

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Position Description

Program Officer, Rural Finance & Risk

Farmer Services & Systems, Agricultural Development, Global Development Program

Foundation Overview:

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

Group Summary:

The goal of the Global Development Program (GDP) is to increase opportunities for people in the developing world to lift themselves out of hunger and poverty and to help deliver targeted healthcare solutions in these regions. Our strategies focus on Agriculture Development; Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene; Financial Services for the Poor; and Family Health which includes Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, Family Planning, and Nutrition. These strategies are supported by functional teams that focus on Vaccine Delivery and Integrated Delivery.

The Agricultural Development Department focuses on sustainable productivity growth for smallholder farmers to achieve the impact that we seek: poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Productivity growth for smallholders depends upon improved seeds, livestock and other technologies, incentives to adopt these improvements through functioning input and output markets, and an improved policy environment. We currently define our goals by commodity, with a focus on delivering tangible productivity gains for a priority set of crops and livestock products within a handful of target geographies. In developing and executing on their strategies, our commodity portfolio managers rely on functional and context expertise from three groups: Research & Development, Farmer Services & Systems, and Country & Policy.

Position Summary & Responsibilities:

The Program Officer (PO), Rural Finance & Risk, will work closely with members of functional and commodity teams within Agricultural Development as well as liaise across the foundation, particularly with colleagues in Financial Services for the Poor and Program Related Investments. With a specific focus on rural finance and household risk, s/he will be expected to develop and manage grants as well as structure program related investments, in collaboration with other POs. S/he will contribute to the development and implementation of commodity- and country-based strategies for improving on-farm productivity and realized value for smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

The PO will be expected to:

- Work in close collaboration with internal and external partners to design, implement, and manage performance-based grants and investments, focusing on opportunities that mitigate risk and provide financial services for smallholder farmers as well as entrepreneurs and small- to medium-sized enterprises in the agricultural value chain such as processors and input suppliers.
- Provide advice and strategic guidance to colleagues that enables practical, innovative, and catalytic investments addressing agricultural rural finance and household risk.
- Consult with grantees and other partners in public and private sectors to maximize impact of grants and ensure optimal learning. This may include: site visits, providing operational guidance, working with companies on co-investments, and convening meetings of key stakeholders.

- Collaborate with foundation colleagues in related program areas outside of Agricultural Development to take advantage of cross-sector grant and program related investment making opportunities, particularly working collaboratively with Financial Services for the Poor and the Program Related Investments team
- Provide high quality interactions and clear and consistent communications with grantees and partners in the field. Represent the foundation with external stakeholders including governments, regulators, companies, grantee organizations, banks, mobile operators, universities, think tanks, and other valued partners.
- Review letters of inquiry and grant proposals; provide clear, concise and insightful written analyses and recommendations for funding including drafting and editing proposal summaries and progress reports for existing grants for review by foundation leadership.

Qualifications:

We are looking for people who enjoy the challenge of working on complex problems and collaboratively creating solutions that have the potential for transformational change in the lives of smallholder farmers. The candidate must be prepared to work across diverse sides of this field, bridging a wide range of expertise, including that of: farmers, development practitioners, technical experts, analysts, policymakers, business people, investors, and philanthropists. S/he must have an understanding of the difficulties that face poor farming households and the roles that risk mitigation strategies and financial services play in raising people out of poverty and keeping them out. Additionally, the candidate must have practical expertise relating to: programmatic and policy solutions in the field of rural finance and household risk. S/he will be a solid team player who is self-motivated and self-managing. The candidate must have a demonstrated ability to work with flexibility, efficiency, and diplomacy in a fast-paced, challenging environment, using a hypothesis-driven approach and analytical rigor to develop sound strategies and implementation plans.

The candidate should have the following qualifications:

- Ten or more years of relevant work experience in roles responsible for developing, implementing, and managing projects/programs. Outstanding record of achievement required.
- Undergraduate degree in business, finance, supply chain management, agriculture, or related discipline. Master's preferred.
- Strong understanding of, and the ability to communicate: (1) the financial services challenges associated with building and managing market-driven food and agricultural supply chains including rural credit markets, working capital finance, savings, and insurance products, and (2) risk mitigation strategies of smallholder farmers and other entities in the supply chains comprising rural developing country markets.
- Experience working with teams that have built, deployed, and scaled financial services in support of smallholder farmers in developing countries. Private sector work experience is desired.
- Comprehensive understanding of structuring financing deals including the due diligence process as well as all aspects of debt and loan guarantees and insurance mechanisms.
- Experience working in-country in Africa and/or South Asia strongly preferred.
- Ability to travel up to 25% of time as needs dictate.

The position will be based in Seattle, WA and will report to the Senior Program Officer, Farmer Services & Systems.

The statements in this description represent typical elements, criteria and general work performed. They are not intended to be construed as an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties and skills for this job.

As part of our standard hiring process for new employees, employment with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will be contingent upon successful completion of a comprehensive background check.

We are an equal opportunity employer dedicated and focused on diversity.
