



National Soybean Research Center  
1101 W. Peabody Dr.  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Urbana, IL 61801  
soybeaninnovationlab@illinois.edu

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

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

#### Managing Program

#### Pan-African Soybean Variety Trials

#### 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 change 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 further overview of the U.S. FTF initiative, please visit [www.feedthefuture.gov](http://www.feedthefuture.gov). SIL, initiated in 2013, currently is funded through 2027. SIL operates in 26 countries and 140 locations.

#### Background

Soybean varietal release occurs at a rate of .08 varieties per country per year since 2000 (TASAI, 2020), which has been too slow to meet the needs of the industry. The Pan-African Trial (PAT) platform addresses the seed industry's need for low cost and fast-track access to soybean varieties for registration, licensing, and commercialization. The PAT platform begins with effective support to the trial managers evaluating 30-50 varieties per location as to their appropriateness for their operations. Effectively supporting trial operators involves numerous steps including seed inventory management and storage, packaging, shipping, and communication with clients. Program dimensions: 388 varieties, 21 originators, 140 trial sites, 98 trial operators, 17,000 seed packs, 10 kgs of bulked seed stored per variety (388), 388 small plots for bulking seed.

#### Expected Activities and Procedures

- Define the entry list of soybean varieties for each macro-environment based on previous results and following the pipeline strategy.
- Contact and source local seed originators to supply new soybean varieties
  - Set up a database noting all key dates and communication, such as the original request date, follow up communication, deadlines, completion, etc.
- Designate a full-time employee to
  - coordinate trial management support activities



- maintain frequent and formal communication with originators, trial managers, other suppliers, and other key stakeholders
- Import and export seed from each originator and to each operator.
- Manage seed inventory to ensure seed quality and quantity:
  - Organize the seeds received and keep track of each variety available, from where, when and know its stages in the pipeline
    - Maintain an online database
  - Identify the need for bulking seeds, the quantity needed, and when the bulked seeds will be available
    - Track using a management tool
  - Use bar codes to track seed inventory and share information with the PAT Coordination team using recommended digital tools.
  - Implement a seed quality assurance process and perform a germination test on inventory one month before planting season combining laboratory and greenhouse testing and following a defined methodology.
    - Maintain a database of all results
    - Conduct analysis on all results for quality control purposes
    - Remove from inventory seeds with germination lower than 80% and with low quantity, these seeds can be used to seed increase.
  - Build seed storage with controlled temperature and humidity to guarantee seed shelf life.
    - Regularly record and store data on conditions
- Invoice creation: Develop and implement an online shared system to facilitate the creation of invoices and reduce coordination via e-mail.
- Seed packing for trials: track seed packing using a barcode to provide PAT Team with partner name, number of locations, seed origin, seed lot, and trial design
- Monitor seed shipments to partners, keeping the information updated
- Develop a formal system to send confirmation to partners informing them that seeds were packed and shipped with the attached trial design and entry list.

### **Geographic Focus**

This Request for Proposals spans Africa, with a focus on sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Applicant Eligibility**

This RFP will support the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) institutions, 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 seed 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 \$25,000, 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 must be addressed by each project. 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 SIL community on monthly researcher conference calls, biannual advisory board meetings, and annual researcher retreats.

## Proposal Submission Deadline

SIL will continue the support of this program over the next five 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](mailto:soybeaninnovationlab@illinois.edu) by March 31, 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 emailed to [soybeaninnovationlab@illinois.edu](mailto: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 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, 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 needs to 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.