

Request for Applications (RFA) WHAM-AID-168-LA-17-00013

Workforce and Higher Access to Markets (WHAM) Activity

Issuance Date: 17-March-2021

Closing Date: 14-April-2021

Total Potential Funding: USD 350,000

Estimated Number of Awards: 10

Maximum Award Amount: USD 70,000

Dear Applicant:

You are invited to submit an application for implementation of the terms of reference contained herein. Grants will be awarded and implemented in accordance with the 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 International Executive Service Corps (IESC), and Workforce and Higher Access to Markets (WHAM) Activity's internal grant management policies.

The final deadline for **receiving applications is April 14, 2021 by 18:00**. We encourage interested organizations to submit their applications as soon as possible.

Applicants who have questions about the application process or about this RFA should submit them to: whamgrants@iesc.org. Please note that WHAM will organize webinars to present RFA goals in details. Dates of these events will be published on the WHAM web page and social media channels. Please check web site www.whambih.org for dates and links.

This RFA contains Grant Application Package.

Section I. About the Program

What is WHAM and what is it trying to achieve?

Workforce and Higher Access to 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 organizations that provide workforce development trainings, aiming to support SMEs to expand capacity, address workforce development gaps and problems, reach more markets, and generate greater employment.

Activity efforts will focus on training centers and will involve both public and private technical/vocational institutions working with SMEs, and linked to four main sectors: wood processing, metal processing, textile/footwear and ICT (information and communication technologies). More information about WHAM can be found on www.whambih.org.

Grant funds may be used to cover the costs of workforce development (trainings) that will serve immediate, specific training needs with capacity building packages that are envisioned to be completed in three to six months time, but may not extend beyond the end of January 2022. Please note that the evaluation process, USAID approval and negotiation lasts approximately 70 working days from the day the RFA is closed. Consequently, plan your activity accordingly when preparing your project proposals and discussing with potential partners and beneficiaries.

What is the specific intervention area of this RFA?

WHAM will improve the capacity of high-growth, exporting, and export-ready small and medium enterprises from the wood, metal, textile/footwear and ICT sectors via grants focused on **improving workforce** in targeted sectors. Grants should aim to address workforce development needs on a sectorial level, by supporting private and/or public institutions, sector associations/organizations and training institutions that demonstrate clear engagement and response to targeted-sector enterprises' labor demand.

WHAM can provide a wide range of support to potential grantees, some examples of which are detailed below.

Examples by industry:

- In metal sector training of CNC programming, CAD/CAM engineers, welders, etc.
- In wood sector training of CNC programmers and operators, upholsterer, carpenter, etc.
- In textile sector trainings of sewer, material technology, designers, CNC cutting, etc.
- In ICT sector programmer trainings, project manager, tester, cyber security expert, etc.

Examples by type of applicant and potential costs to be covered:

- Existing private or public training centers, or vocational schools that provide training to SMEs in target sectors
 - Subsidy of regular training costs that training centers are organizing for companies or unemployed individuals in the four targeted sectors;
 - Supplies and materials used for training;
 - Development and updating of the training curriculums and programs
 - Equipment rental used for training; Note that equipment purchase is not eligible under this grant.
 - Experts, mentors and trainers that are providing training; and,
 - Cost of the individual certification paid to accredited organization.

- Costs of training promotion and project activities but not promotion of the applicant itself.
- Costs of transport and food for the training participants
- Industry associations (SME integrators) that are not training centers
 - Common or mutual costs of training for a minimum of ten SMEs.
- SME (that has an existing training center) that organizes workforce development assistance if it supports workforce beneficiaries for the greater sectorial needs, not just individual enterprise needs. SME that has training center must demonstrate that training center operates regularly and continuously, regardless of subsidized trainings, and not as an ad hoc on demand activity. SMEs applying for this grant must provide historic evidence of past trainings that have supported wider sectorial needs and must provide information about programmatic and financial sustainability of its center and training services.
 - Direct cost of tuition/fee, training location costs, training materials, licenses and cost of trainers; and
 - Cost of certification exams paid to third party for individual trainees.
 - Costs of promotion of the training and project activities but not promotion of the applicant itself.
 - Costs of transport and food for the training participants.

Please note that WHAM grants cannot be used to cover the costs of VAT (value added tax). This cost must be covered from other sources and cannot be displayed as cost share participation in the project.

Section II: Eligibility

Is my organization eligible to receive grant funding?

The focus of this RFA will be on training centers and will involve both public and private technical/vocational institutions. In some cases, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) may have a training center within their organization that could be eligible for assistance if it reaches workforce beneficiaries for the greater sector, not just individual enterprises. The successful grant applications will demonstrate client buy-in from at least ten SMEs, ideally through coordination with applicable business associations. SME applicants and beneficiaries must come from the following four sectors, metal, wood, textile/footwear and ICT. They must be aiming to expand capacity, reach broader markets, and generate greater employment. All organizations must be legally registered under the laws of BiH.

Grantees include the following types of organizations:

- Public or private training organizations, vocational training centers, technical secondary and post- secondary schools;
- Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that are operating in metal, wood, textile/footwear and ICT sectors with a core business that isn't training but provide trainings for the benefit of the greater sector in which they are operating, not just for their own company. Existing training centers must demonstrate continuity over the past years and not be a temporary activity to solve current company employment needs. Evidence of the past trainings for the benefit of the entire sector

must be presented as well as information about programmatic and financial sustainability;

- Educational institutions, such as schools, universities, and adult education centers;
- For-profit organizations, training institutes, and private educational entities (second and third level);
- Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) dedicated to education or training purposes, business associations, chambers of commerce and development agencies that organize trainings for their member SMEs in target sectors.

Additionally, applicants are encouraged to provide cost share and/or leverage that matches the requested grant amount at a 1:1 rate.

Applicants are required to submit cost realism documents for each expenditure for which they seek our funding, in the form of previous and/or present invoices or quotes. These documents should be added to the application for our review and need to be translated into English. Questions on the required cost realism documents may be submitted to whamgrants@iesc.org. Additionally, letters of commitment and interest must be provided by companies and partners in cases where an applicant is applying for the needs of higher number of companies and organizations.

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;
- Purchase 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, telecommunications equipment produced by Huawei Technologies Company or ZTE Corporation, etc.;
- Alcoholic beverages;
- Purchase of goods or services restricted or prohibited under the prevailing USAID source or nationality (Burma, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, 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 and U.S Department of Treasury OFAC and United Nations Sanctions Lists.

Applicants may only submit one application per open RFA. All applications must be in accordance 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 **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 Form Template, Grant Budget Form Template, Monthly Budget Breakout, Grant Budget Notes Template, Grant Budget Forms Instructions, Indicators Example, Indicators Template, Environmental Review Template). Please note that grant applications will only be accepted in the application format given in Annex I – Grant Application Package 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.

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 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 working days of submission whether or not they were successful. The application must be accompanied by the following supporting documents and certifications:

- Copy of relevant 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 subsequently 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 an application is successful, it will be submitted to USAID for final review and approval. If both WHAM and USAID approve, 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 technical assistance. All awards will be monitored on an ongoing 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. In some cases, the applicant might be invited to make a presentation of the application in order to answer potential questions and clarify goals. Unsuccessful applications can request feedback intended to provide guidance on how to improve the application for future consideration.

As noted above, the evaluation process, USAID approval and negotiation lasts approximately 70 working days from the day RFA is closed. Consequently, plan your training activity accordingly.

What criteria will my application be reviewed against?

Applications submitted to WHAM will be evaluated according to the following criteria, applicants should pay close attention to this criteria and reference it in their application.

- **Organization potential (25%):** Applicants must present training capacity. How many years of experience in organizing trainings do you have? How many trainings were organized in the past two years? What is the average number of trainees per month you have had in the last two years? From the trainees that participated in trainings during the last two years how many have found jobs related to the training they received? Where were trainings conducted and what type of experts provided the trainers? Was the curriculum designed in coordination with the private sector to take SME needs into account? Are these trainers considered industry experts with years of experience and are they employed by the applicant or contracted on demand? WHAM also analyzes the organizational capacity of the applicant in terms of experience working with similar activities in the past. Did the applicant successfully implement similar activities in the past? As all of these questions indicate, the WHAM

Activity is looking to support applicants that have a demonstrable track-record of workforce development training success.

- **Type of training provided (30%):** Is the proposed training focused on advanced technology and in-line with current industry needs, and will this training bring new and needed workforce skills to SME beneficiary companies? Applicants that request more technologically advanced skills¹ will be looked upon favorably.
- **Training / employment needs (30%):** WHAM looks favorably on applications that in the case of SMEs have a target of more than twenty people that will be trained; or in the case of training centers or vocational schools, a history of trainings organized over the years that will lead to successful implementation of trainings and potential employment after the training is completed. We shall look favorably on applications that engage a large number of SMEs. Have companies that will likely hire newly trained people been pre-identified by the applicant? Have there been pre-identified people that will be trained, or will the selection process take place once the training starts? What is the number of anticipated trainees that are employed vs. unemployed? How many trainees fit into the categories of youth (under 35 years of age) and women?
- **Cost of training (15%):** Training costs vary from industry to industry, as do the types of skills being taught. However, in addition to the previously mentioned criteria, applications shall be reviewed based on the percentage of matching WHAM funds with applicants' own funds or third-party funds leveraged by the applicant to complete the training activity. Applicants are encouraged to provide as additional documentation analysis of training prices in the market for those trainings which are subject of the grant project. What is the cost of the training per person?

Applications containing the following will be viewed favorably:

- Training centers, technical schools, vocational schools/organizations, private companies (with previous training experience) that are operating in metal, wood, textile/footwear and ICT sectors that are conducting training for the benefits of the entire sector(s), or groups of individual companies with a common training needs will be given preference;
- Higher employment generation – please note that new jobs are defined as persons being fully or part-time employed by the applicant, or by other SMEs in the targeted sectors in coordination with the applicant, which would be documented through official employment records upon grant closeout;
- Provision of qualified workforce to a larger number of private enterprises and beneficiaries;
- Higher number of female/youth participants; 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.

¹ Data science classes in ICT sector, friction welding in metal, etc.

Note that WHAM evaluation committee does not look favorably on applications from existing grantees or organizations that have previously implemented grants with USAID WHAM.

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.