



OPEN CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR SMALL GRANTS, WOMEN AND YOUTH

Country: Malawi

Name of Project: Transforming Agriculture Through Diversification and Entrepreneurship (TRADE Programme)

Assignment Title: Agriculture Commercialization Innovation Fund (ACIF) matching grants for Commodities under the TRADE Programme

Reference No. TRADE-MWI-2000001600-0339/0342-GRANTS-GRT-AWARD

Date of Issue: 1st November 2025

1. Background

Transforming Agriculture through Diversification and Entrepreneurship (TRADE) Programme is a Government of Malawi 6-year initiative funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID). The overall goal of this programme is to contribute to improved sustainable livelihoods of rural people in Malawi through Value Chain commercialization and resilience of rural poor and smallholder's producers". TRADE Programme specifically seeks to:

- (a) Increase production and productivity by smallholder farmers;
- (b) functionally upgrade smallholder farmers and the rural poor to undertake new functions such as processing, storage, and packaging to capture more value;
- (c) improve horizontal linkages by strengthening the capacities of cooperatives to provide market access functions to smallholder farmers; and,
- (d) Improve vertical linkages between stakeholders at different functional levels of the commodity chain, including the private sector

TRADE supports rural entrepreneurs, focusing on youths and women to develop and sustain their agribusiness enterprise opportunities and ensuring that commodities are nutrition-sensitive. This objective is achieved through targeted support to smallholder farmers and non-farm actors to benefit from commodity markets, improved access to rural financial services, market and business development services and partnerships with the private sector. The programme directly contributes to Pillar 1 of MW 2063 and Strategic Objective 2 of the Malawi Country Strategic Opportunity (COSOP 2016-2021) “Smallholder households’ access remunerative markets and services”. It also contributes to Strategic Objective 1 of the COSOP by focusing on the promotion of climate-smart agriculture and the mainstreaming of nutrition in all interventions. Under the Ministry of Local Government as the lead agency, TRADE is being implemented under 3 interlinked components namely:

- (1) Sustainable producer-private public partnerships;
- (2) Enabling environment for smallholder commercialization and,
- (3) Institutional support and programme management.

Targeting 127,000 direct and 173,000 indirect households, TRADE Programme is implementing its activities covering eleven (11) districts of Mchinji, Ntchisi, Dedza, Blantyre, Kasungu, Nkhata Bay, Rumphi, Karonga, Lilongwe Rural, Thyolo and Chitipa focusing on seven (7) commodities namely groundnuts, soybean, sunflower, potato, dairy, beef and honey

2. The ACIF Matching Grants –

(i) Small grants Window; as one way of accelerating its Agricultural Commercialization agenda, TRADE Programme provides Agricultural Commercialization Innovation Fund (ACIF) grants to qualifying projects. The ACIF Grants – Small Window are administered under a matching concept, where the applicant pledges to contribute towards the project in cash and in kind. The ACIF Grants – Small Window is specifically available to registered farmer groups (Cooperatives) and for projects with a ceiling of up to USD100,000.00 (One hundred thousand United States dollars). TRADE Programme shall contribute a maximum of 70% of the proposed project cost, while the applicant shall contribute 30% of the proposed project cost (where 10% is a mandatory cash contribution, going directly to the cost of the project).

(ii) Women and Youth window; as one way of accelerating its Agricultural Commercialization agenda, TRADE Programme provides Agricultural Commercialization Innovation Fund (ACIF) grants to qualifying women and youth owned businesses in Agriculture. The ACIF Grants – women and youth Window are administered under a matching concept, where the applicant pledges to contribute towards the project in cash and in kind. The ACIF Grants – women and youth Window is specifically available to registered women and youth owned businesses and Cooperatives and for projects with a

ceiling of up to USD100,000.00 (One hundred and fifty thousand dollars). TRADE Programme shall contribute a maximum of 80% of the proposed project cost, while the applicant shall contribute 20% of the proposed project cost (where 5% is a mandatory cash contribution, going directly to the cost of the project and 15% is in kind contribution).

The ACIF will specifically give priority to interventions that:

- (a) Bring sustainable innovations to the value chain development of targeted commodities
- (b) Create sustainable market linkages for the smallholder producers
- (c) Increase production and productivity, incomes, and resilience of targeted commodities through Climate Smart Interventions (Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA)/Natural Resources Management (NRM).
- (d) Foster entrepreneurship and vertical diversification by smallholder farmers
- (e) Value Chain investments that empower women, youth, and other marginalized and vulnerable groups.
- (f) Value Chain investments that adhere to IFAD's Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP)

3. Call for Proposals

TRADE Programme now calls for proposals from interested and eligible FOs, FBOs such as cooperatives and farmer groups who will promote the ACIF grants initiatives. Applicants are advised that TRADE Programme is commodity and location specific (as provided under <https://www.tradeprogramme.org/procurement-update>), therefore, only applications that target the specified TRADE EPAs, and the targeted commodities within these EPAs will be considered.

4. Review of Proposals

Proposals shall be reviewed by an independent team of reviewers called The Grants Review Committee (GRC), in line with the eligibility criteria that will be made available to the applicants or which may be downloaded from the TRADE Programme website.

5. How to Apply

Interested applicants should request the following by writing and/or emailing the addresses below or downloading documents from the TRADE website: <https://www.tradeprogramme.org/procurement-update>

- ACIF Small Grant Proposal Submission format
- The General Conditions for the Utilization of the ACIF Grant Facility

- Eligibility Criteria for ACIF Small grants • Eligibility Criteria for ACIF Small grant.
- List of EPAs and targeted commodities where TRADE Programme is operating

6. Further information about the application form

Requests, Questions and/or inquiries should be sent to TRADE Programme through email grants@tradeprogramme.org

7. Submission of proposals

Interested applicants should submit their proposals in electronic copies through email grants@tradeprogramme.org or through a link on <https://www.tradeprogramme.org/opportunities> or in hard copy to the address below. Clearly Marked “Proposals for ACIF Small Matching Grants” Proposals will be reviewed on a rolling basis therefore applicants are encouraged to respond at their earliest possible time to tap from the grants facility.

8. All Proposals should be addressed to:

The National Programme Coordinator Transforming Agriculture through Diversification and Entrepreneurship (TRADE) Area 9 Plot Number 328 P.O. Box 2135 Lilongwe. Malawi.

Web: www.tradeprogramme.org