

Looking for potential social entrepreneurs to work in a social enterprise

Volunteer Positions are available in the US to support a new solar technology Microfranchise in rural Nicaragua

IDEAS (The Institute for Development, Evaluation, Assistance and Solutions) is a 35 year-old international non-profit with administrative offices in Decatur, Georgia. It has operated for 24 years in Latin America. It has worked in Asia and Africa as well. IDEAS has launched a couple of dozen sustainable social enterprises. Volunteers in the US support the work of the IDEAS Latin American Office located in Nicaragua. For the programmatic services, see www.ideasnet.org.

The purpose of microfranchising is to promote local economic development by developing sound business models that are readily adopted by microentrepreneurs at the bottom of the economic pyramid (BOP). The key measure of a microfranchisor is its ability to achieve impact by scaling up its transfer of technology, goods and services delivered by low and moderate income microentrepreneurs (microfranchisees) in developing countries. In contrast to mainstream franchises, which are usually designed to generate wealth mainly for the franchisor and middle class franchisees, the goods and services of microfranchises are sold to low income individuals. The focus of microfranchising is to assist the microfranchisee in quickly developing a business, which can increase family assets and provide employment. For an overview of our program, see www.ideasnet.org/microfranchise.htm.

IDEAS recently has launched a new microfranchisor, **TecAp**, to provide solar energy and other appropriate technology products to farmers in agricultural cooperatives that sell millions of dollars of product annually in international fair trade. IDEAS has been working with international lenders to lend to the coffee exporting coops for longer term for this new initiative. The coops then lend to their members for a 5 year term that will lower annual payments sufficiently to allow low wealth members to be able to purchase solar and other appropriate energy products. TecAp is contracting with private company vendors to install and support the technologies and import parts. IDEAS coordinates with private lenders and for-profit coffee processors.

TecAp is working with low-income, rural women to become microfranchisees that are selling small solar-powered items (radios; lanterns; cell phone chargers; etc.) as well as educating their neighbors about renewable energy and assisting them to purchase larger solar systems. The Market Research in January-February 2010 was paid for by a for-profit US coffee company that seeks to provide additional benefits to the coops from which it buys its fair trade coffee. The feasibility has been proven and the initial 50 solar systems have been installed with farmers receiving longer term loans. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjslO-geF94 for a 4 minute clip.

IDEAS is seeking multiple entrepreneurial persons to fill these volunteer positions. We will tailor the following job descriptions to the particular set of skills of the applicants who are selected.

The Volunteer Positions are:

1. Business Planning

- Work to refine the Business Plan for the microfranchisor and related actors.
- Support the consultants, Board, and the Nicaraguan Advisory Committee in their planning
- Use Project Management software to map out the various business processes

2. Finance

- Dialog with additional international lenders to increase the capital available for solar technologies to fair trade coffee cooperatives composed of small landholding farmers

- Explore new funding opportunities to help underwrite the Pilot and Startup Phases. Experience in grant writing is a welcome skill.

3. Women's Economic Development

- Assist in developing materials for the training of the initial low income women who will be microfranchisees, selling products and educating their neighbors about appropriate technologies.
- Provide support to those working with women microfranchisees and help refine the new system.
- Research additional products and services that may be sold by the microfranchisees.

4. Technology procurement and adaptation

- Find less expensive suppliers for those technologies in demand in the rural areas.
- Explore the adaptation of new technologies to rural Nicaragua.
- Assist in figuring out how to lower the cost of these new technologies to low-income farmers.

5. Public Outreach to investors and donors

- Assist in developing presentations in PowerPoint and other media. Improve the web site.
- Assist in finding socially responsible investors to lend funds to finance this enterprise.
- Assist in finding donors for this innovative project until it becomes financially sustainable.

Desired Skills include: an ability to communicate well in English, a basic understanding of microfinance and microenterprises in developing countries, willingness to learn about microfranchises, grant making & fund raising experience, internet research skills and a passion for technology transfer.

Additional skills that would be useful include: past work in web page improvement; experience in dealing with socially responsible investors; previous work in Latin America or developing countries. Prior work in supply chain management in international trade would be a plus.

If a candidate has a fluid ability to communicate in Spanish and/or has the characteristics of a social entrepreneur, additional responsibilities can be considered.

Supervision is provided by staff or senior consultants.

Costs can be reimbursed and supplies will be provided. Based on current funding restrictions, IDEAS and TecAp are not in position to offer a salary. For the foreseeable future, these are volunteer positions. However, successful volunteers will be strongly considered for staffing once funds become available.

Location: Would have the ability to work mostly from home via telecommuting. Meetings with supervisor will be at first in person and later remotely. Our office is south of the City of Decatur in metro Atlanta. It is not necessary to live in metro Atlanta or the US to volunteer.

For those with Spanish language ability, most of the work with Nicaraguans is by Skype, email, and phone. Our initial target area is Nicaragua for the Pilot Phase with plans for expansion to other countries in the future.

Submit Resume and Cover Letter: Interested candidates can submit resume and cover email letter to getinvolved@ideasnet.org Please indicate which of the four volunteer positions is of most interest.

Additional Background Information: For more on the international work of IDEAS, see www.ideasnet.org Additional info can be provided.

For other questions or concerns, contact: Carter Garber, Ph.D. cgarber@ideasnet.org 3/10/11