



Social Impact

Data Collection and Analysis work for the USAID/Mali Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Platform

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Project	Mali Monitoring, Evaluation, & Learning (MEL) Platform
Funder	USAID/Mali
RFI Release Date	January 31, 2023
Deadline for Clarification Questions	February 13, 2023
Answers to Questions	February 17, 2023
Deadline for RFI Responses	February 24, 2023
Contact for Submissions	Abigail Price, Sr. Program Manager aprice@socialimpact.com

Disclaimer

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ONLY. The RFI is solely for information gathering purposes and is NOT a Request for a Proposal (RFP), a Request for Quotation (RFQ), an invitation for Bids, a Solicitation, or an indication that Social Impact (SI) will contract for the items contained in this RFI.

In accordance with FAR 15.201(e), responses to this notice are NOT offers and CANNOT be accepted by SI to form a binding contract. Responses to this RFI are strictly voluntary and SI will NOT pay respondents for information provided in response to this RFI. Responses to this RFI will NOT be returned and respondents will NOT be notified of the result of the review. If a Solicitation is issued, it will be announced at a later date, and all interested parties must respond to that Solicitation announcement separately from any response to this announcement. This RFI does NOT restrict SI's acquisition approach on a future solicitation.

About Social Impact and Mali Monitoring, Evaluation, & Learning (MEL) Platform

Social Impact, Inc. (SI) is a global development management consulting firm. We provide monitoring, evaluation, strategic planning, and capacity building services to advance development effectiveness. We work across all development sectors including



democracy and governance, health and education, the environment, and economic growth. Since 1997, we have worked in over 100 countries for clients such as US government agencies, bilateral donors, multilateral development banks, foundations, and nonprofits.

SI is currently implementing the USAID/Mali Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Platform. The purpose of the five-year project is to provide MEL technical and advisory services to USAID/Mali. This contract will have three major components: 1) USAID/Mali monitoring support through a Third-Party Monitoring (TPM) mechanism; 2) Evaluation Services and Surveys; and 3) Collaborating, Learning and Adaptive Management and Communication Services.

The MEL Platform will assist USAID/Mali and its partners to generate empirical data and to foster learning and knowledge management through a participatory process to support stronger results and improve evidence-based programming. The principal customers for this MEL Platform contract will be USAID/Mali staff, other USG agencies, USAID implementing partners, Malian Government counterparts, and relevant offices in USAID/Washington.

Under this contract, SI is requesting information from firms to gauge interest in and qualifications for forthcoming solicitation for data collection and analysis services in Mali.

Project Background

The MEL Platform will provide analytical services that will lead to stronger programmatic results and improve evidence-based decision making across the Mission. During the contract period, SI and partners will fulfill the program objectives by providing services within the contract's three major components:

Component I: Third Party Monitoring (TPM) Services. The SI Team will establish a robust TPM system capable of responding to USAID's varied needs for timely, independent data that supports compliance, accountability, contextual understanding, learning, and adaptive management.

Component II: Evaluation and Survey Services (ESS). SI's process will focus on utilization, creating final products that are valuable and accessible to users. SI will undertake ESS collaboratively with local partners as part of a comprehensive strategy to develop local MEL expertise.

Component III: Collaborating, Learning and Adaptive Management (CLA) and Communications Services. SI will provide CLA and communications support that integrates efficiently into USAID/Mali's ongoing reporting and compliance requirements. SI will integrate CLA and communications tasks into



USAID/Mali's program cycle, helping USAID and its partners systematize processes, generate and use evidenced-based learning, and tell USAID/Mali's story in accurate, compelling terms.

Evaluation and Survey Services (ESS)

This RFI focuses on ESS, Component II of the MEL Platform. Under this component, SI will conduct various Surveys, Performance and Impact Evaluations, Assessments and Special Studies.

- The surveys will consist of baseline, midline and endline at the Intermediate Results (IR) and Projects levels of the USAID Mali Country Development Cooperative Strategy (CDCS).
- The midcourse or final Performance Evaluations will focus on descriptive or normative questions exploring what a particular program or activity has achieved. SI will perform Performance Evaluations using qualitative and/or quantitative data collection and analysis methods.
- Impact Evaluations will measure the change in development outcomes attributable to a defined intervention or a set of interventions under the USAID Mali CDCS. They will be based on models of cause and effect and require a credible and rigorously defined counterfactual. The central objective being to control factors other than the interventions that might account for the observed changes.
- SI will carry out assessments and special studies and gather information on specific sectors that will help USAID Mali and its partners to understand the economic, social and political context under which the CDCS interventions operate.

SI may mobilize when needed local and/or regional firms and organizations with relevant experience and expertise in Mali to support data collection and analysis under these surveys, evaluations, assessments, and specific studies. The firms and organizations mobilized will work with surveys, evaluation, and assessment teams to collect and probably contribute to data analysis when appropriate. The data collection and analysis activities must follow USAID guidelines and standards in quality data management and use stated in ADS 201 and other US Government Guidelines including USAID Gender and Female Empowerment policy. Data collection and analysis must also be in line with SI Ensuring Quality Use and Impact (EQUI) standards.

Activities and programs that SI will evaluate and assess under the USAID Mali CDCS operate in a very stressful political, security and economic context that should be factored in all data collection and analysis processes. As of September 2022, USAID/Mali is operating under a new Country Development Cooperative Strategy (CDCS) that features an integrated approach to two Development Objectives (DOs), improved governance for



stronger democratic institutions and solidified and deepened development gains in targeted areas. A third Special Objective (SpO) targets improved outcomes across the humanitarian, development, and peace (HDP) nexus to save lives and increase resiliency. In total, these two DOs and the SpO are underpinned by 10 Intermediate Results (IRs). The new Strategy will be monitored for 1) the success and progress at the DO, SpO, and IR levels and 2) Strategy assumptions and risks. USAID interventions include Development and Humanitarian activities and cover all the Malian Territory including non-permissive and insecure environments.

Illustrative Scope of Work

SI will respond to USAID Mali's needs for surveys, evaluations and assessments, and special studies under the CDCS programs and projects. These studies will be used primarily by USAID, its implementing partners (IPs), and its host government partners to inform their understanding of the current and changing context and to assess projects and program outcomes for learning and decision-making processes. This effort will help USAID and its partners to understand better the context under which the CDCS operates through effective beneficiaries' feedback, and to improve the quality and effectiveness of its program portfolio.

To implement the surveys, evaluations, assessments, and special studies, SI and the study teams will design, and update the protocols, tools, sampling framework, and analysis techniques and approaches for this effort. Most likely the firms and organizations selected for specific work will provide services that may include but are not limited to the following:

1. Quantitative surveys (exact sample size to be determined) with specific target beneficiaries.
2. Qualitative key informant interviews (KIs) with specific stakeholders, service providers, provincial government stakeholders, NGOs, and others.
3. Qualitative focus group discussions with beneficiaries, Implementing Partners, and service providers.
4. Quantitative data extraction forms to be completed.
5. Quantitative data collection using tailored questionnaires, including the use of tablet applications and relevant online software.
6. Data collection using crowdsourcing methods in remote or hard-to-reach areas.

Social Impact's teams will design data collection instruments and protocols, select the data collection sample, obtain approval from local ethics boards, and complete data analysis. We seek to work with a qualified Malian or regional firm that will complete data collection and contribute to the analysis, as needed. While the specific scope of work for a data collection partner is yet uncertain, the following are very likely activities the firm partner would need to complete:



1. Recruit qualified candidates using a fair and transparent recruitment process. Recruit supervisors and enumerators with at least a high school diploma, and qualitative interviewers with at least a bachelor's degree (master's degree and some experience in the sector is preferred). Ideally, a sufficient number should be recruited to complete data collection within three weeks of notification. Data collectors will preferably have experience with interviewing in areas such as Democracy and Governance, Agriculture and Economic Growth, Health, Education, both for Humanitarian and Development interventions, and other sectors identified in the USAID Mali CDCS.
2. Provide feedback to the SI MEL Platform and study teams on data collection instruments and proposed protocols and logistical considerations including security protocols.
3. Translate data collection instruments from English to French and other local languages, and then back-translate into English to verify accuracy.
4. Organize and lead training for supervisors and enumerators and qualitative interviewers to ensure complete understanding of how to administer data collection tools and locate sampled parties (SI will support this training).
5. Possess the capacity to use online data collection methods and tablets and recruit and train qualified supervisors and enumerators in the use of tablets and other online data collection technologies.
6. Assign experienced supervisors to provide guidance and quality oversight for data collection teams including in hard-to-reach areas.
7. Maintain detailed contact information from respondents (separated from data they share) to facilitate re-contact for follow-up data collection.
8. Complete regular quality checks on both quantitative and qualitative data and rectify issues through calling back respondents or other measures as necessary.
9. Manage all data collection logistics including transportation for supervisors, enumerators and other staff during training and field work, and regularly communicate with SI about progress and challenges throughout data collection.
10. Transcribe and translate qualitative interviews into English.
11. Complete basic cleaning of quantitative data to deliver complete datasets free from duplicates and major errors. This would ideally be done using software that documents all changes made to datasets, such as Stata, SPSS, etc.

Training and data collection activities are expected to begin as early as March 2023. Following data collector training, data collection will typically occur over a period of approximately three weeks. The firm will be expected to perform basic data cleaning and compilation and submit data to SI within one week after data collection ends.



RFI Response Instructions

SI welcomes all locally or regionally-based data collection service providers or NGOs in Mali to reply to the RFI.

Firms interested in this work should provide three components: 1) a response **no longer than four pages** addressing the questions below. Responses should be accompanied by 2) an **annex listing past work** that demonstrates capabilities relevant to the above described effort, and 3) an illustrative CV of a person you would likely propose to serve in a Senior Research Manager role, responsible for managing the overall effort. The past performance annex and CV do not count toward the page limit, and there is no limit to their length. We ask firms to provide this information in the format provided in Exhibit A to facilitate our review.

RFI questions:

1. Please describe your firm's general level of experience with managing data collection efforts of the nature and scale in Mali. Please address your experience with both quantitative and qualitative methods.
2. Please describe how your firm typically organizes and staffs its data collection efforts in terms of numbers of data collectors relative to the number of supervisors. Please also provide an approximate number of data collectors the firm has available to call upon for work and where they are located geographically.
3. Please describe your firm's general level of experience with data collection with marginalized populations and other vulnerable groups over sensitive topics.
4. Please describe your firm's general level of experience working in politically insecure and conflict-affected regions in Mali or other similar regions in the Sahel.
5. Please briefly describe typical quality assurance measures your firm undertakes for both quantitative and qualitative data collection and give specific examples.
6. Please describe your firm's experience with electronic data collection using tablets or mobile phones. Within your response, please address a) which platforms you have used to administer surveys (e.g. Survey CTO, Open Data Kits) b) whether you have capability to complete back-end programming, c) whether your firm already possesses or has capability to rent tablets or mobile phones, and if so, indicate the types and number of devices you have available.
7. Please describe your firm's level of experience using Stata, SPSS or similar data analysis software that permits a reproducible record of data cleaning procedures completed.
8. Should telephonic interviews be required, please describe any experience you have with this method of data collection in Mali or other similar regions in the Sahel. Please share challenges and other considerations SI should keep in mind if such a shift is necessary.



9. Please share any other considerations and recommendations that Social Impact should keep in mind in data collection and analysis efforts described in the sections above.

Exhibit A. Format for Past Performance Listing Annex

Name of project:	
Client:	
Dates of performance:	
Brief description of client's project:	
Description of your firm's services provided <i>(include sample sizes and data collection locations):</i>	
Staff involved in the project <i>(number of experts and man-months):</i>	
List relevant skills/activities performed:	