

Issuance Date: October 8, 2021

Concept Note Closing Date: October 31, 2021 16:00 hours CET

Total RFA Grants under Contract Amount: \$500,000

Anticipated Number of Grants: 5 to 7 Grants

Subject: Request for Applications (RFA) Number: EDGE 2020-001- Concept Note

Dear Prospective Applicants,

International Development Group LLC (IDG) is seeking applications from qualified applicants in the **Western Balkans** countries of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia; the **Caucasus** countries of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan; and the **Western Newly Independent States** (NIS) countries of Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus (UMB), to enable inclusive, sustainable economic growth by supporting intra-regional and Euro-Atlantic integration under the regional **USAID Economic Development, Governance and Enterprise Growth Project (EDGE)**. Grants must include beneficiaries or implementers in a **minimum of two countries in the region** in order to build partnerships and linkages among local organizations and the private sector to work regionally.

The RFA is comprised of the following main sections:

1. **Program Description**
2. **Award Information**
3. **Eligibility Requirements**
4. **Application Review Information**
5. **Award Administration Information**
6. **Submission Requirements**

Successful Applicants will be responsible for ensuring achievement of the program objectives. Please refer to the Program Description section of this RFA for a complete statement of goals and expected results.

Subject to availability of funds, IDG intends to provide up to \$500,000 in total funding for activities to be implemented between April 1, 2022 and ending on March 31, 2023, with awards in the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000 and duration between 6 to 12 months during this period. High performing EDGE grantees receiving high evaluation scores on their performance and quality of deliverables may receive follow-on grant support depending on availability of resources. All grants will demonstrate a minimum of 1:1 leverage, i.e. 50% matching contributions¹ to the funds requested from EDGE. Former and current EDGE Grantees may apply again in accordance with the stipulations of this RFA and can propose activities that will build on the results they achieved, without repeating the same activities for the same beneficiaries. IDG reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

This RFA is a **two-stage application process**. In the first stage, applicants are asked to submit a Concept Note, which will be reviewed by EDGE's Grants Evaluation Committee. Only the selected applicants will

¹ 'Matching contributions' entails cumulative value of cash and in-kind contributions.

be invited to the second stage, the development and submission of a Full Application. To be eligible for an award, Applicants must provide all required information in their application, including the requirements found in the annexes to this RFA. Applications that are submitted late, incomplete, or are non-responsive might not be considered. Awards will be made to the responsive applicants whose applications best meet the requirements of this RFA and the evaluation criteria contained herein.

Applicant should express interest and/or send all inquiries concerning this RFA to Natasha Lazovska, EDGE Grants Manager, nlazovska@internationaldevelopmentgroup.com and edge_gucs@internationaldevelopmentgroup.com no later than October 13, 2021. The answers will be posted on October 15, 2021 on the IDG website.

IDG requires that the Concept Notes be submitted electronically (e-mailed) to nlazovska@internationaldevelopmentgroup.com and edge_gucs@internationaldevelopmentgroup.com in PDF format no later than October 31, 2021 at 16:00 hours CET. The Concept Note should be single-spaced, written in no smaller than 12-point font, and in Times New Roman or a similar typeset. Each page should be consecutively numbered. Concept Notes should have margins of not less than one inch on all sides.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of IDG, nor does it commit IDG to pay for any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. Further, IDG reserves the right to reject any or all applications received. Applications are submitted at the risk of the Applicant, and all preparation and submission costs are at the Applicant's own expense.

I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

EDGE PROJECT GOAL

EDGE is a 3 to 5-year regional activity in Europe and Eurasia (E&E) that aims to create inclusive, sustainable economic growth and to support intra-regional and Euro-Atlantic integration. EDGE aims to generate synergies among USAID projects working in economic growth and bring together stakeholders across countries to work on mutual problems, giving the USAID E&E portfolio a regional dimension. The Development Objective (DO) of EDGE is **Inclusive, sustainable economic growth supporting intra-regional and Euro-Atlantic integration**. This RFA will support the following EDGE Results:

- I. Reduced Barriers to Cross-Border Trade and Investment**
- II. Improved Business Sophistication Within Targeted Value Chains**
- III. Improved Market Integration and Expanded Market Linkages of Firms Within Targeted Value Chains**

TARGETED VALUE CHAINS

With respect to Results II and III, EDGE activities are intended to improve the competitiveness of SMEs within targeted value chains; to increase their trade with the EU and other Western markets; increase their ability to comply with EU standards; and take better advantage of EU trade arrangements in the region. The targeted value chains include:

(I) Agriculture and ag processing

- a. Fresh and processed fruit and vegetables**

(2) Light manufacturing

- a. Apparel and textiles
- b. Wood processing and furniture production

(3) Tourism

- a. Inbound tourism to at least two countries for the following types of tourism: ecotourism, rural tourism, and adventure tourism (as defined by UN World Tourism Organization).²

Information and communication technology (ICT): EDGE invites applicants to propose activities that promote ICT usage and digital transformation in any of the value chains listed above. Illustrative activities may include orientation workshops to demonstrate to SMEs the positive benefits of adopting or expanding their use of ICT; conducting gap analyses to diagnose SMEs' specific ICT needs and identify interventions to improve SMEs' operations, performance, marketing, etc.; developing or adapting ICT applications to address identified needs and providing training on implementation; match-making events that bring together local ICT firms and SMEs from the value chains; etc.

Multiple Value Chains can be targeted as part of the application, for instance agriculture/ag processing and tourism.

GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Local Capacity Building and Greater Intra-Regional Linkages through Grants Under Contract (GUC)

A primary objective of the EDGE GUC Program is to build the capacity of local organizations to enable them to implement EDGE activities in support of EDGE's DO. EDGE will use a Grants Under Contract (GUC) mechanism for this purpose, to promote capacity building and sustainability of local associations and organizations, government entities, and the private sector. The GUCs will address local sustainability and capacity building when applicable, while contributing to the achievement of the DO. This approach supports USAID's focus on building Self-Reliance, in which Government entities, the private sector and other stakeholders assume greater ownership of development initiatives. The grants will support a variety of partnerships that will leverage both public and private sector resources. Grants must include beneficiaries or implementers in a **minimum of two countries in the region** in order to build partnerships and linkages among local organizations and the private sector to work regionally. This

² **Ecotourism** is a type of nature-based tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to observe, learn, discover, experience and appreciate biological and cultural diversity with a responsible attitude to protect the integrity of the ecosystem and enhance the well-being of the local community.

Rural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle/culture, angling and sightseeing.

Adventure tourism is a type of tourism which usually takes place in destinations with specific geographic features and landscape and tends to be associated with a physical activity, cultural exchange, interaction and engagement with nature. This experience may involve some kind of real or perceived risk and may require significant physical and/or mental effort.

regional approach to grant awards is intended to allow for networking, information-sharing, knowledge transfer, and joint advocacy.

ILLUSTRATIVE ACTIVITIES TO BE FUNDED THROUGH THE GUC PROGRAM

Areas of attention and illustrative activities for grants may include one or several activities to accomplish one or several of Results I, II, and III listed above. As previously noted, grants must include implementers or beneficiaries in at least two countries covered by EDGE.

COVID-19 might have some impact on the proposed activities, since it is uncertain how long the present situation will continue. Please try to formally address the potential impacts of COVID-19 on the proposed programming/results, if any, and how you would go about mitigating them. For instance, a proposed travel for a training could be replaced by holding an on-line training. Please address this within the existing sections (e.g., project description, project impact, and project implementation plan and milestone schedule). Also please note that during the co-creation process of the Full Application, EDGE can and will work in partnership with you to address associated issues and the potential impact of the pandemic on the performance of the grants and will help applicants to revise activities accordingly.

Result I: Reduced Barriers to Cross-border Trade and Investment

EDGE aims to improve the conditions for intra-regional trade and reduce the complexity and costs of trade processes in the targeted regions. Illustrative activities under this result include:

- Improving compliance with the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)
- Creating/supporting mechanisms for public-private dialogue on trade and investment
- Strengthening the capacity for advocacy in the private sector to address and resolve trade and investment issues
- Sharing best practices and information related to trade and investment and helping host governments improve the business policy environment
- Directly supporting the implementation of priority trade and investment reforms
- Improving the conditions for intra-regional trade and investment (including e-commerce, where applicable)
- Reducing the complexity and costs of trade processes in the region
- Removing technical barriers and improving the movement of goods and capital, in order to increase trade and investment within the region
- Helping local SMEs improve their access to regional and external markets, particularly the EU
- Chambers of commerce are encouraged to partner regionally and propose activities that will promote to the private sector the ongoing regional trade facilitation reforms, increasing their awareness and knowledge of the benefits of these reforms and enhancing their capacity to advocate for the needed changes.

Result II: Improved Business Sophistication

Grants will be awarded for activities such as those described in the illustrative list below, which must target at least one of the aforementioned value chains:

- I. Identifying and addressing skills, knowledge, and information gaps of SMEs in the targeted value chains. Examples could include:
 - Market development: Strengthening the ability of companies to identify market opportunities
 - Product development: Product planning and development, launch, and life-cycle management
 - Improving operations and productivity by improving internal business processes and workflow; eliminating production bottlenecks; and investing in technologies that enhance productivity and cut costs
 - Inventory control: Supply chain management, inventory planning, ordering, and forecasting
 - Management enhancement: Market focus, strategic planning, project management, and quality
 - Preparing for and participating in trade shows and B2B events
 - Use of Technology: Promote ICT and e-commerce solutions for SMEs
 - Certifications: Helping SMEs achieve certification of their compliance with international standards; improve quality; consulting services; certifying agencies
 - Cross-cutting regional issues critical to productivity and job creation, such as workforce development and skills upgrading
 - Identifying and addressing gaps and insufficiencies of business associations, chambers of commerce and similar business support organizations with respect to their operations and the services that they provide to their members, as compared with standards in international practice. Gaps in their operations could include, for example, poor revenue generation; inadequate accounting and financial management; the need for new income generating services; membership recruitment and retention measures; membership surveys and strategy workshops; modernization of BSP management and administrative systems; communication; becoming members of regional and international organizations, etc.

Result III: Improved Market Integration and Expanded Market Linkages

Illustrative activities, which must target at least one of the aforementioned value chains, include:

- Improving the services provided by business associations, chambers of commerce, and other private sector support organizations to assist their members in increasing exports
- Generating and building capacity to analyze market data from the EU and other target markets and identify industry trends

- Supporting country and regional branding and marketing campaigns
- Improving export marketing: branding, packaging/labeling, customer relations, pricing, promotion, and publicity, etc.
- Establishing linkages with new buyers by organizing trade shows, buyer inbound visits, familiarization trips, etc.

GENDER CONSIDERATIONS

Applications must reflect gender considerations relevant to proposed activities.

Applicants are encouraged to propose activities that will target as many results as feasible.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- Business Support Organizations (BSOs): chambers, clusters, associations, incubators, innovation centers that are locally registered
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that are locally registered
- Government entities (local, regional, national, and parastatal)- Excluding Government entities from Belarus. (Please see below.)
- International Organizations (IOs)
- Private sector firms and consulting firms
- U.S. Organizations
- Public private partnerships
- Educational institutions and training centers; and
- Coalitions of these entities

Belarusian Applicants

1. No entities that are partially or entirely owned by the Belarusian government may participate.
2. Only Belarusian companies headquartered outside of Belarus may apply as lead applicants and must be headquartered in one of the other 11 E&E countries. Partner vs. Grantee roles.
3. The lead applicant may partner with Belarusian companies and private business associations, subject to the guidance outlined in #1 and #2.

2. AWARD INFORMATION

Financial allocation under this RFA is **US\$ 500,000** for activities to be implemented between April 1, 2022 and ending on March 31, 2023, with awards in the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000 and duration

between 6 to 12 months during this period. Grants of \$100k will only be considered for geographic coverage more expansive than two countries or involving multiple sub-regions. High performing EDGE grantees receiving high evaluation scores on their performance and quality of deliverables at the end of Grant implementation may receive follow-on grant support depending on availability of resources. All grants will demonstrate a minimum of 1:1 leverage, i.e. 50% matching contributions to the funds requested from EDGE.

TYPES OF GRANTS

The types of Grants that will be awarded are the following:

Type of Grant	Features	Illustrative Eligible Organizations
Simplified Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment occurs on reimbursement basis based on costs incurred • Maximum value: Simplified Acquisition Threshold (\$250,000)³ • EDGE may provide assistance for financial capacity-building of the organization • No advance payments • May include an in-kind element • Indirect costs are never allowed • The recipient will not purchase any goods or services, except as authorized pursuant to 22 CFR 228 or ADS 310, Source and Nationality Requirements for Procurement of Commodities and Services Financed by USAID or any applicable waivers, and the recipient will not purchase any single item that has a useful life over one year and a cost of \$5,000 or more. • The recipient has signed pre-award certifications as required in 303.3.8. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established CSOs (including established NGOs, business associations) • Individual Firms • Nascent CSOs (community-based organizations, women and youth groups) with a strong focus on in-kind elements of the grant

³ The maximum grant size under the RFA is \$100k

Type of Grant	Features	Illustrative Eligible Organizations
Fixed Amount Award (FAA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific milestones to be completed under the grant are pre-determined and grantee receives payment upon successful completion of these milestones • Adequate, fixed, and known cost available during budget determination providing limited risk of changes or failure in program • No advance payments but initial milestone payment allowed not exceeding 20% of overall grant amount and adhering to other requirements • May include an in-kind element • Tranche payments will not be made for milestones that are not completed. • Recipient may not purchase real property • The duration of the FAA must not exceed three years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations proposing activities that include programmatic accomplishments or results to establish grant milestones • Organizations capable or positioned to produce reports, studies, consultancies, or surveys that would benefit the overall programmatic objectives of EDGE. • Organizations implementing a short-duration quick-impact activity that can be quickly negotiated and awarded • Organizations must have capacity to effectively plan both technical and financial resources with a high degree of certainty about expected costs and the duration of the activity with support from EDGE. EDGE may provide capacity building to assist with the planning.
Standard Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDGE may provide advances to the grantee; an initial advance may not be more than 30 days' worth of expenses, 30% of the total budget, or \$150,000, whichever is less. Subsequent advances can be for no more than 30 days' worth of expenses. • Larger costs can be supported over a longer period of time. • Receipts must be presented to EDGE to liquidate the advance and request a subsequent advance. • May include an in-kind element • EDGE may provide assistance for capacity-building of the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations with demonstrable experience at managing financial resources effectively and long-term activities that require funding in advance.
Limited Scope Grant Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used with governmental entities only. • Includes solely in-kind mechanism • USAID authorized grants to government entities (an organization in which the government owns at least a fifty percent share or receives at least fifty percent of its financial support from the government.) with a total value not to exceed \$300,000 for the duration of the prime contract, July 28, 2023. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National or local Government entities

Type of Grant	Features	Illustrative Eligible Organizations
In-Kind Grant Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used for organizations with lower financial/ management capacity, or quick impact activities, allowing for in-kind procurement of services/goods directly by EDGE • All activities are paid for in-kind directly by EDGE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations with limited financial/ management capacity • Organizations proposing activities that include programmatic accomplishments or results to establish grant milestones • Organizations capable or positioned to produce reports, studies, consultancies, or surveys that would benefit the overall programmatic objectives of EDGE. • Organizations implementing a short-duration quick-impact activity that can be quickly negotiated and awarded.

3. MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Regardless of the grantee or grant type, all GUCs will follow the grant award process.

Given that Grant applications will include multiple beneficiaries and/or implementers, the Grant Agreement will be signed with one organization/entity that will be responsible for management and oversight of the grant. The other beneficiaries and/or implementers will have to sign a Partnership statement confirming their roles, responsibilities, and contribution to the grant. Minimum eligibility criteria are criteria with which an organization must comply in order for its grant application to be accepted for Grant Evaluation Committee (GEC) review. The minimum eligibility criteria are as follows:

1. Grantees must be one of the defined types of entities as listed in the Eligible Applicants section above.
2. Grantees must be in good standing with the respective country authority, and in compliance with all applicable civil and fiscal regulations
3. Grantees must display sound management in the form of financial, administrative, and technical policies and procedures that are in written format and present a system of internal controls that safeguard assets; protect against fraud, waste, and abuse; and support the achievement of program goals and objectives. (See [2 CFR Part 200 - UNIFORM ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, COST PRINCIPLES, AND AUDIT REQUIREMENTS FOR FEDERAL AWARDS](#) for further guidance.) The grantee must also sign a *Recipient Certificate of Compliance*.
4. Sub-agreements⁴ are not permitted, i.e. the grantee must have full responsibility and accountability for grant activity implementation.
5. Prior to grant negotiation, all applicants must be vetted with USAID with regard to the U.S. Government’s prohibition of transactions with, and the provision of resources and support to individuals and organizations associated with terrorism.
6. Prior to grant negotiation, all applicants will undergo a Pre-Award Survey that is conducted:

⁴ Sub-agreements are program awards to sub-recipients, where subrecipients measure performance against program objectives, comply with award requirements, use funds to carry out program activities, and make programmatic decisions. Sub-contracts are permitted- Subcontractors provide goods and services that are ancillary to program operations.

- To determine whether the organization has sufficient financial and managerial capacity to manage USAID funds in accordance with U.S. Government and USAID requirements,
 - To determine the most appropriate method of financing to use under the potential USAID award, and
 - To determine the degree of support and oversight necessary to ensure proper accountability of funds provided to the organization.
7. Grantees must also be willing and able to certify the following:
- They have not and will not provide support to any individuals and organizations associated with terrorism, in accordance with the terms of the *Certification Regarding Terrorist Financing*.
 - They have not or will not use U.S. Government funds for lobbying a U.S. Government official according to the terms of the *Certification Regarding Lobbying*.

Grant Specifications

All grants provided under EDGE must adhere to the following specifications:

- **Maximum grant amount:**
 - The total value of an individual grant to a U.S. NGO will not exceed \$100,000. This limitation will not apply to grant awards to non-U.S. NGO.
 - The total value of all GUCs that provide funds (as opposed to in-kind assistance) to a particular partner government entity must not exceed \$300,000 for the duration of the prime contract i.e. July 28, 2023.
- **Maximum total grant period:** One (1) year (unless expressly approved by the GEC and USAID).
- **Concept paper, application, and budget format:** All grant applications, concept papers, and budgets must be submitted in the format provided. Applications and budgets written in a different format will not be considered. EDGE is willing to assist potential grantees with their application documents (see Concept Note Application template).
- **Geographic area:** The beneficiaries and the execution of the majority of the grant activities **must** take place in at least two, but preferably more countries that include the Western Balkans countries of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia; the Caucasus countries of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan; and the Western Newly Independent States (NIS) countries of Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus (UMB).
- **Leverage:** All grants will demonstrate a minimum of 1:1 leverage, i.e. 50% matching contributions to the funds requested from EDGE.

TYPE OF LEVERAGE			
CASH		IN-KIND	
Items	Valuation	Items	Valuation
Cash contributions	Cash value paid for acquired goods, supplies and services	Volunteer service	Rates for volunteer services must be consistent with those paid for similar work

TYPE OF LEVERAGE			
CASH		IN-KIND	
Items	Valuation	Items	Valuation
Cash contributions, Per Diem	Cash value	Donated employee time	Employee's regular rate of pay
Cash contributions, Travel	Cash value	Donated Supplies	Fair market value of the supplies at the time of the donation
		Donated equipment, building or land	Fair market value at the time of the donation
		Project co-funding	Actual cost incurred

Participating partners can utilize in-kind contributions to meet this requirement, but matching cash contributions will be preferred, especially with the private sector.

MINIMUM REQUIRED LEVERAGE	Cash	In kind	Total
Matching contributions in cash requirements for NGOs, non-profits and for-profit Consulting Firms	5%	45%	50%
Matching contributions in cash requirements for private sector firms	20%	30%	50%

There must be a leverage element from the grantee, either in cash or in kind; the leverage may be financed from organization resources or from an approved third-party source. Contributions must be directly or indirectly allocable to the achievement of the grant objective. All contributions must be clearly identified, and all assigned costs must be reasonable and in accordance with prevailing open market conditions. Third-party contributions and VAT are acceptable and may be considered part of the grantee contribution. The nature and amount of this contribution will be clearly defined in the Grant Application and in the Grant Agreement.

- **Construction:** Is not an allowable cost. However, these activities may be funded with applicant or third-party funds as part of the cash leverage.
- **Payment type:**
 - In-kind support provided by IDG, or
 - reimbursement of allowable expenses supported by legitimate receipts from the grantee or
 - fixed awards based on defined deliverables.

- **Grant disbursement:** Funds will be reimbursed by wire transfer to the grant recipient's bank account from IDG. For in-kind grants including the procurement of goods and services, IDG will procure those directly while working closely with the grantee, unless otherwise agreed on a case-by-case basis. The procured items will then be delivered to the grantee.
- **VAT:** Grantee is responsible for registering the Grant with the government institutions and obtaining a VAT exemption where the national legislation allows for VAT exemption registration. VAT in countries where there is no exemption can be used as part of the matching contributions as long as it is clearly identified in the Grant application, in a separate budget line item and in the final grant award. IDG will not reimburse VAT.
- **Application language:** All grant application documents must be submitted in English.

COST ALLOWABILITY

The beneficiary will not be reimbursed for expenditures incurred which are considered unallowable or in excess of the approved grant budget. The beneficiary should therefore be very careful to adhere to the grant budget and when in doubt as to whether a cost may be unallowable, should consult with the EDGE Grants Manager.

Allowable costs and activities

Generally, EDGE will support beneficiary activities which are consistent with both the grantee and project objectives. Grant activities funded by IDG under the EDGE project will meet the following general criteria.

- Grants supported by EDGE must promote the overall EDGE objectives set forth in the relevant RFA.
- Grants will cover only necessary and allowable costs linked to the execution of the activity such as program staff salaries, consultant fees, training, meetings and seminars, publications, equipment and rental of equipment, office and travel expenses, and other direct costs. The specific costs to be funded under the EDGE project must conform to the USAID guidelines for funding activities.
- Should it be deemed necessary, grants will also cover costs associated with mitigating the environmental impact of grant activities. These mitigation measures should be clearly outlined to determine associated resource needs.
- Activities can only begin upon signature of the agreement between the applicant and IDG. Costs incurred before execution of the agreement will not be reimbursed.

Unallowable costs and activities

Costs that are not allowed for funding under a GUC may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Costs which are not in line with EDGE related activities, goals of an applicant, and proposed activities;
- Immovable Property (real estate) and construction;
- Value Added Tax (VAT);

- Purchase of goods or services restricted under USAID regulations, including but not limited to the following: surveillance equipment, military equipment and/or arms, police and/or law enforcement equipment, abortion equipment and/or services, weather modification equipment, luxury goods, alcohol, gifts and/or gambling equipment; certain agricultural commodities, motor vehicles, pharmaceuticals and contraceptives, pesticides, fertilizer, used equipment;
- Purchase of goods or services that have their origin in countries or suppliers prohibited by the US as may be identified by USAID's consolidated list of debarred, suspended or ineligible contractors;
- Bad debts of the grantee;
- Any previous obligations by USAID to the grantee;
- Fines and/or penalties imposed on the grantee;
- Expenses related to ceremonies, parties and/or celebrations;
- Creation of endowments;
- Profit and fees;
- Sub-agreements;
- Purchases or activities which are illegal under local or US law; and
- Indirect costs such as but not limited to overhead or indirect fringe (unless the applicant has documented proof of such rates through audits or USAID-issued NICRA). Indirect costs are never allowed under simplified grants.

In general, costs not included in the approved budget may not be allowed unless approved in writing by IDG.

REQUIRED CERTIFICATIONS FOR LEAD APPLICANT

Regardless of the type of grant to be awarded, EDGE requires all grantees to sign the following certifications. As these may change over the life of EDGE, the Grants Agreement may be updated accordingly. Required Certifications and Assurances can be found at <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mav.pdf>

- Representation by Corporation Regarding A Delinquent Tax Liability or a Felony Criminal Conviction (An assurance that the organization applying for the grant through a RFA has not been convicted of a felony criminal violation under any U.S. Federal law within the preceding 24 months and the organization does not have any unpaid federal tax liabilities.)
- Assurance of Compliance with Laws and Regulations Governing Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs
- Certification Regarding Terrorist Financing (Required for all grants)
- Certification Regarding Lobbying (Required for all grants over \$100,000)
- Certification of Recipient (Required for all grants)

For grants over the USD equivalent of \$25,000, the grantee will provide IDG with its Duns and Bradstreet Number (DUNS) prior to grant execution or immediately following execution. A DUNS is not required for 100% in-kind grants.

4. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

After the eligibility criteria description are met, EDGE's Grants Evaluation Committee will review all submitted Concept Notes. Concept Notes will be evaluated on a pass/fail basis for each section required in the Concept Note Application provided in the Annex A, while Full Applications will be scored and ranked according to the following selection criteria:

Evaluation Criteria	Concept Note Stage: Pass/Fail	Full app. Stage: Maximum Score								
Project Description	Pass/Fail	20 points								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed activity is in line with the Objectives of the RFA. • Extent to which the applicant demonstrates that the project will solve or diminish the identified problem/need. • Level of regional partnership, networking, alliance and constituency- building involved in the project. • Project objectives are clear, specific, measurable, and achievable within the proposed timeframe. 										
Project Impact	Pass/Fail	20 points								
<p>Clear and credible articulation of the grant's impact on EDGE Indicators for the economic development, governance and enterprise growth of beneficiaries/partners and to the regional industry or value chain</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="214 1297 971 1801"> <tr> <td data-bbox="214 1297 971 1369">Result I: Reduced Barriers to Cross-border Trade and Investment</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="214 1369 971 1411">Anticipated Results:</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="214 1411 971 1480">Improved compliance with the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="214 1480 971 1522">Trade facilitation improved</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="214 1522 971 1591">Target opportunities to increase regional investment developed</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="214 1591 971 1661">Capacity built of trade & investment stakeholders in private and public sectors</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="214 1661 971 1730">Improved conditions for intra-regional trade and investment (including e-commerce, where applicable).</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="214 1730 971 1801">Reducing the complexity and cost of trade processes in the region(s).</td> </tr> </table>	Result I: Reduced Barriers to Cross-border Trade and Investment	Anticipated Results:	Improved compliance with the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)	Trade facilitation improved	Target opportunities to increase regional investment developed	Capacity built of trade & investment stakeholders in private and public sectors	Improved conditions for intra-regional trade and investment (including e-commerce, where applicable).	Reducing the complexity and cost of trade processes in the region(s).		
Result I: Reduced Barriers to Cross-border Trade and Investment										
Anticipated Results:										
Improved compliance with the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)										
Trade facilitation improved										
Target opportunities to increase regional investment developed										
Capacity built of trade & investment stakeholders in private and public sectors										
Improved conditions for intra-regional trade and investment (including e-commerce, where applicable).										
Reducing the complexity and cost of trade processes in the region(s).										

Evaluation Criteria	Concept Note Stage: Pass/Fail	Full app. Stage: Maximum Score
<p>Result II: Improved Business Sophistication Within Targeted Value Chains</p>		
<p>Anticipated Results:</p>		
<p>Identification of business opportunities to increase SME competitiveness</p>		
<p>Increased capacity to trade and B2B market linkages</p>		
<p>Increased SME compliance with International Standards and Certifications.</p>		
<p>Improved workforce skills</p>		
<p>Promote ICT and e-commerce solutions for SMEs</p>		
<p>Result III: Improved Market Integration and Expanded Market Linkages of Firms Within Targeted Value Chains</p>		
<p>Improved export marketing, branding and packaging for SMEs.</p>		
<p>Strengthened linkages between buyers and suppliers organizing B2B, trade shows, buyer inbound visits, familiarization trips etc.</p>		
<p>Strengthened capacity of the Business Support/Service Organization by providing services to assist their members in increasing exports.</p>		
<p>Gender integration</p>		
<p>Anticipated Results:</p>		
<p>Support to female-owned and female-managed businesses to participate in public-private partnerships, mentorships and networking programs</p>		
<p>Develop tools and information resources that will address information gaps identified by women, such as tax and business registration areas</p>		
<p>Provision of targeted training programs to build capacity in priority value chains, where women are often in leadership positions</p>		
<p>Support women in obtaining key standards and certifications</p>		
<p>Design workforce programs specifically to address barriers faced by women who wish to start up or expand their businesses and create networking opportunities</p>		
<p>Actively support the skill development of women managers in priority soft skill areas, such as HR and Leadership</p>		

Evaluation Criteria	Concept Note Stage: Pass/Fail	Full app. Stage: Maximum Score
Project Implementation Plan & Milestone Schedule	n/a	10 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gantt chart of planned activities and a timeline with a brief narrative submitted. ● Applicant describes milestones as a verifiable product, task, deliverable, or goal. ● Applicant describes how they will document the completion of the product, task, deliverable, or goal. ● Applicant indicates dates when the milestone is expected or required to be completed. 		
Experience and Capacity	Pass/Fail	10 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The applicant demonstrates technical, managerial and financial capacity to implement the proposed activity. ● Extent to which project proposal falls within the mission of the organization. ● Extent of prior experience in building or participating in regional partnerships or alliances to address critical economic issues. ● Organizational capacity and prior experience in managing grant funding to achieve program objectives. ● Demonstrated willingness to participate in the grant program's capacity building component. 		
Cost and Budget	Pass/Fail	20 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Applicants provides budget and narrative, including the summary of the information provided in the application budget forms and includes total grant request ● Applicant's ability to co-finance or mobilize I:I resources to support activities. 		
Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	n/a	10 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describe monitoring and evaluation methods and tools used to measure and evaluate the program activities, targets, results and gender consideration. 		
Sustainability Results/Plan	Pass/Fail	10 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presents a vision for how new activities contribute to the organizational sustainability; ● The ability of applicant to finance USAID-funded activities, after the end of USAID support including a general timeline. 		

Evaluation Criteria	Concept Note Stage: Pass/Fail	Full app. Stage: Maximum Score
Total	Pass/Fail	100 points
Additional Criteria	Yes/No	Yes/No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Applicant proposes activities with geographic coverage more expansive than two countries or involving multiple sub-regions. ● Applicant proposes activities that are complementary to other USAID projects. ● Applicant proposes activities that promote ICT usage and digital transformation ● Applicant’s ability to co-finance or mobilize more than 1:1 resources to support activities. 		

Concept Notes will be evaluated by the Grants Evaluation Committee (GEC) on a pass/fail basis. Each section required in the application must pass all evaluation criteria for the application to be successful. Shortlisted Concept Notes will be submitted to USAID for final review.

Only Concept Notes that pass the Grants Evaluation Committee evaluation according to the selection criteria and those that receive USAID’s approval will receive the notification of inclusion into final round and be invited to submit a Full Application. Unsuccessful applicants will receive the notification of exclusion from the final round.

Successful applicants will receive **Full Application** templates and forms, as well as a request for additional information described in Annex B. Upon receiving Full Applications, applicants may receive a request for additional information or clarifications. The applications will be scored and ranked by the GEC based on the selection criteria as described above.

Top applicants will be selected according to the ranking, and the number of awards will be determined by the combined budget of top applicants up to \$500,000. Following USAID approval, successful applicants will be notified of the award.

5. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Upon successful evaluation and approval by USAID, the Grantee will receive a notice of award signed by the International Development Group LLC, EDGE project Chief of Party.

Grants will be administered in accordance with the following regulations as applicable:

- Automated Directives System (ADS) Chapter 303 Grants & Cooperative Agreements to Non-Governmental Organizations: 303.3.25 Fixed Amount Awards to Non-Governmental Organizations
- A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 303: 303_mak Fixed Amount Award Entity

Eligibility Checklist

- A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 303: 303_mat Fixed Amount Awards to Non-Governmental Organizations
- ADS 302.3.4.13 Grants Under Contracts (GUCs)
- 2 C.F.R. 200.45 Definition Fixed Amount Awards
- 2 C.F.R. 200.201 Use of grant agreements cooperative agreements, and contracts (as referenced in ADS 303.3.25.a.)
- 2. C.F.R. 200 Subpart E – Cost Principles for non-profit and educational organizations – used to negotiate award amounts and terminations per 2 C.F.R. 200.201 (b)(1))
- FAR Part 31 – Cost Principles for For-Profit organizations used to negotiate award amounts and terminations per 2 C.F.R. 200.201 (b)(1))

The Grantee will be required to submit periodic financial and performance reports to EDGE's Grants Manager. Reporting formats will be provided upon signing of the award documents.

6. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

INSTRUCTIONS TO APPLICANTS – GOVERNMENT ENTITIES

A Host Government entity is an organization in which the host government owns at least a fifty percent share or receives at least fifty percent of its financial support from the government. The applicant will submit a concept paper based on the concept paper form in Annex A, signed by an authorized agent of the Applicant, and provide the project manager's CV. Government institutions do not have to submit a copy of the organization's Annual Financial Report for the year 2020 and a copy of the organization's registration document not older than six months. Applicants shall present their technical application and budget in the formats provided and shall follow the instructions and guidelines listed in this RFA. The concept paper will be evaluated against the merit review criteria listed in Section 4. If the applicant successfully meets or exceeds the merit review criteria, they will move on to the pre-award risk assessment stage. A Limited Scope Grant Agreement will be signed with the successful applicant.

Please note that as the USAID Economic Development, Governance, and Enterprise Growth (EDGE) Project is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), any activities supporting **foreign security forces** need to comply with the Leahy law. The term "Leahy law" refers to two statutory provisions prohibiting the U.S. Government from using funds for assistance to units of foreign security forces where there is credible information implicating that unit in the commission of gross violations of human rights. Foreign security forces include members of the country's military or civilian police, but they may also include prison guards, armed game wardens, and coast guards, as well as **customs, border**, and tax enforcement personnel. The State Department, USAID, and U.S. embassies worldwide have developed a system that seeks to ensure that no applicable USAID-funded forms of assistance, including training, equipment and other activities is provided to units or individuals in foreign security forces who have committed any gross violations of human rights. This procedure, designed to comply with the Leahy law, is known as "vetting" or "Leahy vetting."⁵As part of the vetting process,

⁵ For more information please see: <https://www.state.gov/key-topics-bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/human-rights/leahy-law-fact-sheet/>

individuals proposed for receiving U.S. assistance as part of a training are required to provide certain individual information for embassy officials to be able to start the process. This information will be kept secure and only used for Leahy vetting purposes.

INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL OTHER APPLICANTS

This RFA is a **two-stage application process**. In the first stage, applicants are only expected to submit a Concept Note per requirements in Annex B. EDGE will perform an administrative and eligibility check, evaluate concepts and notify applicants of the results of the evaluation. Only selected applicants will be invited to the second stage and submit a Full Application. Selected applicants will receive a full application package and a request for additional information as found in Annex B.

All documents must be sent via email to Natasha Lazovska, Grants Manager at nlazovska@internationaldevelopmentgroup.com and edge_gucs@internationaldevelopmentgroup.com in PDF format of originals. The Concept Note should be sent in both MS Word and in PDF format.

This Request for Application (RFA) is open until **October 31, 2021 16:00 hours CET**.

For the Concept Note stage, applicants must submit the following documents:

- 1. Application/Concept Note with the original stamp and signature in PDF and MS Word (Annex A);**
- 2. Copy of the organization's Annual Financial Report for the year 2020;**
- 3. Copy of the organization's registration document not older than six months;**
- 4. Copy of the project manager's CV;**

Applicants selected to develop a full application will be requested to provide additional information as listed in **Annex B**.

The submitted Concept Note and Full Application must be the original and sole work of the applicant organization. Plagiarism will result in disqualification from the grant competition. Request for grant support for the same or overlapping activities supported by other donor organizations will result in disqualification from the grant competition.

EDGE will retain all materials and documents submitted by applicants. It will not use this information for purposes other than application review and will not share it with other persons or institutions.

After the evaluation process, the decision will be communicated to the Applicants via e-mail.

Please fill out the Concept Note form found as **Annex A** to this RFA.

ANNEX B: REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR SHORT LISTED APPLICANTS

- 1) **Basic Information:** The applicant provides basic contact information and information regarding the status of the organization. General information includes: (1) Legal Name of Organization, (2) Tax ID

number, (3) Mailing Address, (4) Physical Location, (5) Contact Information, (6) Organization's Legal Representative.

- 2) Copy of the organization's chart and by-laws and Power of Attorney of authorized signer
- 3) Copy of organization's legal registration under the local laws
- 4) Copies of the last Annual Financial Reports completed by an authorized/certified accountant. Any other supporting document(s) as requested in the RFA.
- 5) **Project Description (expanded concept note):** The applicant describes the program activities, overarching program elements such as objective of the grant and the linkage to the Project objectives or how the proposed project will contribute to these objectives, results, and indicators for measuring results, intended beneficiaries, and plan for disseminating activity deliverables. The applicant will outline how the proposed elements will support progress toward organizational sustainability.
- 6) **Project Impact:** This section describes the project's impact on the competitiveness and growth of members/clients and where relevant, to the broader industry or value chain.
- 7) **Project Implementation Plan and Milestone Schedule:** Project Implementation Plan is a Gantt chart of planned activities and a timeline with a brief narrative. Milestones are for a verifiable product, task, deliverable, or goal of the recipient. The milestones will generally have three parts: (1) a description of the product, task, deliverable, or goal to be accomplished; (2) a description of how the recipient will document the completion of the product, task, deliverable, or goal; and (3) the amount that EDGE will pay the recipient for the deliverable. Some milestones may also have dates indicating when the milestone is expected or required to be completed. The individual milestone payments do not necessarily have to reflect costs incurred for that milestone, but the combined total of the milestone payments must reflect the total costs expected to be incurred for performance of the award. In other words, the total cost of the award must be reasonable. Milestones must be objectively verifiable regarding completion and quantity and within the recipient's span of management control to successfully complete as designed.
- 8) **Experience and Capacity:** Applicant lists previous and ongoing experience implementing similar activities. This is a critical factor in assessing the capacity of the grantee to implement the activity. Applicant also provides contact information of at least three references that can speak to the applicant's performance and capabilities.
- 9) **Cost and Budget:** This includes a summary of the information provided in the application budget forms and includes total grant request. The recipient must provide a budget, budget narrative and adequate cost, and historical or unit pricing data to establish a reasonable cost and the assurance that the recipient will not realize any profit above actual cost. Within the budget notes, applicant also describes their contribution and any other donor funding and how it will be allocated.
- 10) **Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** Description of the monitoring and evaluation methods implemented by the recipient as well as the tools used to measure and evaluate the program activities, targets, and results.

- 11) **Sustainability Results/Plan:** Description of a vision of how new services will contribute to the organizational sustainability and ability of the applicant to finance USAID-funded activities, after the end of USAID support.
- 12) Certifications and Provisions Required as part of Application in accordance with ADS 303_mav **Certifications, Assurances, Other Statements of the Recipient and Solicitation Standard Provisions :**
- Assurance of Compliance with Laws and Regulations Governing Non-discrimination in Federally Assisted Programs (This assurance applies to Non-U.S. organizations, if any part of the program will be undertaken in the U.S.);
 - Certification Regarding Lobbying (22 CFR 227);
 - Prohibition on Assistance to Drug Traffickers for Covered Countries and Individuals (ADS 206, Prohibition of Assistance to Drug Traffickers);
 - Certification Regarding Terrorist Financing;
 - Certification Regarding Trafficking in Persons;
 - Certification of Recipient;
 - Key Individuals Certifications Narcotics Offenses and Drug Trafficking, (ADS 206.3.10) when applicable;
- 13) **DUNS Number. Guidance on obtaining a DUNS number can be found here:** <https://www.dnb.com/duns-number.html>.
- 14) **Branding Strategy and a Marking Plan.** The applicant must follow the mandatory standard provision for Grant recipients entitled MARKING AND PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS UNDER USAID-FUNDED ASSISTANCE (July 2015) in preparing the Branding and Marking Plan. Proposed Marking Plan may include a request for approval of one or more exceptions to the marking requirements in 2 CFR 700.16
- 15) **References.** At least three references from previous donors, businesses, or other clients will be provided in writing. The list must include name and position of the authorized representative of the referee's organization, and their contact information.