

# RFP: Labeled Datasets for Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa

## Questions and Answers

Updated on 26 August to include two clarifications (0.Q and 0.A)

0.Q	<p>1. Where on the portal does an applicant add support letters from collaborating institutions?</p> <p>2. What does “CV of team members” mean? If the application is a consortium of 3 or 4 partners, what CVs should the applicant submit?</p>
0.A	<p>1. Letters of support from collaborating institutions will be requested for accepted applicants during the due diligence stage.</p> <p>2. CVs of team leaders at collaborating institutions should be uploaded under the “key collaborators” question in the “Your Information” form. Key project team members are loosely defined. If the proponent believes the qualifications of that team member are critical to the evaluation and eventual success of the project, they should include the CV.</p>
1.Q	<p>Are universities in Egypt eligible for the latest Agriculture RFP?</p>
1.A	<p>Please find a full list of eligibility criteria on page 3 of the <a href="#">RFP</a>. The geographic scope of this RFP is limited to sub-Saharan Africa as defined by the World Bank: <a href="https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups">https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups</a></p> <p>However, organizations outside sub-Saharan Africa may partner with organizations in the region on proposals.</p>
2.Q	<p>What is the upper limit on the grant awards?</p>
2.A	<p>Please refer to the "Budget" section of the RFP on page 9:</p> <p>"The online application will require the applicant to upload a budget formatted in the Lacuna Fund budget template, available on the application page under “Open RFPs” and in the applicant portal. Budgets should be submitted in US Dollars. <b>We are anticipating proposed budgets in the range of \$20k – 100k for small to medium-sized projects and as much as \$500k for large, complex projects.</b> Note that the Technical Advisory Panel will assess the feasibility and suitability of the budget as well as the linkage between the budget and grant narrative as part of the selection criteria."</p> <p>That section also provides illustrative examples of acceptable costs.</p>

3.Q	I am enrolled in a PhD and I am working on the agroecological transition. Am I eligible for funding? Can the application be completed in French?
3.A	<p>Please find a full list of eligibility criteria on page 3 of the <a href="#">RFP</a>. In particular, applicants must:</p> <p>"Be either a non-profit entity, research institution, for-profit social enterprise, or a team of such organizations. Individuals must apply through an institutional sponsor."</p> <p>You may complete the application in French. All information is available on our website in French: <a href="http://lacunafund.org/fr">lacunafund.org/fr</a>, including a French language copy of the RFP. Select "FR" at the top of the page to view the SurveyMonkey Apply application portal in French.</p>
4.Q	Can you give us an idea on what is the amount of an application? It seems the fund overall pooled \$4 million. Are they completely destined to be used in the first RFP?
4.A	<p>Please refer to the Budget section of the <a href="#">RFP</a> on page 9:</p> <p>"The online application will require the applicant to upload a budget formatted in the Lacuna Fund budget template, available on the application page under "Open RFPs" and in the applicant portal. Budgets should be submitted in US Dollars. We are anticipating proposed budgets in the range of \$20k – 100k for small to medium-sized projects and as much as \$500k for large, complex projects. Note that the Technical Advisory Panel will assess the feasibility and suitability of the budget as well as the linkage between the budget and grant narrative as part of the selection criteria."</p> <p>That section also provides illustrative examples of acceptable costs.</p>
5.Q	<p><i>Note: the majority of this question has been removed to preserve anonymity.</i></p> <p>Considering the aspiration and strategies of [my organization], we would like to know if it aligns to your vision of effective use of the Lacuna fund. Any feedback and information that will help us to prepare focused proposal will be highly appreciated.</p>
5.A	<p>Please review Section 3: Purpose and Need as well as the selection criteria listed in the <a href="#">RFP</a> for more details on the vision of the Fund and this RFP. In particular, please note that the Fund is focused explicitly on the creation, expansion, and maintenance of transformative labeled datasets:</p> <p>"This request for proposals will fund labeled agricultural datasets for machine learning in sub-Saharan Africa, whether referenced to earth observation (EO) data or related to other aspects of the crop and animal agricultural system. Lacuna Fund's mission is to support labeling and creation, expansion, and maintenance of transformative labeled datasets to fill gaps and improve accuracy in labeled data used for machine learning. Projects focused on building machine learning models or other applications will not be funded. "</p>

6.Q	I am a Veterinarian working on Livestock Transformation projects in Africa. My work has necessitated the collection of some essential data which I believe fits into some of the themes listed as fundable. I would love to have the full picture of how this Funding works so that I can package an application with my team and send it in.
6.A	Please see the <a href="#">RFP</a> , which includes further instructions on how to apply, in <a href="#">English</a> and in <a href="#">French</a> .
7.Q	I own a for-profit social venture in [African country], we develop AI tools and datasets for soil regeneration, and small farmer advisory. In [African country], there is no special registration of a company as being 'for-profit social venture'. Companies such as ours are simply registered as all the others, as Limited Liability companies. Our mission is social and environmental.
7.A	No formal designation as a social enterprise is required. Please review other eligibility criteria on page 4 of the <a href="#">RFP</a> to confirm that you meet all other criteria.
8.Q	I I kindly would like to clarify if a proposal for the Agriculture RFP 2020 should focus on Uganda, Kenya and/or Rwanda? And if the project should have a nation/regional wide scope or can this be limited to a smaller defined geographical area based on a set of criteria.
8.A	<p>Projects in all countries in sub-Saharan Africa are eligible for funding. Projects may be national or regional in scope or may be limited to a smaller geographical area based on criteria related to the proposed use case or application.</p> <p>As noted on page 8 of the Proposal Narrative section of the <a href="#">RFP</a> proposals should include information on data interoperability and “the proposed data format should be well documented and include information required for the end user to use the data”.</p>
9.Q	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In the RFP page it is mentioned that the applicant should be an organization headquartered in Africa or have a substantial partnership with organization(s) headquartered in Africa. At the moment, we have a consortium where the lead is the centre for [applied science] in [an African country] and we will be a partner in this proposal. Are we eligible as a consortium to apply for this call?</li> <li>2. In the proposed project, the imagery we collect and interpret will need to be stored indefinitely while our partner in [an African country] has limited facilities for data storage. Will need a storage for minimum 1TB. Can we budget permanent data storage for this proposal?</li> <li>3. Can we purchase UAV for the project? We have a UAV to use for research purposes however to make the project result sustainable, it is the idea to have the capacity carry on to our partner in [an African country] and it is difficult to implement this when they do not have their own UAV.</li> </ol>

<p>9.A</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Per the eligibility criteria on page 3 of the <a href="#">RFP</a> applicants must “Be an organization headquartered in Africa or have a substantial partnership with an organization(s) headquartered in Africa.” The lead applicant is not required to be headquartered in Africa so long as the applicant is engaged in a substantial partnership with an organization(s) headquartered in Africa.</li> <li>2. Please see page 9 of the RFP, under Budget and Budget Narrative. Data publication may include costs for data storage/hosting. In the budget template, please note that hosting costs, while eligible, should be broken out separately.</li> <li>3. Equipment is an eligible expense. Please see the "Budget and Budget Narrative" portion of the RFP for more details.</li> </ol>
<p>10.Q</p>	<p>Can we include the social charges in the staff salary?</p>
<p>10.A</p>	<p>Allowed salary costs are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Actual salary paid to staff</li> <li>● Fringe Benefits</li> <li>● 13% maximum allowed for indirect cost</li> </ul>
<p>11.Q</p>	<p>We have our regional offices at Africa region but we are HQ in Rome. Can we collaborate with them or we have to find the partnerships who HQ in Africa?</p>
<p>11.A</p>	<p>Please refer to the eligibility criteria on page 3 of the <a href="#">RFP</a>. In particular, applicants must:</p> <p>“Be an organization headquartered in Africa or have a substantial partnership with an organization(s) headquartered in Africa.”</p> <p>The lead applicant is not required to be headquartered in Africa so long as the applicant is engaged in a substantial partnership with an organization(s) headquartered in Africa.</p>
<p>12.Q</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can a team apply more than once, i.e., send two or more applications?</li> <li>2. Can one application address more than one agriculture theme listed on the website? e.g., work on pest and disease theme and yield estimation</li> </ol>
<p>12.A</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A team may submit more than one application. In such a case, the team should explain if they have the bandwidth to carry out both projects at the same time, if selected.</li> <li>2. An application may propose a dataset that addresses more than one theme. Applicants should explain how the proposed synergistic effort will enable the application of robust ML tools.</li> </ol>
<p>13.Q</p>	<p>I would like to ask about the fund position on data sharing of funded research work in a scenario that encourages collaboration with multiple partners with different data sharing policy. It's not always the grant applicants who sometimes decide whether they can share the data or not. What if the applicants are ECRs under pressure from their seniors to</p>

	<p>enforce the non-sharing policy i.e data available on request.</p>
<p>13.A</p>	<p>Please see Principles of the Fund on page 2 of the RFP and Evaluation Criteria on page 4. In particular:          “Accessibility – The Fund is committed to ensuring that labeled datasets created through its funding are accessible to and benefit underserved communities in service of the goals outlined above. Datasets and related intellectual property will utilize appropriate open data licensing to maximize responsible downstream use. (see the Fund’s IP Policy for additional details.)          “Accessibility - The dataset will be made widely accessible under open source licensing, or if this is not possible, a compelling case is made for more restrictive licensing in order to protect privacy or prevent harm.”</p> <p>Open publication of data under a CC-BY 4.0 license or similar, barring ethical and privacy concerns articulated prior to the start of work, will be a contractual obligation of institutions who receive funds. The lead institution should clarify data sharing expectations with partners before submitting a proposal. Data may not be embargoed for future publication.</p>
<p>14.Q</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Would the RFP account for any commercial satellite imagery, i.e. in particular Airbus, Maxar, or Planet labs with expectation on higher costs of such imagery?</li> <li>2. Many of the satellite imagery licensing is restrictive for reselling, in that case would the grant be open to open sourcing just the labelled data, i.e. vectors/geojson and JSON files without releasing the training set imagery?</li> <li>3. What is the timeline for the implementation of the full solution?</li> <li>4. Is there an expectation to foresee any further applications from the labeled datasets, i.e. for example the use of training sets of “foraging” areas to be used in the application to guide pastoralist community</li> <li>5. Are use cases adjacent to agriculture (i.e. cold chain) eligible for the grant?</li> <li>6. Is there a chance that we can apply with the several use cases, not just one, i.e. for example clustered around business associations interviewed</li> <li>7. Is there a possibility to apply for a grant with clearance/roadmap on 1 pilot country (i.e. in terms of data collection, and use cases), while envisioning diversifying data in several countries at the later stage. For example, building a dataset with a partner in Kenya at first, but then also acquiring and diversifying the data pool with other countries.</li> </ol>
<p>14.A</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes. Please break out costs for imagery under “Dataset Acquisition” and make a note of the imagery costs in the “2. Budget Assumptions” tab in the template.</li> <li>2. If labels are annotated using satellite imagery, both the labeled data and the source imagery must be shared to ensure the labels can be used. Due to issues such as image registration with high resolution imagery, one cannot simply use the labels and put them on another image type to use.</li> <li>3. Please see the Timeline section on page 9 of the RFP: “Proposed projects must be completed within 6-15 months from notification of award (notifications are planned for approximately October 2020). “</li> <li>4. Yes, proposals should explain how the dataset could be applied. Please see the</li> </ol>

	<p>Proposal Narrative section on page 7 of the RFP.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Use cases adjacent to agriculture (i.e. cold chain) may be eligible for the grant as long as the application is complete and other evaluation criteria are met.</li> <li>6. Yes. It is fine to mention multiple use cases in your proposal..</li> <li>7. Proposals can articulate potential future work, but the scope of the work product proposed under the RFP should stand alone -- i.e. the product might be strengthened by future work, but the dataset released or augmented at the end of the project period with the funding and scope proposed should achieve outcomes likely to satisfy the Evaluation Criteria.</li> </ol>
15.Q	<p>Our headquarter is not located at Africa. However we have substantial partnerships with other [anonymized] agencies that are headquartered in Africa. We were curious if [our organization] will qualify to apply for the proposal as the lead institution. Please let us know any documents that might be needed to substantiate our position.</p>
15.A	<p>Please refer to the eligibility criteria on page 3 of the <a href="#">RFP</a>. In particular, applicants must:</p> <p>“Be an organization headquartered in Africa or have a substantial partnership with an organization(s) headquartered in Africa.”</p> <p>The lead applicant is not required to be headquartered in Africa so long as the applicant is engaged in a substantial partnership with an organization(s) headquartered in Africa.</p>
16.Q	<p>Is <u>mapping</u> of the datasets mentioned in the paragraph above part of the scope of the RFP or is the focus on <u>point data</u> only?</p>
16.A	<p>The focus of the RFP is not exclusively on point data. As noted in Section 3: Purpose and Need of the RFP, various types of datasets will be considered, and applicants are free to propose novel ideas aligned with the RFP’s scope and goals.</p>
17.Q	<p>(1) The call states that “the Lacuna Fund will consider projects that have both data labelling and/or collection aspects, recognizing that labelling of existing data could be completed on a shorter timeline”. Could more advice be given with respect to timelines on the project as a lot of operations working on this project may be affected by COVID-19 impacts?</p> <p>(2) As a follow up question to 1 above, could more specific advise be given with respect to budgeting as there may be currency fluctuations (change in the value of the dollar)?</p> <p>Other follow-up Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What specific crops and animals is the fund supporting?</li> <li>2. What format should the data be collected for ML analysis?</li> <li>3. Can we source the EO template for data profiling?</li> <li>4. While proposing for poverty streams of datasets, can the collation be in clusters?</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Is it possible to have multi-objective (i.e. Crops and animal) data meets?</li> <li>6. Will the instruments for data collection be retained after delivering on proposed goals?</li> <li>7. What happens in the case of underbudgeting?</li> <li>8. What objective parameters are sought in yield estimations?</li> <li>9. What is the limit for project duration? (Number of years)</li> <li>10. Is Lacuna based on general agriculture (livestock, crop and other niche enterprises) or the specific listed in the fund document</li> <li>11. Is it possible to have a sub regional outlook?</li> <li>12. What is the funding limit?</li> <li>13. Would long term sustainability and management of data be funded?</li> <li>14. For quality datasets, is there any need for preprocessing ?</li> <li>15. How can conflict of interest be avoided in this situation?</li> <li>16. Format and standard of data and interoperability</li> <li>17. Handling of missing data</li> <li>18. Volume of datasets expected</li> <li>19. Best Method of crowdsourcing</li> </ol>
<p>17.A</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Please see the “Timeline” section on page 9 of the RFP: “Proposed projects must be completed within 6-15 months from notification of award (notifications are planned for approximately October 2020). “ The Proposal Narrative should include potential COVID-19 impacts and planned precautions, if any.</li> <li>(2) Grants will be made in US Dollars. Currency risk is assumed by the awardee.</li> </ol> <p>Detailed Follow-Up Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- #1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19: In general, the RFP format for Lacuna Fund asks proponents to outline a clear need for a dataset that would allow ML applications to better address urgent issues, in this case in the context of agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa. As part of the proposal narrative, the above questions should be addressed in the context of the dataset proposed (i.e. necessary data quality and volume for intended use case(s) or geographies that would be a logical scope for data collection depending on the features proposed)</li> <li>- #3: Proposed subcontractors should be outlined in the proposal narrative and budget assumptions. They should adhere to all due diligence and ethical requirements noted in the RFP and Annex A.</li> <li>- #6: Equipment is an eligible expense. The instruments may be retained. Please see the "Budget and Budget Narrative" portion of the RFP for more details.</li> <li>- #7: Projects must be completed within the agreed upon budget.</li> <li>- #9, 12, 13: Please review the RFP. Data hosting costs should be broken out in the budget template under “Hosting”.</li> </ul>
<p>18.Q</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the total amount of grant that will be awarded for the 2020 call: <i>Labeled datasets for agriculture</i>?</li> <li>2. Will the call be replicated in 2021 and further in time (2022, ...)?</li> </ol>

18.A	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The total amount of grants to be awarded will be determined by the TAP pursuant to the guidance of the Steering Committee.</li> <li>2. Future RFPs are to be announced.</li> </ol>
19.Q	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If we partner with an organization headquartered in Africa, would that organization need to prime/lead the proposal?</li> <li>2. Would an organization with a regional office in Africa qualify under the eligibility requirement, "Be an organization headquartered in Africa or have a substantial partnership with organization(s) headquartered in Africa."?</li> <li>3. What agricultural lands are going to be the priority of the labeling? e.g. large commercial farms v.s. smallholding farmland; crop types v.s. croplands.</li> <li>4. What are the imagery sources? Are they going to be high-res available in some countries and mostly open-licensed satellite imagery e.g. Landsat and Sentinel-2?</li> <li>5. Are we expected to draw boundaries around the target field and add labels? Or are we expected to add labels to the target images?</li> <li>6. Could you please speak to the intended long-term outcomes of the project? Who will be the main users? How will the data be shared?</li> <li>7. How much of the existing data does Lacuna Fund have for validation?</li> </ol>
19.A	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No, the partner would not need to be the prime on the proposal so long as the applicant is engaged in a substantial partnership with an organization(s) headquartered in Africa.</li> <li>2. No, a regional office would not satisfy the eligibility requirement.</li> </ol> <p>3, 4, and 6: In general, the RFP format for Lacuna Fund asks proponents to outline a clear need for a dataset that would allow ML applications to better address urgent issues, in this case in the context of agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa. As part of the proposal narrative, questions #3, 4, and 6 should be addressed by the applicant in the context of the dataset proposed. Imagery sources, including costs, if applicable, should be included in the proposal and will vary depending on the dataset and use case(s) proposed.</p> <p>Please see the “Galvanizing a step change...” section of our <a href="#">About page</a> for general information on the broader impact Lacuna Fund hopes to achieve related to democratizing ML. Please review our IP policy (located at the bottom of <a href="#">this page</a>) and relevant sections of the RFP for more information on expectations related to open datasets. We expect the vast majority of funded datasets to be shared openly with a CC-BY 4.0 or similar license.</p> <p>Potential users of the data should be identified in the proposal narrative.</p> <p>5. Similar to the question above, the RFP both gives the flexibility and expects applicants or partnerships applying to articulate the need for a dataset, which should drive proposed collection methods that are sufficient to ensure data quality and coverage for intended</p>

	<p>use case(s) or application(s).</p> <p>7. Lacuna Fund will not supply validation data. Applicants or partnerships applying should consider existing validation data that they can build from.</p>
20.Q	<p>The RFP indicates that applicants must "Be an organization headquartered in Africa or have a substantial partnership with organization(s) headquartered in Africa." Would organizations with headquarters in the US and established branches/offices in Africa be eligible? Does an organization have to be locally registered as an NGO to apply?</p>
20.A	<p>Per the eligibility criteria on page 3 of the <a href="#">RFP</a> organizations with branches in Africa but headquartered outside Africa are only eligible if they "have a substantial partnership with an organization(s) headquartered in Africa." Lead applicants outside of Africa should keep in mind <a href="#">the equity and participatory approach principles</a> governing Lacuna Fund.</p>
21.Q	<p>The [organization] is a non for profit <b>International Organization</b> established (Headquarters) in [outside of Africa], and with a Regional Africa Hub, with over [x] employees and a Hosting Agreement with the Government of [African country].</p> <p>According to the above statement, kindly confirm if we are eligible to apply as a lead organization.</p>
21.A	<p>Per the eligibility criteria on page 3 of the <a href="#">RFP</a> organizations with branches in Africa but headquartered outside Africa are only eligible if they "have a substantial partnership with an organization(s) headquartered in Africa." Lead applicants outside of Africa should keep in mind <a href="#">the equity and participatory approach principles</a> governing Lacuna Fund.</p>
22.Q	<p>Page 6 of the RFP indicates that the Fund will not make awards in areas related to forestry. Could you please confirm whether projects related to agriculture and agroforestry that intend to label data for tree crops (such as shea or cocoa) are eligible for award under this RFP?"</p>
22.A	<p>Agroforestry for tree crops, such as those noted, are eligible. Projects that focus primarily on applications in forestry, such as biomass estimation and forest management, are ineligible for this RFP.</p>