

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Call for Proposals

Accelerating inclusive green growth through agri-based digital innovation in West Africa (AGriDI)

Date of issue: April 22, 2021

Closing Date: June 30, 2021

Summary

Purpose of the call	To strengthen innovation systems and foster adoption of agri-based digital technologies in West Africa.
Eligible countries ¹	Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.
Eligible applicants	Universities, research institutes, legally incorporated small and medium enterprises and farmer cooperatives, innovation support organisations (i.e tech hubs, innovation labs, university technology transfer offices), Government ministries, departments, and agencies responsible for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI), Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Civil Society groups and related entities in the eligible countries.
Grant Categories	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grants for co-development and adaptation of digital innovative solutions to enhance agricultural productivity. 2. Grants for digital innovative solutions to establish market linkages for farmers' produce. 3. Grants for development of policies to support digital innovation.
Grant budget per project	EUR 150,000 - 300,000
Period of grant	Up to 2 years from date of award
Submission deadline	June 30, 2021
Expected date of publication of award decision	September 10, 2021

¹ Member states of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries in Western Africa.

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1. Background

The ‘Accelerating inclusive green growth through agri-based digital innovation in West Africa (AGriDI)’ intervention supports innovations² to address key challenges related to climate change, sustainable use, and management of biodiversity³ as well as responsible production and consumption among farming communities in West Africa. It is funded through the ACP Innovation Fund of the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) financed by the European Union (EU), and implemented by the [International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology \(icipe\)](#), under its Regional Coordination Unit of the [Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund \(RSIF\)](#), in partnership with the University of Abomey Calavi (Benin), [Agropolis Foundation](#) (France) and [Gearbox Pan African Network](#) (Kenya).

AGriDI aims at strengthening innovation systems and fostering adoption of agri-based digital technologies in West Africa. Digital technologies offer potential to make it easier and more efficient for farmers and small business owners, especially women and youth, to produce and market their goods and services, leading to greater profits. AGriDI will increase identification, adaptation, and use of agri-based digital technologies by farmers, SMEs especially women and youth to enhance agricultural production and marketing through strengthened linkages between research communities, industry, and policy actors, and improved policy environment.

The project will contribute to implementation of ECOWAS and national policies and strategies related to Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) and ICT as well as the African Union’s Science, Technology, and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) 2024. Outputs support roll-out of the Africa Continental Free Trade area.

2. Desired outcome

AGriDI has three main objectives: (i) increased uptake of agri-based digital technologies by farmers and SMEs, especially women and youth in West Africa; (ii) strengthened linkages between research communities, industry and policy actors in digital innovations in the region and (iii) a strengthened policy environment for scaling agri-business digital innovations in the region.

3. Nature of grants

AGriDI will provide competitive grants to enhance the capacities of key stakeholders in diverse areas of digital technologies and agro-ecological⁴ systems, and strengthen synergies with the private sector, civil society, and other community-based organisations. The grants support the development of tangible digital solutions that address real challenges for farmers and agribusinesses, especially among women and youth, thereby increasing opportunities for jobs and income in the region

² We understand innovation as a process, idea, invention, initiative, or product that is i) genuinely new and ii) creates value or more effective solutions.

³ Biodiversity may refer to variety of life (plants, animals, microorganisms, etc.) in any habitat or ecosystem.

⁴ Agro-ecology may refer to the relationship between agricultural production and ecological processes.

4. Target groups

The target groups for this call are: i) scientists and researchers in universities and research institutes ii) agri-business owners and proprietors of legally incorporated small and medium enterprises iii) innovators in tech hubs, innovation labs, and university technology transfer offices iv) policy makers in national government ministries, departments, and agencies responsible for creating enabling policy environment to promote digital innovations, including those responsible for rural development, gender and social inclusion v) farmers in legally registered groups and cooperatives⁵ based in the eligible countries. The call encourages participation of women and youth.

Organizations and individuals (scientists, researchers, entrepreneurs, policy actors, among others) from organisations in other parts of Africa and globally may also participate in the call. However, they can **ONLY** participate as 'collaborators' in a project. A collaborator brings a specific skill or expertise to implement specific activities in a project. Collaborators should be described in the proposal, and their role and contribution to the project should be clearly articulated.

5. Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for funding, the applicant must:

- i. Be a legal entity established at least since 2017 in one of the eligible countries⁶ in the ECOWAS region of West Africa;
- ii. Have directly implemented research and innovation projects with the following characteristics;
 - at least two grants for research and innovation activities, for an amount of over EUR 75,000 each during the last two years (2018-2020) and
 - be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the activities being proposed for funding.
- iii. Be directly responsible for the preparation, management and implementation of the proposal including joint activities with beneficiaries⁷.
- iv. Applicants may also include other legally established organisations or individuals and list them as 'collaborators' in the proposal. The role and contribution of collaborators should be clearly described in the proposal. Collaborators will not directly receive funds from the grant except for travel related costs. In addition, they may not necessarily meet the eligibility criteria highlighted in section 5 (i and ii) above. If awarded, the applicant will have fiduciary responsibility for the Project.
- v. Submit a maximum of one proposal per grant category but will not be awarded more than one grant in total.

⁵ We understand a cooperative to be a business or organization that is owned and run jointly by its members who share a common interest, profits and benefits.

⁶ Eligible countries⁶: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo

⁷ Beneficiaries are listed in each grant category.

6. Category of grants, grant size and duration

Total funding of up to **EUR 2.7 million** is available for competitive grants. Each grant is implemented for a period of up to **two (2) years** from the time it is awarded to successful applicants. Funds are allocated in **three** grant categories as follows;

Grant Category	Category 1: Digital Innovations for agricultural productivity enhancement	Category 2: Digital Innovations for market linkages	Category 3: Policies for digital innovation
Purpose of grant	To support co-development and adaptation of innovative digital solutions for improving agricultural productivity.	To support digital innovations for establishing market linkages for farmer's produce.	To support development of policies for digital innovation.
Key outcome	Enhanced agricultural productivity using digital innovative solutions.	Increased uptake of agri-based digital technologies by farmers and SMEs especially women and youth in Western Africa.	Strengthened policy environment for scaling agri-business digital innovations in Western Africa.
Eligible applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Universities or Research institutions (<i>Target group: Scientists or researchers</i>) ii. Technology hubs, innovation hubs, and technology transfer offices (<i>Target group: Innovators</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Legally registered private companies, especially small and medium enterprises – SMEs in ICTs, agriculture, among others (<i>Target group: Business owners and proprietors of SMEs</i>) ii. Legally registered farmer cooperatives or farmer groups (<i>Target group: Farmer groups</i>) 	Government ministries, departments, and agencies/commissions responsible for ICTs, science, technology, and innovation policy relevant for promoting digital innovations for agriculture. (<i>Target group: Policy makers</i>)
Grant amount per project	Min. EUR 150,000 and Max. EUR 300,000	Min. EUR 150,000 and Max. EUR 222,500	Min. EUR 150,000 and Max. EUR 160,000
Beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Private sector (proprietors of small and medium enterprises/businesses - SMEs) especially women and youth. ii. Farmer cooperatives 	Farmers and agroprocessors especially women and youth.	Universities, research institutes, SMEs in ICTs and agriculture, technology and innovation hubs, farmer cooperatives, agroprocessors (especially women and youth), among others.
Area (s) of focus	Digital solutions for solving agricultural production bottlenecks:	Digital solutions to enhance effective market linkages.	Policy analyses and development such as analysing and designing incentives for digital

Grant Category	Category 1: Digital Innovations for agricultural productivity enhancement	Category 2: Digital Innovations for market linkages	Category 3: Policies for digital innovation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Animal /Crop protection e.g. management of pests and diseases of national and regional importance. ii. Geo information tools such as for mapping soils and agro-ecological conditions iii. Weather and climate information including to support crop insurance solutions iv. Other relevant applications supporting increasing national agricultural productivity. 		<p>innovations, intellectual property, cyber security, data management and privacy issues, among others leading to improved policies.</p>
Type of activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Co-creation (design, testing and adapting with end users) of digital technologies for example; participatory identification of innovative and viable agri-based digital technologies to be developed, tested and/or adapted. ii. Applied research in the use of identified agri-based digital technologies. This may include refining technical concepts on digital solutions and compiling lessons from the project that may inform the review and design of university curriculum to enhance digital literacy. iii. Skills enhancement especially in technical areas such as use of artificial intelligence, coding techniques, robotics, and big data analytics. iv. Other relevant activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Developing and testing business models (in an inclusive way) for farm produce and value-added products aided by innovative agri-based digital technologies. (Business incubators or business advisors will be instrumental in guiding the process of developing inclusive business models.) ii. Part of the activities may include a techno-economic analysis of the digital technologies with potential for use as tools for creating market links. iii. Developing online platforms for accessing agri-inputs and other critical information on markets for farm produce and value-added products. These platforms may incorporate aspects of adult learning to increase digital literacy. iv. Other relevant activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Policy dialogues at institutional, national, and regional levels. The policy dialogues may be based in the country studies conducted by applicants in this category. The dialogues may also be used to validate study findings and agree on how the findings may be used to inform the revision or design of policies. ii. Capacity strengthening for technology transfer professionals within universities and research institutes. This may involve design and preparation of tailored courses or training workshops on how to package scientific information or technologies and share these with policy makers and development practitioners. iii. Policy analyses of topical issues on digital technologies and innovation iv. Other relevant activities

7. Proposal and budget guidelines

- i. Applicants must write the full proposal using the provided template (Annex 1) and provide a result matrix and workplan to be used for monitoring of the project (See template in Annex 2).
- ii. Applicants must provide a budget using the budget template (Annex 3). The budget should not exceed the maximum limit for a particular grant category applied for.
- iii. All approved AGriDI grants are subject to the conditions of European Union support to third parties and general terms and conditions for and related rules for reporting, annual expenditure verification. For more information, please see the AGriDI Grants Operations Manual (Annex 4)
- iv. Eligible direct costs include; direct staff costs for research and technology development, project related travel costs, equipment and consumables, Intellectual property protection, knowledge transfer and dissemination, publication costs, visibility and communication costs, office consumables and other direct operation costs. The applicant may charge indirect costs not exceeding 7% of the total direct costs.
- v. All applicants are required to include travel costs (transport, accommodation, and incidental costs) for at least 2 people to participate in an annual project regional workshop, at least 1 interproject annual learning meeting and annual implementers' forum for the duration of the grant. The meetings will be held in person and virtually.

8. Evaluation process and criteria

a. Evaluation process

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following steps:

- vi. Screening for completeness to ensure proposals meet the eligibility requirements by the AGriDI Project Management Unit.
- vii. Proposals that pass the eligibility check will be assessed by at least two (2) independent experts who will score the proposals.
- viii. AGriDI Project Management Unit will review and rank the proposals according to score and prepare a shortlist.
- ix. An external five-member Technical Advisory Committee (TAC⁸) of AGriDI project will assess the shortlist and recommend proposals to be selected for funding.
- x. AGriDI Project Management Committee will make a final selection of proposals that will receive funding.

⁸ The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is an independent committee of experts, who will assist in the review and selection of proposals for funding by the project. The TAC also provides technical advice on the digital innovations for agriculture to the project team.

b. Evaluation Criteria

Generally, proposals should demonstrate clear linkages of activities with various beneficiaries or innovation actors to provide inclusive innovative digital solutions and policies that deliver gender-responsive positive results for farmers and agripreneurs in a sustainable way.

The essential criteria for review and selection of proposals shall include:

Criterion	Max Score
i. Relevance of the proposal to objective and outcomes of AGriDI intervention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal should demonstrate how it will contribute to sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, especially for women and youth in the region. 	15
ii. Alignment with national development plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal should show how it addresses national priorities as stipulated in the country's national development plan. 	10
iii. Feasibility of the proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal should be technically feasible to implement. It should use proven methods, which will give credible findings. 	20
iv. Potential for impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals should articulate a clear pathway to impact, i.e., measurable outcomes that are necessary to bring about inclusive growth in the region. 	10
v. Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal should be innovative in its approach and clearly describe the proposed policy incentives and/or digital solutions it hopes to provide or promote. 	25
vi. Quality of joint activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals should clearly demonstrate how they will collaborate with key beneficiaries or innovation actors involving academia, industry, and government agencies in the respective countries. Institutions or agencies that need to be consulted should be clearly identified and included in the proposal. 	10
vii. Institutional capacity and experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Applicant should be qualified to implement the proposed project and should demonstrate experience in implementing similar grants. They should provide evidence of managing at least two research and innovation grants of over EUR 75,000 each in the last two years. 	10
Total	100

9. How to apply

- i. Complete an application form available through an online system at this link <https://app.rsif-paset.org/rcu/forms/agridi2021.php>. Use the system to upload the following documents;
 - completed proposal, results matrix and workplan, a budget;
 - official letter of support from the head of the applying institution, a copy of an official certificate(s) of registration of the institution, CVs of at least 3 key team members;
 - Evidence of managing research and innovation grants as described in Section 5 ii above.
- ii. The online system will accept file types with the following formats: .doc, .docx, .pdf, .rtf, .zip, .rar, .xls, .jpg, .jpeg, .png, .bmp, .tif. The maximum file size accepted for any single file is 5 MB.
- iii. Should you encounter any challenges with the online application system, please contact agridigrants@icipe.org
- iv. The proposal must be written either in English or French languages.
- v. Applications should be submitted through the online system not later than **30 June 2021, 23h:59 West Africa Standard Time (GMT+1)**

10. Ethical Issues

In the process of preparing the application, the applicant is obliged to observe ethical principles and rules and describe how ethical issues in the proposal will be addressed. The applicant should indicate plans to obtain ethical approval from relevant bodies (as needed and if the proposed project involves human or animal subjects).

11. Additional Information

- i. Letters of acceptance or rejection of proposals, with statements of opinion, will be sent to all applicants within three months after the application deadline.
- ii. Selected proposals are subject to further improvement and technical support as might be recommended by the Technical Advisory Committee.
- iii. Summaries of selected proposals will be published on the AGriDI website.
- iv. Please, note that the submission of proposals does not establish any form of legal claim or responsibility of *icipe* as the Lead Coordinator of the AGriDI Project. All decisions made by the Committees are final and are not subject to further claims or revisions, with exception of administrative mistakes.
- v. All selected applicants will be required to sign a Grant Agreement with *icipe*. The Agreement provides general and specific terms and condition for the efficient and effective management of the grant. All applicants are encouraged to review the AGriDI Grants Operations Manual provided as Annex 4.

12. Contact information and Support

A virtual webinar session will be conducted to provide clarifications on this call. You may register in advance on;

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYudu-hqj8vGNyfwTDvzn0A81li0tDy-Hc1>

Upon registration, you will receive a confirmation email with specific information that enables you to join the meeting.

13. Annexes to the Call for Proposal (provide a link to each)

- Annex 1- Proposal Template
- Annex 2- Result Based Matrix and Workplan Template
- Annex 3- Budget Template
- Annex 4-AGriDI Grants Operations Manual

The AGriDI Project is collaboratively implemented by the following partners



Further enquiries can be sent to agridigrants@icipe.org
AGriDI Project Manager
International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (*icipe*)
P.O Box, 30772-00100, Nairobi, Kenya