



**REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA) FOR  
INNOVATION FUND**

**RFA No. EOAI/SDC/BvAT/2022/-05**

**Issue Date: 12-05-2022**

**PROJECT TITLE: MAINSTREAMING ECOLOGICAL ORGANIC AGRICULTURE (EOA)  
INTO AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS IN AFRICA FOR THE PERIOD 2019-2023 (PHASE  
II)**

Dear Applicant,

Biovision Africa Trust (BvAT) acting on behalf the African Union-led EOA Continental Steering Committee (CSC), with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is pleased to release a Request for Applications (RFA) for its Innovation Fund for 2022 to recruit suitable consortia of partners to implement innovation activities of the Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOA-I) Phase 2 in their countries based on the scope of work contained herein. The project grants will be awarded and implemented in accordance with the EOA-I grants management policies and procedures.

The annexes accompanying this Request for Applications are:

- 1) Annex A: Phase II Project Document (ProDoc) that can be accessed through these [links](#)
- 2) Annex B: Cover Letter (Sample Format) accessible through these [links](#)
- 3) Annex C: Technical Application template accessible through these [links](#)
- 4) Workplan template accessible through these [links](#)
- 5) M&E Plan template accessible through these [links](#)

This RFA does not obligate BvAT to execute a sub-grant, nor does it commit it to pay any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of the applications. Furthermore, BvAT reserves the right to reject all applications, if such action is in the best interest of the EOA Initiative. Applications are submitted at the applicant's own risk. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Thank you for your interest in being a partner in the EOA Initiative in Africa.

Sincerely,

David Amudavi (PhD)

Project Coordinator, Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative  
BvAT Executive Director  
Nairobi, Kenya

## **1. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF WORK**

### **1.1 Overview of the EOA Project**

The Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) Initiative is an African Union-led continental undertaking currently implemented in nine African countries namely Benin, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, and Rwanda. The initiative is provided guidance and oversight by the AU- chaired Continental Steering Committee (CSC) to establish an African organic farming platform based on available best practices; and to develop sustainable organic farming systems and improve seed quality.

The EOA Initiative envisions achieving resilient and vibrant ecological organic agricultural systems for enhanced food and nutrient security and sustainable development in Africa. Its mission is to promote ecologically sound strategies and practices among diverse stakeholders involved in production, processing, marketing, and policy making to safeguard the environment, improve livelihoods, alleviate poverty, and guarantee food security among farmers in Africa.

The EOA-I is anchored on 6 interrelated strategies namely, (i) Research, training, and extension, (ii) Information and communication, (iii) Value chain and market development, (iv) Networking and partnership, (v) Policy and programme development, and (vi) Institutional capacity development according to its 10-year Strategic Plan (2015-2025). Phase I (2014-2018) supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) funded the project with Pillars 1 to 3 being retained while Pillars 4 to 6 [Networking and Partnership (Pillar 4), Policy and Program Development (Pillar 5) and Institutional capacity development (Pillar 6)] combined to form Pillar 4 and named the Management, coordination and governance pillar for enhanced coordination, advocacy, networking, and institutional capacity building. The pillars have been revised to bring the focus of Value Chain Approach, Inter and Intra pillar synergies into closer perspective.

In Phase II (2019-2024) again supported by SDC, the initiative is being implemented under the following 4 Pillars: (i) Research and applied knowledge, (ii) Information, communication, and extension, (iii) Value chain and market development, and (iv) Management, coordination, and governance. The four pillars comprehensively capture the Initiative's five-year Action Plan anchored on six interrelated strategies mentioned above.

### **Project Goals and Objectives**

The overall goal of this initiative is to mainstream EOA into national agricultural production systems by 2025 to improve agricultural productivity, food security, access to markets and sustainable development in Africa.

The objectives of Phase II linked to the Action and Strategic Plans has five objectives namely:

- 1) To improve quality of life for all households in EOA implementing countries by mainstreaming ecological organic agriculture practices and technologies into the national agricultural systems.

- 2) To avail information and knowledge on EOA needed by value chain actors through demand driven, multi-disciplinary, gender sensitive, participatory research and knowledge repositories.
- 3) To enhance adoption of EOA technologies and practices through systematic dissemination of research and experience-based information, knowledge, and training of value chain actors.
- 4) To substantially increase share of quality organic products at local, national, regional, and international markets through value chain development and market strengthening; and
- 5) To enhance structured management and governance of EOA initiative through coordination, networking, advocacy, multi stakeholder platforms and capacity building leading to positive changes in agricultural systems in Africa.

## 1.2 Scope of Work

Applicants are required to propose their own implementation strategies to cover the scope of work described below, introducing innovative interventions that are appropriate to their organizational strengths, and demonstrating how they contribute to the goal and objectives of this initiative.

Innovations can be in any specific or combination of the following pillars:

Pillar 1- Research and Applied Knowledge (RAK)

Pillar 2- Information Communication and Extension (ICE)

Pillar 3- Value Chain and Market Development (VCMD)

Pillar 4- Management, Coordination and Governance (MCG)

**Project Pillar 1: Research and Applied Knowledge (RAK):** This pillar focusses on generation of EOA research from farmers, research and learning institutions and other actors, the outputs of which should be disseminated by Pillar 2 to potential users, namely all the actors in the value chains including organic farmers, input suppliers, traders, consumers and ultimately to policy makers for influencing relevant policy and legislation. Policy makers need to appreciate the value and impact of research to consider increased attention and support. Activities under this pillar should include identifying information and knowledge gaps in consultations with the stakeholders including farmers; demand-driven information generation, innovative, participatory, gender sensitive, interdisciplinary, and multicultural research processes; collating and validating available information and knowledge on practices and technologies and; packaging it into accessible repositories for dissemination and use by the various target groups along the EOA value chains.

**Project Pillar 2: Information, Communication and Extension (ICE):** This pillar supports dissemination of information and knowledge on EOA to various target groups. It links with Project Pillars 1, 3 and 4 by ensuring that information and knowledge generated by Pillar 1 is further repackaged and disseminated through effective and specific user targeted formats to reach the various target groups along the value chains.

**Project Pillar 3: Value Chain and Market Development (VCMD):** This pillar presents the greatest opportunity for making a difference in the outcomes of the EOA Initiative. In this Phase, the focus is on value chain approach, a departure from the fragmented implementation approach

used in Phase I, where focus was on unrelated value chains scattered in various regions within each country. The value chain approach will enable pillar partners to optimize

achievement by focusing on selected value chains in common regions with greater pillar synergy and coherence through joint planning and implementation. Besides, this Phase employs the market systems development (MSD) approach and other market system approaches to address systemic failures in the EOA sector market and ensure stronger participation by small-scale organic farmers to enhance production, incomes, food, and nutrition security. The strategy enhances access to business support services and market intelligence including the 4Ps (products, prices, places, and promotion) to EOA value chain actors. It will also develop new market channels and strengthen existing ones through consumer awareness campaigns and other forms of facilitation, making the markets more accessible to producers and buyers.

**Project Pillar 4: Management, Coordination and Governance (MCG):** This pillar focusses on coordination, networking, advocacy, and institutional capacity building. It covers core areas of the original last three pillars in the EOA strategic plan: Networking and Partnership (Pillar 4), Policy and Program Development (Pillar 5) and Institutional Capacity Development (Pillar 6). The promotion of EOA is a complex and multi-disciplinary process that calls for efficient cooperation and communication among relevant stakeholders at all levels including governments, farmers, civil society, private sector, and the international community. Effective implementation of the EOA Initiative requires strong institutions with effective, functional, and responsive administrative and operational systems.

## 2. APPLICATION DETAILS

### 2.1 Who can apply

The EOA-I participating countries: The Call is intended for 9 countries currently of eastern and west Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, Mali, Nigeria, Benin, and Senegal).

The EOA-I already has Consortia of partners implementing the fixed funds component of the project that was rolled out from 2020.

Two consortia from Kenya (KOAN) and Benin (OBEPAB) were awarded the Innovation funds for 2021. They are eligible to apply for the grant if they fulfill the innovation requirements.

We encourage the existing consortia of partners to apply or Individual Pillar Implementing Partners (PIPs in line with their strategic areas of operation.

### 2.2 Project activities that can be funded

The project activities should be within the guidelines of the EOA Phase II Pro-Doc that can be accessed through this link ([English](#)) or ([French](#)). They should address the concrete development challenges in the organic sector (government, civil society, private sector) and refer to policy frameworks at national/regional/global level. The activities shall facilitate information generation through research work, uptake of information to the target beneficiaries - the small-scale farmers and policy makers, value chains, market development and linkages and establishment of networks and platforms for information sharing.

The activities have to be in line with the AUC decision on organic farming passed during the Eighteenth Ordinary Session, 24-28 January 2011, EX.CL/Dec.621 (XVIII), Global frameworks and partnerships such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (1, 2, 3, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 17), the African Agenda 2063, International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the “Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food” call for new institutional and organizational arrangements to transform agricultural and food supply systems towards ensuring food and livelihood security, in a stable environment, fully supported by appropriate and implementable government policies and strategies.

## 2.3 Duration of Funding

**Intended Duration of Grants:** From July 2022- April 2023 (9 months)

## 2.4 Funding Available per Country (for successful consortium)

### a. Innovation Challenge Fund: USD 154,418

BvAT reserves the right to vary the actual value of individual grants provided and to accept any or none of the proposals received.

**Innovation challenge fund** will be considered for a few high-quality proposals, meaning from a few countries. This granting model aims at generating partner interest in organic agriculture, encouraging participation and collaboration, entrenching implementing partner commitment, fostering synergy and promoting resource mobilization amongst organic stakeholders to bring organic agriculture to scale in policy, plans and programs.

The **Innovation challenge** fund will be awarded to consortiums or pillar implementing partners that have the best rating across the two regions in relation to last year’s performance in terms of achievements and sound project cycle management including reporting (as major decisive allocation 1<sup>st</sup> criterion), demonstration of matching funds (2<sup>nd</sup> criterion), indication of sustainability, scalability, and innovativeness (3<sup>rd</sup> criterion) of the consortia proposals. The 1<sup>st</sup> criterion will only apply to previous CLOs/PIPs’ performance but not on the new applicants. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> criteria will apply to all consortia, whether current or new.

The RFA will consist of only the innovation fund applications. **Intended**

**Start Date of Grants Use: 15-06-2022.**

## 3. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

### 3.1 Eligible organizations:

- Those implementing EOA-I within the 9 partner countries in form of consortia.
- Pillar Implementing Partners – can apply individually within the pillars of operation. The proposed Pillar activities should be in line with already ongoing work,

**3.2 Geographic focus:** Only applications from organizations registered and operating in the nine (9) participating countries will be considered.

### 3.3 Ineligible expenses

EOA-I grant funds may not be utilized for the following purposes:

3.3.1 Construction or infrastructure activities of any kind ( e.g construction of buildings, roads, tanks and any infrastructure)

3.3.2 Ceremonies, parties, celebrations, or “representation” expenses

3.3.3 Alcoholic beverages

3.3.4 Purchases or activities unnecessary to accomplish grant purposes as determined by the EOA-I

a. Prior obligations of and/or, debts, fines, and penalties imposed on the Grantee, Creation of endowments.

## 4. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

- All application materials should be submitted to EOA-I grants via the official email: [info@eoiafrica.org](mailto:info@eoiafrica.org) by 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022 (4 weeks to submit applications)

### 4.1 Time frame and targeted dates

Key dates in the application process will be as shown below:

#	PROCESS	DATE
1	Release of RFA	16-05- 2022
2	Seeking of clarifications by applicants	23-05-2022
3	Response to applications by BvAT	24-05-2022
4	Submission of Proposals	22-06-2022
5	Review and Awarding	01-07-2022

Applications that are not submitted according to the formats requested and in accordance with the instructions in this RFA may be considered as non-responsive and may be disqualified.

The application elements and guidelines are summarized below:

**A. Section I (Applicants Information):** The Applicant provides the name of the organization or consortium partners applying.

**B. Section II (Project Description).** The applicant describes overarching program elements such as the title of the project, objective of the grant and the linkage to EOA-I objectives,

results, and indicators for measuring results, the activities, beneficiaries, and plan for disseminating activity deliverables.

**C. Section III (Project Implementation Plan).** This section covers information regarding project implementation, including proposed personnel and descriptions about each activity.

**i. Each activity must be:**

- Complete and sound
- Integrated and scheduled with dependent tasks
- Assigned to a responsible and relevant partner
- Defined in terms of resources required
- Concluded with a viable milestone of achievement - milestones must be linked to results.

ii. The activities listed must show a logical, thoughtful approach to the overall implementation plan. Activities should describe actions and be logically sequenced. Each activity must contribute to the achievement of a specific objective.

iii. Applications should be in line with the current EOA Results Framework and should clearly articulate the different results levels.

iv. The following templates: Workplan and Budgets and M&E Plan should be filled in line with the Results Framework for Phase II.

## **5. EVALUATION CRITERIA**

All applications will be subjected to evaluation criteria with the following steps:

- 1) Technical evaluation
- 2) Financial evaluation

The evaluations will be conducted at Executing Agency level (BvAT) but may include representatives from the Donor (SDC).

### **5.1 Innovation Challenge Fund**

Applications for the innovation challenge fund will be evaluated by the Executing Agency using criteria for value add to project activities. This fund will be awarded to most enterprising and innovative country proposals meriting additional funding.

### **5.2 Duration of evaluation**

The evaluation process will take **not more than 10 days** from the date of closure of submission of application. More time may be allocated to this process if it is practically impossible to finalize evaluation due to competing interests and/or receipt of high number of proposals.

### **5.3 Notifications to applicants**

Applicants will be notified of the status of their application at the conclusion of the whole evaluation process.

#### 5.4 Compliance/Eligibility Check

The review team shall within **5 days** after RFA deadline conduct a compliance check using RFA requirements checklist below. The applications shall be subject to technical evaluation with non-compliant ones being rejected, and the applicant notified of the rejection. **The compliance check shall be documented.**

	Mandatory requirements	Compliance status
1	Met deadline for submission	Y/N
2	Submitted both technical and financial proposals	Y/N
3	Submitted Workplan, Budgets and M&E Plans	Y/N

#### 5.5 Technical Evaluation

Technical review will be conducted by the Executing Agency. This will be undertaken using the template below.

#### 5.6 Evaluation criteria

The criteria for selection should be discrete, measurable, exhaustive, and verifiable components of the services required and provide a basis for assessing each applicant's capability to provide the required services. The process should eliminate applications that might present a substantial technical or commercial risk to the EOA-I project.

Any changes in the evaluation criteria before or during the evaluation process shall be communicated to all the applicants. This shall be done before the reviewed criteria are applied.

#### **Feasibility of Design & Technical Approach.**

This will examine the quality and feasibility of the proposed technical approach and methodology to produce the intended outcomes, the innovativeness of the interventions, and the work plan for achieving project objectives leading to significant impacts on organic agriculture in the country; proposed mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) with objectively measurable indicators; and, identification of target group(s), their needs and how the proposed activities will lead to addressing target groups' needs and provide other opportunities.

#### **Management and Programmatic Capacity.**

The application should demonstrate the organization's preparedness and effectiveness in terms of institutional and governance structures, technical capacity, and financial management capability. The appraisal will be based principally on reference checks related to the EOA-I; the background, qualifications, reputation, appropriateness, and skills of its key personnel; and achievements (including development of self-sufficient, sustainable activities) of the organization involved.

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### **Relevant Work Experience.**

Relevant work experience implementing similar activities as outlined in the RFA to demonstrate confidence in undertaking the proposed EOA project activities.

### **Gender Inclusivity.**

The extent to which the proposal represents a strong commitment to ensuring access and equity between genders especially the involvement and inclusion of women. The project should **NOT** disadvantage women. There is need to describe what will be done to include women and women's perspectives in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the project. There should be evidence of, **in least, 60%** female representation and 10% of youth amongst target project beneficiaries.

The evaluation of gender awareness should consider questions such as, (1) Does the proposal provide an answer to the issue of gender inclusivity and in what ways? (2) Does the proposal provide evidence or examples of women engagement to show distribution of benefits? and, (3) Does the proposal demonstrate an understanding of the objectives of the gender inclusivity and awareness?

### **Scalability of the Intervention.**

This will consider the practicality of the expansion of the proposed activities to cover a wider geographical region to reach more individuals, the capacity to manage the scaled-up activities, ability to access the resource requirements for the scale up and overall cost effectiveness of a scale-up. Cost effectiveness compare the resource requirements and the overall impact that may be achieved from the scale up.

### **Sustainability Strategies.**

The extent of community engagement & ownership in the project, level of integration of the project into what beneficiaries do, effectiveness of capacity development of beneficiaries, linking of this project to other programmes/projects, evidence of resource mobilization (number of new donors and grants), evidence of political buy-in and integration into national programmes, simplicity of the proposed project activities/approaches (the simpler it is the more sustainable it becomes).

## **5.7 Innovation challenge fund evaluation criteria**

Technical review for the Innovation Challenge Fund will be conducted by the Executing Agency.

<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	<b>Sub-Criteria</b>	<b>Sub criteria score (Max Points)</b>	<b>Criteria Score</b>
	Innovativeness of the concept in the proposal	10	

<b>Feasibility of Design &amp; Approach</b>	Appropriateness of the proposed approach- a clear rationale for project intervention, evidence-based approach clearly linking to results. Proposed activities directly relate to or lead to achievement of the objectives	10	50
	A clear demonstration of how the project will improve impact in selected outcomes.	10	
	Elaboration of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanism with objectively measurable indicators.	10	
	Clear identification of target beneficiary and needs to be addressed by the proposed project activities.	10	
<b>Gender Inclusivity</b>	Demonstration of how the proposed project activities will ensure participation of, and benefit, both male, female and youth beneficiaries.	10	10
<b>Scalability of the Intervention</b>	Demonstration of a clear vision, strategy, drivers and pathway for scaling up (such as partnerships, enabling environmental factors) and the target beneficiaries.	10	10
<b>Sustainability strategies</b>	Exit strategy and evidence and appropriateness of strategy to manage stakeholder participation and ownership, Alignment with country level (government) initiatives, communication/public awareness, and raising of extra funds.	10	10
<b>Total</b>			80

Applicants will be required to attain a minimum score of **60** scores to be considered technically capable to implement the proposed project.

### 5.8 Financial Evaluation

Financial evaluation will be conducted to ensure there is value for money for the project. It will involve a detailed assessment of the proposed budgets and ensuring the costs therein represent a fair reasonable and allowable in pursuing the objectives of the project.

Financial evaluation will be conducted using the financial evaluation checklist below. The findings of the financial evaluation will inform the budget negotiations. The executing agency will conduct financial evaluation.

Criteria	Score (Max Points)	Comment
Budget clearly delineates costs of the project to be met by the funding source	3	
Budget is realistic, reflects the work plan/scope of work and it is sufficient to cover the cost of the project activities	4	
Budget includes reasonable and realistic costs	4	

Costs reflect accurate calculations	2	
Budget does not contain amounts for unexplained purposes (i.e., miscellaneous)	3	
Activity costs are at least 70% of the total costs	4	
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>	<b>20</b>	

Applicants will be required to attain a minimum score of **15** scores in order to be considered financially capable to implement the proposed project.

### 5.9 Combination of Technical and Financial Scores

The final technical evaluation scores from the consensus meeting shall be combined with the financial evaluation score to attain the total score.

## 6. SCORING METHODOLOGY

Scoring methodology is a guide on how evaluators will score. Each score value is given a description that must be achieved for the score to be given. Evaluators will score the applications as guided by the scoring methodology in the RFA.

### 6.1 Individual scoring

Each evaluator will review and score individually the proposal, both technical and financial. The scores and comments will be recorded on the 'individual evaluation score sheet'. No evaluator can see another's score to avoid undue influence in the scoring.

Each evaluator may change their scores on both technical and financial evaluation of each application before the lapse of the evaluation period after which no further changes can be made.

### 6.2 Overall scoring

The evaluation team will apply the following scoring methodology to score overall the proposal on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest score for the best proposal.

### 6.3 Consensus meeting

On the lapse of individual scoring timeframe, the Executing Agency members will hold a consensus meeting to discuss and agree on the final scores for each application. They will discuss all the individual evaluations and make necessary changes to the individual proposal scores. Changes made will be effective based on voting with simple majority and the reason for any change shall be documented. A reviewer with dissenting opinion regarding the score changes will provide his/ her opinion before the BvAT Chair submits the agreed on best proposals with their scores.

### 6.4 Negotiations

The executing agency will negotiate with the top applicant who meet the capacity/risk assessment threshold on the scope of work, suggested approaches, targets, project timelines and rationalization of budgets. Based on the negotiations held, the executing agency may either recommend full award or no award.

## 6.5 Approval

The executing agency will submit to the donor for further appraisal and approval of the following documents:

1. The evaluation report will contain details of:
  - Applications received
  - Compliance check results
  - Technical evaluation results
  - Financial evaluation results
  - Negotiations details
2. Revised technical proposals
3. Negotiated budgets for all the applicants
4. Recommendations for award or rejection.

## 6.6 Decision-making for the grant

The donor will review the documentation and may make any of the following decisions: (1) accept the decision as is, (2) partially accept the decision and/or (3) take decisions for changes before award is made.

## 7. AWARD

Once the award decision has been made, the executing agency will issue an award notification to the successful applicant(s). The award notification shall be made **within 3 days** from date of award decision.

### 7.1 Award Notification & Acceptance

On receipt of the award notification, the successful applicants will be given award offer within **3 days**. This will be followed by issuance of a grant agreement.

### 7.2 Regret Notification

All unsuccessful applicants shall be notified of regret within **5 days** from the date of the award decision. The notification (will include the reasons for not being awarded.

### 7.3 Grant Agreement

The executing agency will issue grant agreement to successful applicant (s) not more than **5 days** after the recipient's acceptance of the award offer for signing by representatives from both parties.