

**Workforce and Higher Access to Markets Activity (WHAM)  
Request for Applications (RFA)**

**Solicitation number: WHAM-AID-168-LA-17-00001-004**

**Issuance Date: July 18, 2018**

**Closing Date: September 12, 2018**

**Total Potential Funding: USD 50,000**

**Expected Number of Grants: 3**

**Maximum Award Amount: USD 25,000**

**Reference:** Access to Markets Workforce Development Trainings for Sales and Market Research Specialists

Dear Applicant:

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

Please note that the **deadline for receiving Concept Note Applications** is 4:00pm local time on September 12, 2018. Refer to section III Application and Submission Information for further instructions and requirements.

Applicants who have questions about the application process or about this RFA should submit them to: [whamgrants@iesc.org](mailto:whamgrants@iesc.org) before September 5, 2018. Please write "Sales and Market Research training activities" in the subject line.

This RFA contains the following attachments:

Annex 1 – Concept Note Instructions and Template

### **Section I. About the Program**

#### **What is the WHAM Activity and what is it trying to achieve?**

The Workforce and Higher Access to Markets (WHAM) Activity is a USAID-funded program designed to stimulate job creation by advancing Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)'s trade integration with—and expansion into—European Union (EU) markets. This will be accomplished via a grant program open to eligible individual small and medium enterprises (SMEs), groups of SMEs with predefined internal structure, or a number of organizations

working together. Grants will prioritize high-growth, exporting or export-ready SMEs aiming to expand capacity, reach more markets, and generate greater employment.

### **Background**

SMEs in the BiH metal, wood and textile/footwear sectors have succeeded in achieving record results in sales and exports during the past two years. Nevertheless, there are several constraints hampering the penetration and expansion of these industries into EU recognized global value chains. Apart from labor force and technology gaps, which are present in most of the BiH manufacturing industries, sales and market research development is a significant limitation of the BiH metal, wood and textile/footwear sectors. More than 50 percent of locally surveyed SMEs lack sufficiently skilled sales and market research staff and tools needed to expand their businesses. While most of these issues are addressed in-house, there are no tailored initiatives addressing these deficiencies on a sectoral level.

The WHAM Activity efforts will focus on the SMEs' needs through support of activities and interventions that improve the BiH workforce, while striving to build sustainable capacity and tools within BiH enterprises and training institutions. The WHAM Activity will support local SMEs, groups of companies with the same or similar needs, institutes, design studios, educational and training centers, universities, and companies that are integrators in their segment, to form partnerships. These partnerships may consist of, but not be limited to, private-private partnerships or public-private partnerships whose aim is to organize and provide training services, and/or create a service center that could provide capacity while sustaining and building competencies for the entire sector.

### **What are the specific intervention areas of this RFA?**

Sales and market research departments with product development aptitude are almost non-existent in local SMEs. In some sectors, the dominating business practices of Lohn production have caused the marketing business units to dissolve. Prolonged dependence on agents that bring desired quantity versus quality of work automatically demotes BiH suppliers into third-tier suppliers that struggle with meager margins.

To increase value-addition and capture higher profit margins, BiH enterprises need to know trends on existing and potential markets. Through its private sector outreach, the WHAM Activity invites local SMEs, either individually or in groups of companies with the same or similar needs, to submit proposals to efficiently and effectively create solutions to develop market and sales workforce capacity intervention areas within the metal, wood and textile/footwear sectors by addressing the following (select and strategize):

- Lack of qualified sales workforce;
- Inability to connect market research, product development, and sales;
- Inability to sustain market research, product development, and sales;

- Lack of institutional and systematic market research that could yield strategies and market penetration plans with affordable costs for all beneficiaries;
- Lack of sustainable training and education in the segments;
- Lack of effective and proficient market research and development within companies in targeted sectors;
- Lack of knowledge and usage of new technologies in sales and market research tactics and strategies;
- Inability to organize businesses to answer demanding online and JIT supplier markets
- Inability to sell quality products;
- Inability to market and eventually sell inherent capacities and competencies; and,
- Inability to grow and strategize due to all the previously listed.

### **What types of support are available from the WHAM Activity?**

The Activity 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 below:

- Support for training initiatives related to sales and market development (product development) skills with both public and private sectors;
- Assist in the development of new training initiatives targeting sales and market development (product development) skills;
- Facilitate and co-fund the establishment of new and/or existing regional training centers and training bodies in cooperation with public and private sector to address training needs and initiatives in the BiH metal, wood and textile/footwear sectors;
- Support local high schools and university initiatives in updating existing and/or establishing new training/practice centers with the private sector SMEs to address skill gaps related to sales and market development (product development) skills;
- Co-finance the purchase of training equipment for private and public business training/educational/service centers, vocational schools, where adequate business opportunities related to the next generation of employment exist; and/or,
- Co-finance development of adequate marketing tools for enterprises aimed to increase sales and export (branding, promotional materials).

### **Volunteer Experts**

A distinctive feature of the WHAM Activity is its ability to field volunteer experts through the activity implementer, International Executive Service Corps (IESC). IESC maintains a large registry of experienced, senior-level professionals from business, financial institutions, IT enterprises, and other private sector institutions. IESC volunteers are experts in their industry with years of private sector experience, deep practical knowledge and market

connections. If your organization feels they can benefit from one of these experts, you can include a request for volunteer support in your initial concept note (detailed below).

## **Section II: Eligibility**

### **Is my organization eligible to receive grant funding?**

The focus of this RFA is to target SME's that are high-growth, exporting or export-ready enterprises, and/or individual enterprises operating in the metal, wood, and textile/footwear sectors (Beneficiaries), 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 three-year periods. SMEs with fewer than 10 employees with demonstrated growth and potential may be eligible to apply. All organizations must be legally registered under the laws of BiH.

Grantees may include the following types of organizations:

- Individual SMEs (integrators<sup>1</sup>) from project targeted sectors;
- Group of companies with a preset internal agreement and mutual strategy;
- Research and development organizations for product development;
- Sales and marketing agencies and individuals with proven success providing Sales and Market research training;
- For-profit organizations, training institutes, private educational entities (second and third level);
- Business incubators and technology parks;
- Educational institutions such as high schools, universities, and adult education centers; and
- Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), such as business associations and development agencies.

Additionally, applicants are required to contribute cost share and are encouraged to contribute a higher proportion of the overall costs.

### **Are there any restrictions on what can be funded?**

WHAM Activity 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;

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<sup>1</sup> Integrators are those companies that apply individually, but their business model relies on vertical integration of capacities and competencies of more than one company: more than two companies will benefit from the activity.

- 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 is allowed under the U.S. Government authorized geographic code for procurement of goods and services under this award is 937 (United States, the cooperating / recipient country, and developing countries other than advanced developing countries, and excluding prohibiting sources).
- Prior obligations of and/or, debts, fines, and penalties imposed on the Grantee.
- Creation of endowments.

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

- WHAM employees, contractors, and their family members as well as employees or family members of participating sponsors.
- Selection Committee (REC) participants, providers of technical assistance (TA), and consulting services funded by the Activity.
- 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 environmental laws and regulations on environmental protection in 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 one or more of the two intervention areas described above, you should apply for support by submitting a four-page concept note using the Concept Note Template attached to this RFA (the detailed budget will not be counted against the page limit). Please note that concept notes will only be accepted in the application format given in Annex 1 and must be completed in the English language.

Concept Notes and supporting documentation should be submitted electronically to the following email address: [whamgrants@iesc.org](mailto: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 the Section II: Eligibility;
  - Kind of product(s) which each Beneficiary manufacturers;

Questions regarding the technical or administrative requirements of this RFA may be submitted by email to [whamgrants@iesc.org](mailto: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 a Concept Note will be notified within 10 business days of the RFA closing date whether they were successful.

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

- Copy of relevant BiH registration license
- Tax ID
- VAT number (if applicable)

### **How does the selection process work?**

The information that you provide in the concept note 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. Based on this, you may be invited to develop a more detailed full application (WHAM personnel can assist you in this if required). Please note that being asked to develop a full application does not constitute an agreement to award grant funding as the final decision remains with USAID.

Developed applications will then be submitted to the WHAM selection committee for evaluation against the merit review criteria outlined in the next section. Based on the 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 fulfil its requirements and receive any necessary technical assistance. All awards will be monitored on an on-going basis and evaluated upon 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:

Selection Criteria	Description	Percentage weight
1. Experience providing Sales and Market research training and relevant results to date and/or proven track record of successful sales for multiple manufacturers in their respective sectors	Applicant(s) should describe their previous experience providing Sales and Market research trainings and/or services and describe the type of curriculum available and define if the curriculum/methodologies has already been tested. Applicant(s) should note if they need assistance developing a new curriculum/ sales method or improving their existing one.	10
2. Soundness and innovativeness of the proposed training model	Applicant(s) should describe how their training modules considered and addressed the current needs of the SMEs and current market trends. They should also describe the duration of the training and the percentage of theoretical and practical training expected. Additionally, applicants should also describe the type of credentials (certificate, diploma, etc.) a person will have after completing the training.	25
3. Estimated number of people trained/ employed through this effort in the next two years	Applicant(s) should estimate the expected number of people trained/employed by them during the period of 12 and 24 months, as well as assess the potential of the impact the trainings will have on the new jobs generation. Also describe the pre-requisites for a person to participate in the	15

	training. Applicant(s) should also describe the expected outreach activities to attract students to participate in their program, as well as provide the expected costs a company will incur to participate in the program. Small businesses are encouraged to apply together to share the effort and cost.	
4. Proposed or existing linkages with SME's for job placement	Applicant(s) should describe their current or potential partnerships with SMEs regarding facilitating future employment for trainees.	20
5. Estimated cost per trainee/employee	Applicant(s) should provide a detailed breakdown of costs per trainee/new employee.	10
6. Organizational capacity	Applicants should demonstrate that they have the organizational and financial capacity to implement this grant	10
7. Cost-share /Leverage ratio.	Applicants must describe how the grant funding will be used and will be required to match the grant requested with their own funding (or leverage third-party resources). Also, evaluation may be based upon percentage amount rather than the total value of the USD amount.	10

Applications containing the following will be viewed favorably:

- 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. To not disadvantage a smaller enterprise or group of smaller enterprises from applying, applications will be evaluated as a percentage increase, regardless of the actual amount.
- Higher potential for an increase in export sales documented through the creation of long lasting and profitable export contracts.
- Provision of effective technical assistance to a larger number of private enterprises and beneficiaries.
- Higher number of female/youth participants in selected companies.
- 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



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7. **Grant activity title:**

8. **Problem analysis and statement:**

9. **Grant objective:**

10. **Results to be achieved, linkage to grant objective, and verifiable indicators of achievement:**

11. **Identify beneficiaries, disaggregated by gender if possible, number, and how they will benefit from grant:**

12. **Anticipated duration of activity from start to finish:**

13. **Main task phases of the activity:** [Include Calendar activities with estimated periods, responsible and expected results.]

	<b>Time (periods)</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Expected Results</b>
Task 1:			
Task 2:			
Task 3: (etc.)			

14. **Approximate cost of this activity (cash, in-kind, and third-party sources):**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Total Amount in Bosnian Convertible Mark</b>
Estimated Funding Requested from IESC/WHAM	
Grant Applicant Resources (Cost share) *	
Third-Party Resources (leverage - identify source and add lines as needed) **	
Total Estimated Cost	

\*Resources Grant Applicant is providing either in cash or in-kind.

\*\*Third party resources include resources provided to the grant that are not provided by either the Grant Applicant or WHAM. Identify source and add lines as needed if more than one source.

15. **Budget:** Provide a detailed budget of costs requested from Workforce and Higher Access to Markets (WHAM) Activity under this grant.