National Soybean Research Center
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REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Soybean Value Chain Research (SVCR IL)

(Soybean Innovation Lab – SIL)

Managing Program

Soy 360 & Processor to Processor Program - Year 2

About SIL

The Feed the Future (FTF) Innovation Lab for Soybean Value Chain Research (SVCR IL) is part of the strategic investment by the U.S. Government to make transformative changes in the food systems of target partner countries. FTF is the overarching U.S. government initiative on global hunger and food security. FTF programs work in close partnership with target countries to develop innovative agriculture advancements that break the poverty and hunger cycles. For a further overview of the U.S. FTF initiative, please visit www.feedthefuture.gov. SIL, initiated in 2013, is currently funded through 2027. SIL operates in 30 countries and 202 locations.

Background

SIL's Managed Research Area 5 (MRA5) focuses on supporting Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) processors to enhance nutrition at scale through innovations and knowledge transfer technologies. Enabling processors enhances farmer livelihoods and increases access to better nutrition, at scale. Innovations include:

- *Processor-to-Processor (P2P).* SIL established the P2P program through partnerships with the American Oilseed Chemists' Society (AOCS) and Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture – CNFA's Farmer-to-Farmer (F2F) program. P2P provides direct technical support to processors using a large network of processing engineers and food scientists looking to help colleagues in low-resource settings. P2P brings one-on-one consulting to SSA's soybean processors (at their facility or virtually). The program aims to enhance efficiencies and innovations that scale up nutrition in food and feed.
- *Soybean 360*. This holistic knowledge transfer platform serves the needs of soybean processors and food and feed manufacturers, capable of enhancing nutrition and farmer livelihoods at scale. Processors presented several constraints during SIL's needs assessment engagements with this industry. Specifically, processors seek assistance in oilseed and soy-specific technical guidance to enhance efficiencies, new product development, quality assurance and certification, and capacity building for both labor (youth) and management.

The next steps include:

- Expand the reach of P2P Program by identifying technical expert consultants to match with SSA processor-specific tasks. Working collaboratively with partners in the program, implement a communications and marketing plan to:
    - Make processors aware of technical support opportunities.
    - Make expert engineers/scientists aware of technical support opportunities.
    - Leverage consultant expertise and curate/translate consultant findings for knowledge transfer to Soy 360.
    - P2P endeavors aligned/supportive of SIL MRA5 metrics for P2P are shown below (see Table 1).

Table 1. SIL MRA5 metrics for P2P.

	Year 1 FY 2023 COMPLETED	Year 2 FY 2024	Year 3 FY 2025	Year 4 FY 2026	Year 5 FY 2027
Targeted # P2P volunteers for assignments (virtual or in-person)	6 assignments	6 assignments	6 assignments	6 assignments	6 assignments
Number of volunteer recommendations implemented	12	12	12	12	12
No. of processor requests fulfilled	95%	90%	90%	90%	90%
Approximate no. of technical professionals reached with messaging/marketing	3,000 technical professionals	5,000 technical professionals	5,000 technical professionals	5,000 technical professionals	5,000 technical professionals

- Enable Soy 360 as a technical knowledge transfer and support system providing processors with world-class technical training, designed by industry experts.
    - Using a collaborative design approach, enhance the partner's capacity to market and run technical training for processors that serve regional industry needs toward enhancing efficiencies, product testing, and product development. Incorporate facilitator better practices and instructions.
    - Determine needs, obstacles, and opportunities for partners to expand 'hands-on' technical training capabilities for soybean processing at their pilot plant facility, *in situ*, and demonstrated techniques for virtual audiences.
    - Incorporate common SSA processor "choke points" into Soy 360 knowledge transfer programs.
    - Recommend a comprehensive, modular, and flexible curriculum for technical training, product development, and specialty topics (e.g., edible oil, maintenance, contaminants, valorization) that are stratified for different levels of processor staff, i.e., management, entry-level, and aligned/supportive of SIL MRA5 metrics for Soy 360 centers shown below (see Table 2).

Table 2. SIL MRA5 metrics for Soy 360 center.

	Year 1 FY 2023 COMPLETED	Year 2 FY 2024	Year 3 FY 2025	Year 4 FY 2026	Year 5 FY 2027
Targeted # of courses (TOTs)	1 Draft	2 courses	+ 2 courses	+ 2 courses	+ 1 for 7 total
Targeted attendees		15 in situ per course	25 in situ per course	50 in situ and/or online combined, per course	100 in situ and/or online combined, per course
Value/satisfaction rating	85%	90%	95%	95%	95%
% sustainable online and *in situ* training execution/marketing (non-course development)	10%	25%	50%	75%	100%

- Pilot SIL novel methods with partners with investment requiring a minimum of 50% matching funds from the processor. Some examples include:
  - Use of germination pre-treatment for soybeans for increased shelf life and nutritional value
  - Low-cost methods to manufacture soy protein concentrate (SPC)
  - Low-cost methods to upcycle okara flour from soymilk processing.

Applicant Eligibility

This RFP will support the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) institutions, scientific societies, Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, university institutions, and members of the National Agriculture Research System (NARS) institutions, as defined by FAO (http://www.fao.org/3/Y4349E/y4349e05.html): "NARS are defined, in a given country, as encompassing all institutions public or private devoting full time or partially their activities to agricultural research and committed to a national research agenda".

Applicants must be actively involved in soybean nutrition research and development, with a demonstrated track record of scaled impact (outreach, adoption, diffusion, or commercial sales). Projects funded under this RFP must be led by a principal investigator (PI) already based at the lead institution.

Funding Amount

The maximum amount awarded for proposal development grants is $63,000, including indirect costs. All budget requests should be commensurate with the scope and proposed deliverables of the project.

Time length

The duration of the grant is for up to one year. Smaller, more target project periods with more limited budgets or shorter timelines are also acceptable.

Capacity Strengthening

The research team winning the award will undergo training and then employ the Innovation-to-Impact (i2i) learning platform and management system, which will support their implementation of the Product Life Cycle (PLC) framework. Capacity building is a critical theme that each project must address. Research proposals should demonstrate capacity-building plans both at the individual level and at an institutional level.

Cross-cutting themes

The cross-cutting themes of gender and youth responsiveness and resilience are a central focus of SIL. As noted above, target product profiles selected must seek to address gender and youth-based constraints and show potential for economic inclusion for women and youth. Applicants must designate a team member with the relevant background and expertise in gender and youth inclusion to guide the team in these focus areas.

Finally, applicants should be prepared to join the SIL community on monthly researcher conference calls, biannual advisory board meetings, and annual researcher retreats.

Proposal Submission Deadline

SIL will continue supporting this program over the next four years through an annual competitive grant program. Only proposals that adhere to the following guidelines will be fully considered. Proposals need to be emailed to soybeaninnovationlab@illinois.edu by **September 1st, 2023**, and the maximum proposal length is two single-spaced pages not including the budget. Proposals must be written in English. Questions about this RFP should be e-mailed to soybeaninnovationlab@illinois.edu.

Proposal Instructions

Successful proposals need to follow the following outline:

1. **Introduction**
    a. Describe your program
        i. Goals
            1. Long term
            2. Over the next year
        ii. Successes
        iii. Challenges
        iv. Sources of support

2. **Program Description**
    a. What will take place?
    b. Theory of Change?
    c. What will be the outcomes?
    d. Describe your materials and methods when using the grant funds.
        i. This should match your budget and budget justification.
    e. Describe how you will measure progress.
    f. Be specific and outline key metrics.
        i. Project deliverables – Include a separate section for project deliverables that includes outcomes, milestones, and deliverables. Include a timeline for the attainment of objectives and production of deliverables that include final milestones with specific and measurable outcomes.
    g. Cross-cutting issues – Include a section describing activities, and teams to address gender and youth issues.
    h. Select suitable performance indicators from the FTF Handbook of Indicators that are applicable to the activities of your project and data collection plan. https://agrilinks.org/post/feed-future-indicator-handbook.
    i. What is the monitoring, evaluation, learning, and adapt plan?
    j. Describe a plan for how the program will be sustained without donor funding.

3. **Budget**
    a. The budget must include separate budget lines for salaries, benefits, supplies, services, domestic travel, international travel, and indirect costs.
    b. Your budget total needs to include indirect costs.
    c. Please provide a budget justification and a list of leveraged support for the program.