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# Request for Proposals

Fair Trade USA

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Fair Trade USA

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## Contents

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- 1. INTRODUCTION TO FAIR TRADE USA, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUND PROJECTS, AND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS ..... 2**
- 2. PROJECT VISION, DESCRIPTION, AND SCOPE ..... 3**
- 3. PROJECT OBJECTIVES ..... 4**
- 4. PROJECT OUTCOMES ..... 4**
- 5. PROJECT REQUIREMENTS.....5**
- 6. PROJECT TIMELINE ..... 6**
- 7. KEY DELIVERABLES.....7**
- 8. SELECTION CRITERIA ..... 8**
- 9. EVALUATION APPROACH..... 8**
- 10. PROJECT BUDGET AND SUPPORT ..... 9**
- 11. APPLICATION PROCESS ..... 9**
- 12. ADDITIONAL NOTES.....10**



# 1. Introduction to Fair Trade USA, Community Development Fund Projects, and Needs Assessments

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## **Fair Trade USA:**

Fair Trade USA is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and is the leading third-party certifier of Fair Trade products in the United States, enabling sustainable development and community empowerment by cultivating a more equitable global trade model that benefits farmers, workers, consumers, and businesses. Fair Trade USA operates in 45 countries and in a broad range of product categories including but not limited to coffee, cocoa, produce, seafood, as well as apparel and home goods.

In many supply chains producers are still not treated with the respect they deserve; they have limited ability to control whether they receive a fair exchange for their goods or services. Labor is still commoditized, and workers and farmers may not receive payment (wages or prices) that cover their basic needs or costs of production. Despite increasing awareness of these inequalities, global systems change is needed to create fair trading relationships.

In order to shift this paradigm, Fair Trade USA and their strategic partners advocate for, and implement, decent work initiatives to achieve equitable supply chains. This empowers producers and enables businesses to more transparently support sustainable livelihoods for workers, small producers, and producer organizations.

Fair Trade USA's Theory of Change frames a model in which people prosper in resilient and sustainable communities by building a market for responsible business and mutually beneficial trade that cultivates conscious consumption.

## **The Community Development Fund Model: From Assessing Needs to Implementing Projects**

Fair Trade USA's impact results from two mechanisms or strategies: certificate holders adhering to rigorous sustainability and social compliance standards and the investment of Community Development Funds.

Fair Trade USA utilizes standards to ensure cooperatives, farms, factories, and traders operate ethically and fairly. These standards are designed to protect the livelihoods of those who produce goods by requiring decent and safe working conditions, supporting economic well-being, advocating for gender equity, requiring fair prices (in some supply chains), and protecting human rights.

Through adherence to the Trade Standard, each industry and brand partner commits to pay an additional sum of money, known as a Premium, above the purchase price of the Fair Trade Certified product. These funds are then returned to the producer community in the form of Community Development Funds (CDFs) which are then spent according to a democratic vote based on a Needs Assessment.

Worldwide, fair trade initiatives have paid out hundreds of millions of dollars in the form of Community Development Funds. This is unique among development interventions, which continue to be largely top-down and prescriptive, rarely providing communities agency to determine their most pressing needs nor design solutions to address those needs. CDFs, on the other hand, empower communities through a democratic process and offers unlimited outcomes through the multitude of ways producers invest funds to meet critical needs-from building schools to mitigating climate change risks.

All participants in the Fair Trade program elect the members of the Fair Trade Committee. This committee is responsible for identifying the needs of beneficiaries of the Community Development Funds, and how these funds may and may not be used according to the Fair Trade Standards.



Identifying a community's most pressing needs and designing projects to address them is a key aspect of this model and drives outcomes. The challenge remains, however, that tools and processes to support producer-led needs assessments and project implementation at FT USA have historically been bespoke and siloed across geographies and supply chains.

As such, there has not been a formal, consistent implementation of this aspect of the model across communities that FT USA serves. The current approach results in varying degrees of community impact and implementations that are not consistent. In some producer groups, a needs assessment might simply rely on focus group input, in others, it might be a sophisticated survey administered via a QR code.

These disparate implementations highlight a gap in the uniform administration of needs assessment processes as well as producer tools, and the ability to track project outcomes. This leaves FT USA unable to collate needs across various supply chains, optimize interventions, and share aggregated project outcomes with stakeholders. It also causes challenges in the monitoring and evaluation of the intervention when working to identify common variables that contribute to outcomes. As a result, FT USA has been unable to develop nuanced programming for specific country and cultural contexts nor leverage on-the-ground NGOs and implementation partners to accelerate and deepen the impact of Premium projects for producers.

## 2. Project Vision, Description, and Scope

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The Needs Assessment and Community Development Fund Spending Redesign is a 30-month project intended to re-envision and reimagine the process by which FT USA supports the identification of the needs of the communities receiving Fair Trade USA's Community Development Funds. In addition, the project includes the development of a suite of tools and resources to support, implement, and evaluate the spending of funds at the community level.

The vision is a Fair Trade system that optimizes the use of the Fair Trade Community Development Funds for beneficiaries while also empowering farmers, fishers, and workers to have agency over their community and household decisions. The redesign is intended to provide value to Certificate Holders as well as build partner and stakeholder connections to origin communities and ensure that communities have access to the resources they need to implement and evaluate the projects which evolve from their identified needs. Finally, the vision intends to strengthen and amplify Fair Trade USA impact and expertise in the space.

### **Scope 1: Needs Assessment and Community Development Fund Spending Process and Producer Toolkit**

The first scope of the project includes:

- Developing a needs assessment process and producer toolkit related to assessing needs, supporting the implementation of the project or program to meet those needs, and the development of an evaluation infrastructure to support communities to evaluate their projects or programs on the efficacy of the implementation to meet those needs.
- Building the processes and tools to support translating the results of needs assessments into project ideas, selecting Community Development Fund Projects, implementing and managing the projects, and evaluating the projects and their outcomes.

It is intended to cover the full life cycle of CDF projects (assessing needs, implementing a project to meet those needs, evaluating the project). It is also, however, recognized that this project timeline will not allow



for development of process and toolkit for every step of the CDF project lifecycle nor every context in which to implement it (which might need different delivery mechanisms).

The processes and tools developed are intended to serve FTUSA as a holistic process and toolkit for use across all products and all geographies.

## **Scope 2: Field Trials and Pilot Sites**

The second scope of the project includes conducting field trials and pilots of the efficacy of the processes and tools toward intended outcomes. The field trials will be tested in 4 supply chains in Latin America. Additional field trials may be conducted to support testing in two additional supply chains in Indonesia and India as the project develops.

Iteration as a result of field trials and pilots is expected in order to develop a final deliverable with input from all stakeholders.

## **Scope 3: Evaluation of Outcomes**

The third scope of the project is an evaluation of the outcomes of the intervention (see below for anticipated outcomes). This includes the possibility of a baseline or counterfactual, an assessment designed to understand individual producer attitudes and perceptions, as well as project implementations outcomes.

## **3. Project Objectives**

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Through this proposed project, FTUSA aims to answer two key questions that are central to the organization's ability to drive positive impact for producer communities and value for Fair Trade partners as a market-driven model.

- How can FTUSA increase the impact of Community Development Funds in producer communities?
- How can improved processes, tools, data capture methods, and reporting create stronger ties between producer communities and buyers/brands/consumers and increase the amount of CDFs returned to producers through expanded purchase commitments?

## **4. Project Outcomes**

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The Needs Assessment and Community Development Fund Spending Redesign is intended to achieve three outcomes listed below. The evaluation of the re-imagined process should have these outcomes in mind when developing the evaluation strategy:

### *Outcome 1*

- Increased Needs Assessment inclusion & satisfaction. Measured by statistically significant increase in the following metrics: 1) Producers report feelings of inclusion in the decisions that affect their livelihoods having been through the Needs Assessment process, and 2) Producers report satisfaction with the Needs Assessment process.



### Outcome 2

- Increased producer empowerment. Project drives positive change in perceptions that identified needs were addressed and affected, as measured by statistically significant increase in the following metrics: 1) Producers feel empowered to identify/assess their needs, 2) Producers feel positive individual and/or community change as a result of project implementation and 3) Positive changes in the perception of the process, project implementation, and feeling project helped to meet identified needs.

### Outcome 3

- Effectively & accurately assess needs. Tools developed drive more successful implementation of projects as measured by the following metrics: 1) Producers report that they have correct/sufficient resources to a) evaluate their needs b) implement successful projects, 2) the projects met their identified needs (e.g., access to clean water) 3) are satisfied with the experience of using the tools, 4) are satisfied with the allocation of Premium, and 5) are satisfied with project implementation.

In addition to the aforementioned outcomes, evaluators should also attempt to capture unanticipated outcomes, positive or negative, so as to gather a full understanding of the intervention.

## 5. Project Requirements

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The successful Evaluation team (firm, group, or individual) will:

1. Develop a literature review/desk review to use in informing outcome evaluation as well as for use in the final report of the project. It is expected that this literature will include academic literature published in peer-reviewed journals as well as literature produced or commissioned by credible non-governmental organizations, think tanks, policy institutes, and international organizations (“gray literature”).
2. Identify the best approach/methodology/framework to evaluate the project outcomes. This is clearly defined and has appropriate theoretical context in the literature.
3. Develop in conjunction with FTUSA the resources needed to implement the evaluation, understanding the need for flexibility in working in resource constrained environments and the imperative for malleability in international development contexts.
4. Work with FTUSA staff and field staff as well as other third-party Human Centered Design Consultants so as to gain appropriate context for evaluation.
5. Design/identify instruments/tools (quantitative and qualitative) so as to collect data from the relevant respondents (farmers, workers in a hired labor setting, or other relevant cooperative members), while ensuring the best response rate to effectively evaluate the outcomes.
6. Implement infrastructure into the piloting of the Needs Assessment Redesign project such that there are effective measures in place to evaluate outcomes (ie. Baseline interviews, surveys etc.) This could require travel to Central and South America. This could also require travel to South and/or SE Asia.
7. Conduct evaluation of outcomes at pilot test sites in collaboration with FTUSA staff and field staff. This will require travel to Central and South America. This could also require travel to South and/or SE Asia.



8. Perform analysis on the data. Ensure quantitative data is examined in aggregate as well as across country/commodity/labor and takes into account other nuances that surface in the context of the research. If interviews and focus groups are used, ensure that the appropriate qualitative analysis methodology (such as content analysis/thematic analysis/grounded theory) is used to extract relevant themes/outcomes.
9. Develop recommendations on how to strengthen the project for scaled implementation across FTUSA commodities.
10. Present key findings (graphs, figures, charts, infographics, etc) to relevant stakeholders within Fair Trade USA in formats that are also suitable for external release via webinar or in-person.

## 6. Project Timeline

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### April 2020 – June 2020

- Project on-boarding, including working with Human Centered Designers
- Develop literature/desk review
- Develop strategy for outcomes assessment (including the decision on the baseline or counterfactual)
- Project Evaluation plan and approach is clearly defined, including what metrics are being tracked, by whom, how, and when

### July 2020

- Deliver desk review and evaluation strategy and plan.

### September/October/November 2020

- Logistics and implementation for pilot testing
- Collect baseline data if needed.

### December 2020 – March 2021

- Official pilot testing (4 – 6 sites)
- Implementation of any data collection needed during pilot phase

### February- June 2021

- Data analysis and evaluation of outcomes
- Early findings analysis to Implementation Resources team in order to iterate tools and processes.

### June - November 2021

- Roll additional findings as able to project team so as to continue process and tool iteration

### December 2021

- Final report delivered



- Presentation with key stakeholders of findings

## 7. Key Deliverables

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### First Deliverable

- 1) Literature Review/Desk Review
  - a. Needs Assessment Processes
    - i. Can include asset mapping or other community-based assessments
  - b. Community Decision making
  - c. Other relevant literature as identified

### Second Deliverables

- 2) An evaluation strategy and plan
  - a. Quantitative data survey instrument
  - b. Qualitative data survey strategy and methodology (if needed)
  - c. Data analysis strategy
    - i. Variables and indicators defined and identified
- 3) Evaluation implementation
  - a. Full participation in the evaluation implementation as needed. This could include:
    - i. Conducting interviews
    - ii. Conducting focus groups
    - iii. Conducting surveys
  - b. Trip report from any field work at origin. FTUSA provides a standard template for trip reports

### For Final Deliverables:

- 4) A final report including:
  - a. Literature Review
  - b. Methodology
  - c. Outcomes/Findings
  - d. Conclusions and recommendations
- 5) Presentation to stakeholders both external and internal





## 8. Selection Criteria

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### *Essential*

- Fluency in English spoken and written (Spanish proficiency preferred)
- Demonstrated understanding of program/project evaluation, evaluation frameworks (such as Outcomes Harvesting) and mixed methods studies
- Successful experience in conducting literature reviews.
- Successful experience in designing and conducting evaluations, ideally including expertise in at least one survey software platform and in rapid and effective survey design, implementation, and analysis.
- Successful experience in qualitative data gathering and analysis as well as expertise in at least one
- Ability to create interesting and eye-catching data visualizations and presentations
- Team availability during the timeframes indicated

### *Highly Desirable*

- Demonstrated understanding of Needs Assessment implementations and impacts as well as a familiarity with different types outcomes of such interventions. In particular, producer empowerment and community-based or asset-based decision-making
- Background in certification schemes, with past work related to smallholder farmers, cooperatives, hired labor settings (factory and agricultural), Community Development Funds and Projects, and/or sustainable livelihoods or international development.
- Understanding of Fair Trade principles, key tools and approaches, Fair Trade USA Theory of Change, Needs Assessments, and processes and tool kits for understanding community needs.
- Understanding of Human Centered Design

## 9. Evaluation Approach

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This process redesign is intended to capture the outcomes There will be several considerations within this approach that are important to integrate into the proposal.

- This is an outcomes evaluation not a process evaluation
  - While this is the implementation of a new process at FTUSA, we are interested in the *outcomes* of the process
  - If, however, the outcomes are not achieved, recommendations for remediation of the process is encouraged, thus it will be important to understand how the process affects the outcomes
- Balancing FTUSA's output requirements with the outcomes
  - FTUSA also has internal requirements related to the final processes, tools, and data outputs: therefore the approach will need to be balanced against organizational realities.
- Multiple methodological considerations



- There are many outcome evaluation strategies that could be utilized (beneficiary assessment, case study, democratic evaluation, outcomes harvesting etc.). It will be important to choose the \*best\* methodology/approach in order to capture outcomes.
- Researchers should have experience in conducting different approaches and understand the nuances in what each can accomplish/cannot accomplish in order to meet the objectives of the project.
- This project works across multiple commodities, countries, and cultural norms. Understanding these variables will be important to capturing outcomes. International development context is key.

## 10. Project Budget and Support

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The total budget for this project is currently **\$158,000** for 2020 and 2021. Please note that all costs invoiced must be below this amount.

Note that the Impact Research and Learning Team will be significantly engaged in this work in order to support the evaluation fidelity and completion of the deliverables. Additionally, some project management support will be available along with the Human Centered Design support and expertise of a member of FT USA's Standards and Implementation Resources team.

## 11. Application Process

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If you are interested in being considered for this project, please send a short proposal (10 pages max) detailing:

- How you or your team meets the selection criteria (including links to past relevant work)
- The approach you would take for each work stream, detailing your team's knowledge of outcomes evaluation strategies and methodologies as well as incorporating appropriate guardrails relevant to working in an international development context
- A detailed project timeline
- A budget (ensuring that each workstream is broken out within the budget)
- A CV or resume for each member of the team as an appendix (not counted towards the page limit)
- 3-5 references

RFP published: 3/20/2020

**Deadline extended: 5/8/2020**

Contact person for all questions and proposals:

**Sarah Binion, Sr. Director Impact, Research, and Learning**

**Email: [sbinion@fairtradeusa.org](mailto:sbinion@fairtradeusa.org)**

Please note that all application materials will be shared with a selection committee. Your submission of a proposal will be taken as de-facto consent to share your personal data with those on the selection committee.



## 12. Additional Notes

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- 1) Because of the need to literature including peer reviewed scholarship, the evaluators are required to have access to paywalled literature in journals
- 2) Fair Trade USA will also engage a Human Centered Design team to support the redesign project and development of tools and resources. The HCD team may have some engagement with the evaluators and will be highly engaged in the implementation of the work for assessment. The evaluators should take a collaborative approach with the HCD team so as to ensure that the needs of the communities are prioritized and all work streams move together efficiently to accomplish multiple objectives to ensure deliverables are met.
- 3) Given the significant challenges with the COVID-19 virus, timelines and possibly other aspects of this RFP are subject to change. Flexibility under these circumstances will be required.

