OpenLandContracts.org Mini-Grants Program

Application Deadline: March 31, 2016

The Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment (CCSI) is pleased to offer two grants of $10,000 each for innovative uses of www.OpenLandContracts.org, the world’s first online repository of publicly available commercial agriculture and forestry contracts. The grants are offered to support and advance innovative uses of the repository and of the content available through it.

OpenLandContracts.org was launched in October 2015 to promote greater transparency of land-based investments, facilitate a better understanding of the contracts that govern them, and provide useful tools for governments, communities, companies, and other stakeholders. The repository provides the full text of contracts, as well as plain language summaries of each contract’s key social, environmental, human rights, fiscal, and operational terms. By early 2016, OpenLandContracts.org will host more than 100 contracts from around the world, as well as associated documents and other resources that help users understand and assess such contracts. More information can be found on our website: http://www.openlandcontracts.org/about.

For this mini-grants program, we seek proposals for projects that make use of OpenLandContracts.org to promote more sustainable land-based investments, support different stakeholders in understanding investments and their implications, or provide new insight into such investments. Proposals could include, for example, projects to:

- Develop practical tools to assist governments, local communities and land users, investors, or others in negotiating or monitoring land contracts and their implementation
- Improve understanding of the content of land contracts and the implications of particular contract terms
- Raise awareness of the costs and benefits of land-based investment using information included in land contracts
- Host training workshops on land contracts
- Undertake targeted advocacy efforts to improve current levels of land contract disclosure
- Build financial models using specific contracts to highlight potential public interest implications
- Create interesting ways of using data available through OpenLandContracts.org
- Establish a program to disclose contracts
- Design linkages between OpenLandContracts.org and other relevant initiatives

Proposals need not be limited to these suggestions, and we welcome innovative ideas to use OpenLandContracts.org.

The grants are being offered with financial support from the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

Applications must be submitted via email or sent in hard copy format by regular mail. Please note that completed applications must be received by CCSI on or before March 31, 2016.

Email applications to: jcoleman@law.columbia.edu

Send hard copy applications to: Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment
Jerome Greene Hall
435 West 116th Street
New York, NY 10027
United States
Attn: Jesse Coleman

Successful applicants will be notified of the funding decision by April 30, 2016.

For further information about the OpenLandContracts.org Mini Grants Program, please contact:

Jesse Coleman
jcoleman@law.columbia.edu
+1 (646) 628 0098
Additional Guidelines for Applicants

Who is Eligible?
Civil society organizations, government departments and agencies, grassroots community-based organizations, and representatives of communities affected by land-based investment are all invited to apply. Others are also welcome to apply, although CCSI cannot guarantee that applicants not identified with one of stakeholder groups specified above will be deemed eligible for consideration.

While the program does not have a specific geographic focus, increased consideration will be given to applicants based or working in (or with) low- or middle-income countries strongly affected by large-scale land-based investment in the agriculture or forestry sectors.

How to Apply
Applicants should include the following in their application:

1. Completed application form. The form is available for download from CCSI’s website.
2. Description of the proposed project to be funded by the grant (max. 3 pages). Please include a description of the following: (1) how the project utilizes www.OpenLandContracts.org and the information made available by the repository; (2) the objectives the project seeks to achieve; (3) the steps required to attain the objectives sought and how you will implement them; (4) the primary audience or group(s) that will benefit from the project; and (5) details of applicant’s current activities relevant to the subject matter of the grant.
3. Detailed budget specifying how funds would be spent.
4. CV of the principal lead or project coordinator, outlining in particular any experience that may be relevant for the purpose of the proposed project (max. 2 pages).

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Program Limitations
- The grants may not be used to supplement ongoing projects or programs, unless CCSI deems them to be sufficiently related to OpenLandContracts.org. Further information can be requested from CCSI by contacting jcoelman@law.columbia.edu.
- Any funds obtained will be restricted, meaning that they must be used solely for the purpose of the approved project.
- Within 12 months of receiving funding, grantees will be required to submit a report to CCSI that addresses, among other points: (1) progress made; (2) the inputs, outputs, and outcomes of the project; and (3) how funds were spent.
- Each grant issued will not exceed the maximum limit of US$ 10,000. Applications requesting less than that amount may be submitted.