speaking
- Greater consideration will be given to students who demonstrate financial need and come from rural areas.

Letter of Intent

The first step of the proposal process is to submit a 2-3 page Letter of Intent (LOI). It must identify the student and the supervisor of the student. It must include a

preliminary project overview and the methods that will be used to carry out assessments and to select a target population.

The target population must have an active role in determining their needs and in the design of the project. This can be accomplished through discussion groups or other methods of participatory assessments performed by the student and/or supervisor.

A student may not conduct research in his own hometown or a neighboring town. If necessary, the LOI should also include a budget for transportation, food, and lodging to conduct no more than one week of assessments.

The importance of assessments (besides identifying the village) is to establish a relationship with the leaders of the village and to acquire a land-use agreement as necessary for field research. It will also allow the student to provide sufficient details for the proposal.

Assessments may not be necessary if a target population is readily known and a land-use agreement is easy to obtain. In this case, details of the arrangement must also be provided in the LOI.

Once received, the LOI will be reviewed by VI's Board of Directors and advisory committee. Within 30 days, they will send a letter of response to state that it has been approved, or if not approved, to state why it was not approved, or to ask for additional information.

Proposal Requirements

Once the LOI has been approved, assessments should be conducted and a proposal written. The proposal must include the following information:

Problem Analysis

Describe the assessment approach that was taken, the village that was selected and the needs that were determined and approved by both the leaders of the target village and the project supervisor. It may be helpful to consider the problem from a systems perspective.

Objectives and Activities

The objectives and activities must include a research component and an extension component.

Research component

The research component consists of field trials for two growing seasons in the target village. The proposal must describe the technique and/or varieties to be evaluated. It must also have a clearly stated hypothesis to be tested.

Extension component

The extension component is equivalent to a teaching requirement in which the student must teach basic principles and/or proven techniques pertaining to agriculture or livestock to members of the rural community where the project is taking place.

Target Population (Beneficiaries)

Briefly state the size of the village, regional importance, and potential number of households who will be taught through the extension component of this project.

Indicators

List specific indicators, milestones, or goals which will be used to evaluate the progress and the success of this project.

Oversight and Monitoring

State who will supervise the student and project, and administer the budget. This person(s) must be a faculty member of a nationally recognized academic institution. Describe how the project will be monitored. For example, include the frequency of supervisor visits to the field.

Sustainability

Describe what mechanisms are in place or what measures are to be taken to ensure that this project has an enduring positive effect on the target population. Address any potential problems of sustainability pertaining to the research or the extension component of this project. For example, address how new techniques or knowledge will be successfully transferred to future generations.

Risks

Identify major risks and any methods that will be used to mitigate those risks. For example, in the event the rainy season arrives late, one could switch to a faster-maturing species or variety or in the event of drought, one could plant two fields in different parts of the country which would increase the chances that at least one field would have a successful yield.

Coordination

Coordination with other organizations and cooperation amongst graduate students is strongly encouraged.

Indicate which government agencies (federal, provincial, and local) and public institutions this project will coordinate with and in what ways. The scope of the project must be accurately conveyed to local authorities before project implementation.

Format

The proposal must be limited to 15 A4 or Letter sized pages, single-spaced with a 12-point standard font and one-inch margins. The front page must specify the name of the project, project time-frame, the student name, the supervisor name, and contact information.

Financial Requirements

Each proposal must include a detailed budget. Receipts will be required for all purchases. If for some reason the seller will not provide a receipt, write a description of

the purchase, the date, the cost, and the reason for purchase on a piece of paper and obtain a signature or fingerprint from the seller.

The following items will be funded with prior approval: in-country travel, living stipend for student, project materials and supplies, wages for unskilled labor, travel costs for pre-proposal assessments, administrative overheads including costs of monitoring and evaluation, possible travel to neighboring country.

Expenses that are not included in the approved budget or without prior written authorization from VI will NOT be funded.

Reporting Requirements

Monthly status reports must be submitted via email by the 5th business day of the following month. A status report should include accomplishments, challenges or problems, and other important information.

Quarterly financial reports must be sent by mail and postmarked by the 5th business day of January, April, July, and October. These reports must include a comparison between the actual amount spent and the budgeted amount for each line item in the approved budget. An explanation must be given for any expenditures in excess of the budgeted amount for each line item. These reports must also contain a ledger sheet listing all expenditures including date paid, brief description of purchase, cost, and corresponding line item number in the approved budget. Original receipts for all expenditures must also be included.

VI will not provide additional funds until all reports are up to date.

A final evaluation of the project must be submitted via email by the student's supervisor within 60 days of the completion of the project. The final evaluation should be no longer than 3 pages. It must evaluate the success of the project, its current impact, and its potential future impact. Suggestions should also be provided for ways in which the project or this RFP could be improved.

Correspondence

All correspondence to VI should be emailed or mailed to the addresses listed at the top of the first page.