

Request for Applications (RFA)
WHAM-AID-168-LA-17-00008

Workforce and Access to Higher Markets (WHAM) Activity

Issuance Date: 24-Jun-2019

Closing Date: Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis as they are received

Total Potential Funding: USD 300,000

Estimated Number of Awards: 10

Maximum Award Amount: USD 50,000

Dear Applicant:

You are invited to submit an application for implementation of the terms of references contained herein. The grants will be awarded and implemented in accordance with U.S. Agency for International Development and U.S. Government regulations governing grants under cooperative agreements, as deemed applicable by prime U.S. Agency for International Development, Prime Recipient IESC, and Workforce and Higher Access to Markets (WHAM) Activity's internal grant management policies.

Please note that as stated above, applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis as they are received. The final deadline for **receiving applications is August 31, 2019**; however, the RFA will be closed earlier if all the potential funding is exhausted. We encourage interested organizations located in Republika Srpska to submit their applications as soon as possible. The first review will be done on July 12, 2019. Refer to *Section III. Application and Submission Information* for details.

Applicants who have questions about the application process or about this RFA should submit them to: whamgrants@iesc.org

This RFA contains the following documents:
Annex 1 – Grant Application Instructions and Templates

Section I. About the Program

What is WHAM and what is it trying to achieve?

Workforce and Access to Higher Markets (WHAM) is a USAID-funded activity designed to stimulate job creation by advancing Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) trade integration with and expansion into European Union (EU) and regional markets. This will be accomplished via a

grant program open to eligible individual organizations, or a number of organizations working together. Grants will prioritize high-growth, exporting or export-ready enterprises aiming to expand capacity, reach more markets, and generate greater employment.

Activity efforts will focus on organizations working in, or linked to, three main sectors: wood processing, metal processing and textile/footwear. Grant funds may be used to cover costs of trainings, access consultant's services, obtain business development services, attend trade fairs, and on exceptional basis, to meet export market requirements.

What are the specific intervention areas of this RFA?

WHAM will improve the capacity of high-growth, exporting, and export-ready small and medium enterprises from the wood, metal, and textile/footwear sectors via grants focused on three intervention areas:

1. **Improve workforce** in targeted sectors by supporting private and/or public institutions with the cost of recruiting, training or retraining labor force with adequate skills;
2. **Increase market access** by supporting companies in targeted sectors to identify and access new customers and markets. This may include supporting private and public sector initiatives to help companies attend major regional and international trade fairs and/or develop marketing and promotional materials that will strengthen company's brand; and,
3. **Improve product quality and use of new technology related to quality management and certification** by supporting companies in targeted sectors to introduce quality management systems, technology upgrades, and necessary product/service certifications in demand by target markets (EU standards and/or other relevant standards). WHAM will help beneficiaries to improve product quality and capacity building through grants which should result in new certifications and business strategies that optimize these improvements to the enterprise's competitiveness.

What types of support are available from WHAM?

WHAM can provide a wide range of support to potential grantees, examples of which are detailed below. Grantees are not limited to only one area of support and can request a package of assistance if it makes business sense and meets the eligibility criteria described in *Section II. Eligibility*.

- Subsidize/support training initiatives in industry-related skills with both public and private sectors;
- Assist in the development of new training initiatives targeting identified industry skills deficits;

- Facilitate organizations wishing to participate in export promotion events (trade fairs, trade missions, and B2B) targeting EU and other markets;
- Help organizations develop market entry strategies for their products;
- Assistance in development of new products and introduction of new technologies in the production processes
- Assist in market identification, marketing, buyer introductions, and inward buyer participation;
- Guide organizations to become export market ready (research, planning, improved management, and production practices);
- Assistance in establishing market-relevant certifications and chain of custody systems;
- Assistance in gaining quality assurance certifications for accessing EU markets; and,
- Improve competitiveness through establishing new manufacturing processes and energy efficient technology.

Section II: Eligibility

Is my organization eligible to receive grant funding?

The focus of this RFA is to target organizations that represent high-growth, exporting or export-ready enterprises in the metal, wood and textile/footwear industries aiming to expand capacity, reach more markets, and generate greater employment. Generally, high-growth enterprises have at least 10 employees and an average annualized growth in employees greater than 20 percent per annum over last three-years. All organizations must be legally registered under the laws of BiH.

Geographic Location: Organization applying under this RFA must be registered in Republika Srpska.

Grantees may include the following types of organizations:

- Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that are operating in metal, wood and textile/footwear sectors;
- Group of companies with a preset internal agreement and mutual strategy;
- Educational institutions, such as schools, universities, and adult education centers;
- For-profit organizations, training institutes, and private educational entities (second and third level);
- Research and development organizations for product development, quality management systems and certifications;
- Business incubators and technology parks; and
- Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), business associations, chambers of commerce and development agencies.

Additionally, applicants will be encouraged to provide cost share that match the grant amount requested at a 1:1 rate.

Are there any restrictions on what can be funded?

WHAM will not provide grants to applications that create market distortion, nor can the grants awarded be utilized for the following:

- Ceremonies, parties, celebrations, or “representation” expenses.
- Purchases of restricted goods, such as: restricted agricultural commodities, motor vehicles including motorcycles, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, contraceptive products, used equipment (without the previous approval of USAID), or prohibited goods under USAID regulations, including, but not limited to, the following: abortion equipment and services, luxury goods, etc.;
- Alcoholic beverages;
- Purchase of goods or services restricted or prohibited under the prevailing USAID source or nationality (Laos, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, (North) Sudan and Syria);
- Prior obligations of and/or, debts, fines, and penalties imposed on the Grantee; or,
- Creation of endowments.

The Activity would not consider applications from or in partnership with:

- Employees, contractors and their family members, as well as employees or family members of participating sponsors;
- Selection Committee participants, providers of technical assistance (TA) and consulting services funded by the Activity; or,
- Entities listed in Parties Excluded from Federal Procurement or Non-procurement Programs.

Applicants may only submit one application per the open RFA. All applications must be in line with the environmental laws and regulations of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Section III: Application and Submission Information

How do I apply for grant funding?

If you are an eligible organization and have a business need that aligns with the intervention areas described above, you should apply for support by submitting a maximum ten-page grant application using the Grant Application Template that can be found on the WHAM web page www.whambih.org in addition to other documents that are part of the grant application package (Grant Application Budget Forms Instructions, Grantee Budget Preparation Guidance, Grant Budget Form Standard and Simplified Grants Template, Indicators Example, Indicators Template, Milestones Example, Milestones Template, Environmental Review Template). Please

note that grant application will only be accepted in the application format given in Annex 1 – Grant Application Template and must be completed in the English language.

Grant applications and supporting documentation should be submitted electronically to the following email address: whamgrants@iesc.org.

As for the identity of enterprises (Beneficiaries) represented by Intermediary organization (Grantee), the following information is required:

- Beneficiaries are to be identified per registration license if pre-selected (desired);
- If Beneficiaries are to be selected by the Grantee or a third party based on a future public call, the following information pertaining to the selection of prospective Beneficiaries needs to be presented:
 - Type of industry each Beneficiary belongs to;
 - Size of each Beneficiary as defined in Section II: Eligibility;
 - Kind of product(s) which each Beneficiary manufactures.

Questions regarding the technical or administrative requirements of this RFA may be submitted by email to whamgrants@iesc.org. Questions must be submitted in writing; phone calls will not be accepted. Questions and requests for clarification—and the responses thereto—that WHAM believes may be of interest to other offerors will be circulated to all RFA recipients who have indicated an interest in submitting Applications.

Only the written answers issued by IESC/WHAM will be considered official and carry weight in the RFA process and subsequent evaluation. Any verbal information received from employees of IESC/WHAM or any other entity should not be considered as an official response to any questions regarding this RFA.

Applicants that submit an application will be notified within 30 days of their submission whether they were successful.

The concept note should be accompanied by the following supporting documents and certifications:

- Copy of relevant RS registration license;
- Tax ID; and,
- VAT number (if applicable).

How does the selection process work?

The information that you provide in the grant application will help WHAM decide if you are a suitable candidate to partner with. If your idea is sound and corresponds with the objectives of the activity, WHAM staff will contact you to discuss your plans further. Please note that preliminary acceptance of a grant application by WHAM does not constitute an agreement to award grant funding. The final decision remains with USAID.

Accepted applications will then be submitted to the WHAM selection committee for evaluation against the merit review criteria outlined in the next section. Based on this review, the selection committee will either approve, request further clarification, or reject the application. If your application is successful, it will be submitted to USAID for final review and approval. If approval of both WHAM and USAID is provided, the award will move into a final negotiation stage. Upon successful completion of this stage, the award will be finalized, and a post award management plan will be created for each grant to ensure that the award recipient will fulfill its requirements and receive the agreed upon necessary technical assistance. All awards will be monitored on an on-going basis and evaluated upon the grant award's conclusion. While some applications will be rejected outright, some will be referred to the applicant for improvements. In such cases, the WHAM team will assist with further development of the application. Unsuccessful applications will receive written feedback intended to provide guidance on how to improve the application for future consideration.

What criteria will my application be reviewed against?

Applications submitted to WHAM will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- **Soundness of business model (40%):** Applicants must present a well-thought out business model and demonstrate that they are (or represent) a high-growth¹, exporting, or export-ready business, with the potential to be profitable, sustainable, and expand employment. Successful applications will clearly articulate why the proposed investment is necessary compared to the existing one.
- **Appropriateness of planned investment to achieve WHAM Activity objectives (40%):** Applications must demonstrate the ability to achieve tangible results in terms of business growth and economic development during the grant period and beyond. The application should define relevant outcome indicators and targets that include, but are not limited to, projected export sales growth and expected number of direct jobs created. Organizations that create jobs for women and youth are viewed favorably.

¹ High-growth businesses are defined as businesses experiencing at least 10 percent growth over the past three years with an expected growth of 15 percent or higher within the next two years. These targeted businesses include an existing employment base of 10 to 250 employees, significantly expanding by at least 10 employees within the next 12 months due to increased markets.

- **Organizational capacity and technical experience (20%):** Applicants should establish that they have the organizational and financial capacity to meet the demands of implementing a grant. Evidence for this will include information regarding team composition, relevant qualifications, demonstrated record of accomplishment and success, and types of management systems. Applicants must demonstrate their ability to leverage existing resources in terms of operations, financing, expertise, and networking.

Applications containing the following will be viewed favorably:

- Private companies that are operating in metal, wood and textile/footwear sectors (described in section II) or groups of individual companies with a common goal will be given preference;
- Higher employment generation – please note that new jobs are defined as persons being fully employed by the applicant, or partner, which would be documented through official employment records upon grant closeout;
- Higher potential for the increase in export sales documented through the creation of long lasting and profitable export contracts;
- Higher potential for creation and use of new or upgraded technologies;
- Provision of effective technical assistance to a larger number of private enterprises and beneficiaries;
- Higher number of female/youth participants in selected companies; and,
- All other evaluation factors being equal, WHAM may assess applicants that have not received previous USAID funding more favorably. Applicants that haven't received previous USAID funding are highly encouraged to apply.

Availability of Funds and Other Considerations

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Workforce and Higher Access to Markets (WHAM) or International Executive Service Corps (IESC), nor does it commit USAID or the U.S. Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of the grant application.

WHAM/IESC reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted, to extend or shorten the due date for applications, and to make grant awards on a revised schedule. Grant awards will be subject to the availability of funding in the grant fund.