

# REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

## Business Service Organizations

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**Issuance Date:** March 9, 2020

### 1 Increasing Market Employability (IME) Program background

Increasing Market Employability (IME) is a programme of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, implemented by Palladium. The IME programme works on strengthening the business sector in Macedonia, improving the quality of products and services offered, expanding markets and creating an enabling environment in three selected sectors: Sustainable Agriculture, Adventure Tourism, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

The goal of the programme is that more working age women and men, in particular young, are engaged in sustainable, decent employment or self-employment and/or are earning higher incomes. IME will create 2,706 new and higher quality jobs through private sector development in select high-growth sectors, so more working-age Macedonians, in particular women and youth, are engaged in sustainable, decent employment. IME's updated design enables the project to deepen assistance to a smaller number of sectors and leverage complementary Swiss and other donor programmes to target resources to maximize impact and systemic change. To achieve this goal, IME Phase 2 will continue to use a market systems approach to achieve the following outcomes

- **Outcome 1:** *Companies in select sectors grow by improving products and services and expanding markets.*
- **Outcome 2:** *Improved services, policy and regulatory frameworks are conducive to companies' growth in select sectors*
- **Outcome 3:** *Private sector is incentivised to engage youth and women, and equipped with tools for identifying, attracting, and retaining them*

Additional information about the project can be found on the programme's facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/ime.org.mk>

### 2 Background Information

The IME programme is a market systems development to facilitate improvements in the quality and delivery of business support services, access to finance and investment, and the enabling environment so firms can provide inclusive employment opportunities at scale. IME will work with selected Business Service Organizations (BSOs) to address sector-wide constraints in the sustainable agribusiness, adventure tourism and ICT sectors.

IME will support registered business associations and chambers in the three selected sectors under this RFA to undertake a range of activities to address sector-wide challenges such as limited access to markets, lack of well-developed and competitive products, limited linkages on a regional level, lack of business services relevant to their members, etc. In addition, under this RFA, IME will support CSO (clubs) who have prior experience in organizing international and local outdoor/ adventure festivals.

Illustrative areas of support include:

- BSOs that want to expand business support services for their members
- Demand driven requests by BSO members for access to markets to meet with clients.
- Specialized fairs with B2B platforms for meetings between local and foreign companies, outside Macedonia
- Internationalization of the existing local fairs or market place events through familiarization trips or inbound buyer trips, whereby buyers come to Macedonia to increase their knowledge of companies in Macedonia. This may include FAM trips for foreign tour operators to visit Macedonia for the development of new tours, agricultural and food buyers, ICT companies
- Support to annual events of major importance to the companies in the selected three sectors organized by sector business associations. The events may have a regional aspect to support creating linkages among companies in the region.
- Cross-cutting activities or events in the selected 3 sectors organized by business associations or chambers such as ICT in tourism, digitalization in tourism, ICT in agribusiness, etc.
- Outdoor adventure Festivals that focus on improving the offer in the destinations across Macedonia and target both local and international audience; festivals that are linked to promoting adventure sports such as biking, hiking, paragliding, rock-climbing, etc.
- Innovative job fairs in the IME selected sectors where companies will be linked up with universities with a focus on youth and women; improving accessibility to jobs through increasing students' capacity to become more competitive on the job market, and working with employers to enhance conditions in the workplace.
- Support to companies in the IME selected sectors to adopt and improve inclusive and gender-sensitive HR policies and/or practices.

IME's contribution will be in the range of CHF2,000 - 10,000 per intervention, though there may be exceptions. All applicants will be required to cover 25 percent of the total costs either with their own or with third-party cost share.

All interventions will need to demonstrate what impact the intervention can potentially have to increase sales for the applicant and sales in the sector. If the intervention is related to a business association, it needs to demonstrate a clear link to the benefits and services to its members and the sectors it operates. All applicants will need to agree to provide IME all financial details and other relevant indicators made because of the intervention for a period of at least two years.

### **3 Award Information**

Subject to the availability of funds, the range for opportunity fund contracts will be from **CHF 2,000 to 10,000** (payable in Macedonian denars). All payments will be a fixed-sum payable upon completion of deliverables, which will be defined in detail during contract negotiations.

Subject to strategic decision and/or availability of funds, IME reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. Issuing this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of IME, nor does it commit IME to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. Further, IME reserves the right to reject any or all applications received if such actions are in the best interest of SDC and the Swiss Government. Applications are submitted at the risk of the Applicant; should circumstances prevent making an award, all preparation and submission costs are at the Applicant's expense.

#### 4 Selection Criteria

All applicants/BSOs must demonstrate how their intervention will support the IME-supported sectors. Below is a definition of the IME sectors.

Sector	Subsectors
Sustainable Agribusiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Companies that grow, collect, package fresh fruit and vegetables for domestic and export market. This can include growers if they are directly exporting the Fruits and Vegetables (F&amp;V)</li> <li>- Companies that process fruit and vegetables and produce wine for both export and domestic markets</li> <li>- Companies organizing collection, packaging and sales of fresh F&amp;V</li> <li>- Companies organizing the collection, packaging and sales of organic F&amp;V</li> </ul>
Adventure Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tour operators that provide tours for biking, hiking, paragliding, rock-climbing, winter sports, soft adventure tourism</li> <li>- General tour providers that provide tour packages that includes adventure tourism elements</li> <li>- Other tourism-related stakeholders (small businesses, hospitality providers) that provide a service in the adventure tourism sector</li> </ul>
ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Software developers that are outsource companies</li> <li>- Software developing companies for original product development</li> <li>- For-profit organizations that provide training support for ICT staff</li> </ul>

Under this RFA, applicants must be:

- Registered business associations **or** chambers according to Macedonian laws, in the three IME selected sectors (ICT, sustainable agribusiness and adventure/ active tourism) with national coverage and interest.

**or**

- Registered CSOs (civil society organizations/ sports clubs) according to Macedonian laws experienced in organizing outdoor /adventure festivals

**or**

- Registered CSOs or registered private companies that are specialized in providing business services to the private sectors regarding job fairs or HR gender-sensitive policies and practices

Registered business associations **or** chambers must:

- Have experience in conducting similar interventions for their members
- Presents a sound methodology to implement the intervention which is logical and clear with a clear link to the benefits to the applicant's members
- Demonstrates impact in terms of increased sales for their members and wider impact in the sector in terms of jobs and sales

- Demonstrate past cooperation or linkages with similar business association or chambers in the region or globally.

Registered CSOs (civil society organizations/ sports clubs) must have:

- Have experience in the destinations that offer rock climbing, hiking biking, paragliding, and other adventure-oriented activities
- Presents a sound methodology to implement the intervention which is logical and clear with a clear link to the benefits of its members
- Demonstrates solid past experience in organizing outdoor and adventure festivals.

Registered CSOs or registered private companies must:

- Presents a sound methodology to implement the intervention which is logical and clear with a clear link to the benefits to the applicant's members
- Have experience in conducting job fairs; improving accessibility to jobs, and working with employers to enhance conditions in the workplace
- Provide business services to the private sectors related to improve inclusive HR policies and/or practices
- Demonstrates good cooperation with universities in the three IME selected sectors

Applicants must comply with all applicable SDC and Palladium rules and regulations (including procurement regulations, if applicable, branding and marking requirements). Prior to the award under this RFA, successful Applicants should pass Palladium's due diligence requirements and will have to sign a set of documents to confirm full compliance with the SDC and Palladium internal procedures.

## 5 Application and Submission Information

All applicants should submit applications electronically, via email to: [ContactIME@thepalladiumgroup.com](mailto:ContactIME@thepalladiumgroup.com)

For activities, events or festivals that need to be implemented from May to August 2020, submission date is March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

For activities, events or festivals that need to be implemented from October to December 2020, submission date is September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

IME will review all received applications but no later than 30 days from the submission date. Applicants should submit any questions concerning this RFA in writing, electronically, via email to [ContactIME@thepalladiumgroup.com](mailto:ContactIME@thepalladiumgroup.com)

All applications in response to this RFA shall consist of a technical proposal (Concept Note) and a budget proposal. The technical proposal must be submitted in English. The cost proposal shall be submitted as a separate file from the technical proposal. Applicants are advised to fill in the budget form as detailed as possible. Lump sums will not be accepted. Please contact IME at [ContactIME@thepalladiumgroup.com](mailto:ContactIME@thepalladiumgroup.com) email to obtain the Concept Note Form and Budget Template.

Completed applications should be sent to Increasing Market Employability (IME) Project, Bulevar Ilinden 9, 1000 Skopje, via e-mail: [ContactIME@thepalladiumgroup.com](mailto:ContactIME@thepalladiumgroup.com)

For additional information contact Irena Bojadzieva, Operations Officer at Tel: +389 70 385 277 in Skopje who will direct you to the most appropriate technical person to provide more information or answer your questions.

## **6 Award and Administration Information**

Successful applicant(s) will receive written notice from the IME Operations Officer informing the applicant(s) whether they have passed the Concept Note phase. For those applicants that have passed the Concept Note phase, IME will inform the applicant if they will make the award with or without negotiation to finalize the details of the award. Negotiations conducted after the receipt of an application do not constitute an obligation on the part of IME to award a contract. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing by the Operations Officer.