

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

Solicitation number: WHAM-AID-168-LA-17-00001-002

Issuance Date: July 18, 2018

Closing Date: September 12, 2018

Total Potential Funding: USD 150,000

Expected Number of Grants: 3

Maximum Award Amount: USD 100,000

Reference: Workforce Development Trainings for Metal Processing Welding and Computer Numerical Controlling (CNC) operators and/or programmers

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 before September 5, 2018. Please write "Welding and CNC training activities" in the subject line.

This RFA contains the following attachment:

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's (BiH) 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), or several 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

While the BiH metal processing sector has been steadily expanding, one of the sector's main obstacles remains the lack in supply of a skilled and trained workforce, especially in the areas of advance technology programming and operation. The lack of workers with advanced professional qualifications, especially those workers with practical experience and skills, is a characteristic common among all metal processing SMEs in BiH. There are several factors contributing to this problem, ranging from inadequate high school and university curriculums to a lack of educational centers for prequalification, secondary education, and training at work programs. Due in part to these reasons, SMEs are not able to increase productivity efficiently or effectively and are unable to introduce higher quality production standards related to welding and computer numerical controlling (CNC) operating processes. This directly constrains their opportunities for exports and much needed growth. The WHAM Activity will support interventions that will offer immediate relief via an improved workforce in areas that support worker skill acquisition in needed technologies and processes related to managing and operating those technologies. The WHAM Activity will support local SMEs, groups of SMEs with the same or similar needs, educational and training centers/ institutes, as well as high schools and universities, to form partnerships, preferably, but not limited to, private-private partnerships and public-private partnerships, with the aim to improve organization and training services that could provide capacity while sustaining and building competencies for the entire metal processing sector.

The WHAM Activity encourages grantees to leverage resources from third party public and private sector funding (at approximately a 1:1 ratio) including state, entity, and cantonal governments, municipalities, and bureaus/institutes of employment, as well as other international donor organizations apart from USAID.

What are the specific intervention areas of this RFA?

The metal processing sector is one of the most important BiH industries and, as such, a key driver of the country's economic development; SMEs operating in this sector significantly affect the national employment rate. The metal processing sector has the opportunity to provide new employment, higher exports, and special development possibilities for business cooperation and joint ventures with downstream EU multinational enterprises. The metal processing sector has grown in the last couple of years; however, there are still many obstacles that hamper further expansion and under-utilized capacities that have great potential for growth. Major gaps within the metal processing sector in BiH can be narrowed down to the lack of skilled workforce, lack of investments in research and development, state of machinery, and quality assurance certifications.

The absence of a skilled and quality workforce trained in accordance with EU standards and knowledge of specific expertise is one of the most common problems faced by employers in BiH today. The high growth, export-oriented metal processing companies are mostly faced with this issue when they need to export their products and services to the EU and other foreign markets. The lack of a skilled workforce also directly impacts their ability to be more competitive in the domestic, as well as their ability to respond to the continuous changes in clients' quantities and demands.

One of the biggest industry labor gaps, found through IESC private sector outreach, relates to welding and computer numerically controlled (CNC) operating related skills. These skills represent a scarce and valuable resource that is in high local demand and can contribute to further growth of companies. The WHAM Activity intends to develop and support initiatives that lead towards the creation of sustainable capacities and/or competencies for welding and CNC operations. Based on the industry analysis and demand, it is evident that companies with workforces skilled in welding and CNC operations are capable of penetrating additional EU markets and reaching more buyers, boosting their sales and exports, as well as increasing their market share.

Therefore, the WHAM activity invites local SME's, groups of companies with the same or similar needs, educational and training centers/institutes, as well as high schools and universities, to form an interest-based alliance or propose their idea on how to efficiently and effectively create a solution(s) for the following workforce development areas (select and strategize):

- Lack of qualified welders, welding engineers, and welding technicians;
- Lack of qualified CNC operators and programmers;
- Lack of sustainable tailor-made training and education in welding and CNC operating industry deficit skills;
- Lack of sustainable training and educational centers in welding and CNC operating industry deficit skills; and/or,
- Lack of sustainable tailor-made training and education in any other area in metal processing industry (for example, metal sheet processing, locksmith, toolmaking, hydraulics, and other skills).

What types of support are available from WHAM?

The WHAM 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 training initiatives related to welding and CNC operating skills with both public and private sectors;
- Assist in the development of new training initiatives targeting welding and CNC operating skills;
- Facilitate and co-support establishment of new and/or existing regional training centers and bodies in cooperation with the public and private sectors for addressing training needs and initiatives in the BiH metal sector;
- Supporting initiatives of local high schools and universities in strengthening existing and/or establishing new training/practice centers with private sector SMEs to address skill gaps related to welding and CNC operating; and/or,
- Co-financing purchases of training equipment and/or technical assistance in introducing WPS and WPQR qualifications of welding technology for private and public business training/educational/service centers and/or vocational schools where adequate business opportunities related to generation of employment exist.

Volunteer Experts

A distinctive feature of WHAM is its ability to field volunteer experts through the Activity's prime implementer, the 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 high-growth, exporting or export-ready enterprises operating in the metal industry (Beneficiaries), aiming to increase exports and employment. Generally, high-growth enterprises have at least 10 employees and an average annualized growth in employees greater than 20 percent per annum over a three-year period. 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 SME companies from the metal sector;
- Groups of companies from the metal sector with preset internal agreements and mutual strategies;
- Existing and/or new public training centers and institutes;
- Business incubators and technology parks;

- For-profit organizations, training institutes, and private educational entities (second and third level); and,
- Educational institutions such as high schools and universities.

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?

The 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.
- 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.

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 compliance 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 intervention areas described above, you should apply for support by submitting a three-page or 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.

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 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 grant 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 follow and fulfill its requirements and receive any necessary technical assistance. All awards will be monitored on an on-going basis by WHAM team and evaluated upon conclusion of the Grant Agreement. While some applications will be rejected outright, some will be sent back to the applicant for additional improvements and modifications. In such cases, the WHAM team will assist the applicant with further development of the application. Unapproved applications will receive written feedback intended to provide guidance on how to improve the application for future consideration and submission.

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 Welding and CNC training and relevant results to date	Applicant(s) should describe their previous experience providing Welding and CNC trainings and describe the type of curriculum available and state if the curriculum has already been tested. Applicant(s) should note if they need assistance developing a new curriculum 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 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 through this effort in the next two years	Applicant(s) should estimate the expected number of people trained by them within a period of 12 and 24 months, as well as assess the potential of the impact the trainings will have on the generation of new jobs. Also describe the pre-requisites for a person to participate in the training. Applicant(s) should also describe the	15

	expected outreach activities to attract trainees 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 SMEs for job placement	Applicant(s) should describe their current or potential partnerships with SMEs regarding facilitating future employment for trainees. The applicant(s) should be able to provide specific perceived/planned employability potential through linkages with SMEs (formal expression of needs through letters of commitment highly regarded)	20
5. Estimated cost per trainee	Applicant(s) should provide a detailed breakdown of costs per trainee.	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 the increase in export sales documented through the standard USAID verification methods;
- Provision of effective technical assistance to a larger number of private enterprises and beneficiaries;
- Higher number of female/youth participants in selected companies; and/or,

- 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 US Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of the concept note and 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.

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.]

	Time (periods)	Responsible	Expected Results
Task 1:			
Task 2:			
Task 3: (etc.)			

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

Organization	Total Amount in Bosnian Convertible Mark
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.