

Subject: Annual Program Statement (APS) Number: APS-WATIH-948
Title of Opportunity: Covid-19 Rapid Response from Financial Institutions & Advisors
Issue Date: December 22, 2020
Deadline for Questions: February 28, 2021 5:00pm West Africa Time (WAT)
Deadline for Submitting EOIs: March 31, 2021 5:00pm WAT

The West Africa Trade and Investment Hub Activity (herein referred to as “the Trade Hub”) funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is accepting Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from eligible applicants to fund a program entitled *Covid-19 Rapid Response from Financial Institutions & Advisors*. To be eligible for award, the applicant must meet the eligibility requirements detailed in Section C of the APS. Awards will be made to eligible and responsible applicants submitting EOIs and, subsequently, full applications that best meet the program objectives and evaluation criteria contained in Sections A and E of Attachment 1 respectively. Only applicants submitting EOIs approved by the Trade Hub will be invited to submit full applications.

For purposes of this APS, “Grantee” is synonymous with “Recipient”. Eligible applicants interested in submitting an EOI are encouraged to read this funding opportunity thoroughly to understand a) the type of program sought; b) the EOI and full application submission requirements; and c) the evaluation process. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that it has received the APS from the internet in its entirety. The Trade Hub bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from the transmission or conversion process.

Each applicant must submit its EOI using the form available at <http://smart.fluxx.io/apply/watihcovid>. The form requires each applicant to provide general information about its organization, contact details for its authorized representative and project point of contact, and a summarized description of its proposed activity for initial consideration by the Trade Hub, including the estimated amount it is requesting from the Trade Hub in grant funding and the amount it will provide in leverage/cost share. Regarding the latter, please note the minimum 1:1 match requirement (a match of up to 5:1 or more is preferred). Once the EOI form is submitted, a notification will appear on the screen confirming it was received by the Trade Hub.

If you face any difficulties submitting an EOI, please contact the Trade Hub’s grants department at grants@westafricatih.com. Any guidance provided to an applicant by the grants department or any Trade Hub staff prior to EOI submission will be strictly limited to technical issues with SMART only. After submission, the Trade Hub will only contact applicants who submit EOIs that it considers practical for further development/negotiation. EOIs must be received no later than the APS expiry date stated above.

Any questions concerning this APS must be submitted in writing to grants@westafricatih.com. Issuance of this APS does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Trade Hub nor does it commit the Trade Hub to pay for any costs incurred by a potential applicant while preparing/submitted comments, questions, or a full application. All preparation/submission costs are at the applicant's expense. Each EOI and full application submitted is at the risk of the applicant.

Thank you for your interest in this opportunity.

Sincerely,



Michael Clements
Chief of Party
West Africa Trade and Investment Hub

Attachments

Attachment 1: Annual Program Statement

Attachment 2: EOI Submission Template

Attachment 3: Trade Hub Performance Indicators Table

Attachment 4: Guide on Gender and Youth Integration for Applicants

Attachment 5: Trade Hub Leverage & In-Kind Contribution Policy

Attachment 6: Provisions

Attachment 7: Certifications

Attachment 1: Annual Program Statement (APS)

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Trade Hub activity is to promote investments, expand regional and international trade, and create employment in West Africa. This APS focuses on advancing this purpose within the context of Covid-19.

2. Background

Program: The USAID-funded Trade Hub is a five-year trade and investment activity that aims to catalyze private sector investments in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in West Africa, thereby increasing SME sales, boosting exports, and creating jobs, particularly for women—all of which are in line with [USAID's Journey To Self-Reliance \(J2SR\)](#). To increase private sector investments, the Trade Hub will co-invest \$96 million in grants, of which approximately US\$14.4 million will be for co-investments with Financial Institutions and Advisors (FI&A) that are engaged in building operational and cash flow resilience among SMEs affected by the SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) pandemic.

Context: Based on information produced by the African Development Bank, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, and McKinsey & Company, the economy in West Africa is expected to contract by 2% in 2020 compared to expected growth of 4% prior to the outbreak of Covid-19. Social distancing and movement restrictions implemented to slow the spread of the pandemic are negatively affecting SMEs, supply chains, and livelihoods in West Africa where: a) 40% and 20% of the workforce are engaged in agriculture and trade respectively and b) on average, 80% of jobs are informal and rely on face-to-face exchanges. Further, Covid-19 has more negatively impacted women due to their increased exposure to sectors greatly affected by social distancing and movement restrictions, such as accommodation, food services, trade, and manufacturing.

Action: The Trade Hub, as its co-investment, intends to award grants valued between US\$250,000 and US\$2 million to FI&As that can mobilize further private capital aimed at building the operational and cash flow resilience of SMEs in West Africa within the context of Covid-19. This is expected to result in:

- Job preservation and ultimately job creation
- Recovery of sales to pre-pandemic levels and, ultimately, faster sales growth and exports
- Preservation and ultimately growth of SMEs in the mission-critical sectors of food and nutrition security, logistics, and global value chains
- Business resilience in the form of sales diversification and growth, margin expansion, faster cash conversion cycle, and prudent discretionary capital spending due to long-term technical governance provided by FI&As
- Loss reversal and profit growth, and, ultimately, positive free cash flow generation and therefore cash build up for liquidity against future risks and repayment of debt obligations

Preference will be given to FI&As submitting Expressions of Interest (EOIs) that target at least one of the sectors and geographies below, contribute to at least one of the objectives in Section A.3, meet the eligibility criteria in Section C, and respond most effectively to the evaluation criteria in Section E.

Sectors: FI&As are defined as commercial banks, microfinance institutions, investment services, accelerator and incubator services, and private equity and venture capital funds, including impact funds. Sectors the Trade Hub can co-invest in with FI&As include agro-allied (e.g., production, field services, processing), logistics (e.g., post-harvest warehousing, quality control technology and services, cold chain, cross-border transport, market platform technology), inclusive financial solutions (e.g., fintech), and light manufacturing (e.g., food preparation and packaging, consumer product goods, clean tech, apparel and textile). Preference is for SMEs with a high number of dependents (e.g., farmers, factory workers, distributors) or operations in global value chains. Restricted industries include live timber, trawling, mining, gambling, and other industries prohibited under USAID regulations.

Geographies: The Trade Hub operates in 18 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauretania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Within Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger, and Nigeria, preference is for SMEs with operations in Zones of Influence (ZOI). (Please visit the Trade Hub's website at westafricatradehub.com for details.)

3. Objectives

The Trade Hub's primary objectives for its Covid-19 response from F&IAs are as follow:

Objective 1: Ensuring Access to Finance During the Covid-19 Crisis

There is currently limited access to investment and working capital for new projects or expansions and for sustaining ongoing operations in the face of Covid-19 related cash flow disruptions. Virtually all companies in West Africa are suffering from significant cash-flow disruptions and financial institutions are reluctant to extend credit to distressed companies without some form of risk mitigation.

The Trade Hub is therefore offering:

- Risk mitigation grants (first-loss) to financial institutions to expand the availability of working capital for SMEs.
- Grants to firms that assist companies in restructuring distressed financing lines or in obtaining new financing lines to support their operations. This includes capital expenditures (e.g., value-additive processing machines), working capital (e.g., raw material inputs), and performance improvement (e.g., technical assistance).

Objective 2: Retaining Employment During the Covid-19 Crisis

Combined with reduced demand and revenues resulting from Covid-19 related operational closures and shifts in the types of products being demanded in the market, companies also face increased costs to implement new health procedures to protect their employees and customers. Companies have already made, or will need to make, difficult decisions related to reducing their workforce and compensation or potentially closing altogether.

The Trade Hub is therefore offering:

- Grants to companies for equipment and/or vocational training required to pivot to new types of production in order to sustain their workforce/employees.
- Grants to companies to implement physical and operational changes to their operations and processes that will allow them to safely operate at reduced capacities.
- Grants to companies to allow firms to maintain large formal workforces and/or extensive sourcing operations for a time-limited period.

Objective 3: Leveraging the Private Sector in the Response to Covid-19

There are significant supply shortages for both critical medical supplies and services as well as for agricultural inputs and food staples given border closures and export restrictions.

The Trade Hub is therefore offering:

- Grants to companies to scale-up companies engaged in the direct response to Covid-19, including in areas such as manufacturing of medical apparel/PPE.
- Grants to companies that supply agricultural and other products in short supply in local and regional markets as a result of the impacts of Covid-19.

4. Illustrative Activities

Illustrative examples of entities and activities that may be supported by the Trade Hub through this APS include:

- A Ghana-based investment firm co-investing private capital at an 8:1 ratio in export-oriented SMEs, preserving over 2,000 jobs, of which more than 1,500 are women.
- A guarantee fund intending to use the Trade Hub as part of a larger first loss capital to catalyze a US\$300 million Covid-19 guarantee facility for banks, including Tier 2 and Tier 3 SME banks in West Africa.
- An impact fund intending to use a Trade Hub grant to blend capital, resulting in more affordable loans for key mini-champion SMEs in agriculture and logistics.
- A Burkina Faso-based fund intending to use a Trade Hub grant for a Technical Assistance SME Facility to build resilience.

Considerations: FI&As are urged to consider the following in their EOI submissions:

- A clear description of the problem that is aligned with the Program, Context, Sectors, and Geographies.
- A clear description of the proposed solution that is aligned with the Objectives in Section A.3 and USAID's J2SR. Preference will be given to solutions that structure the grant as catalytic and protect against moral hazard.
- An outline of credible, practical, cost-effective, and timely actions with preference for solutions that constructively detail the path to SMEs' operational and cash flow resilience and credibly convey immediate deployment.
- A pre-selected pool of SME investments with preference for ready investments.
- Mobilization of substantial private capital investment for ready investments, with preference for at least 5:1 but a minimum of 1:1.
- Capital efficiency in a grant request of between US\$250,000 and US\$2 million.
- Breadth and depth of inclusiveness, including preservation and ultimately creation of jobs for women and youth, particularly in Zones of Influence.
- Promotion of trade, with preference for global value chains that boost trans-Atlantic trade and investments including transfer of knowledge, quality control, and value addition.
- Incorporation of climate-responsive investments, including consumption efficiency, waste reduction, carbon footprint management, and biodiversity protection.
- Advancement of food and nutrition security that promotes general health, well-being, and self-reliance.

5. Authorizing Legislation

Awards are authorized in accordance with Creative Associates International, Inc.'s contract with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

6. Additional Information

- a. **Monitoring requirement:** Potential grantees will be required to detail how they will monitor the impact of their proposed activity, notably the resources that will be required to ensure a high standard of data is being recorded and reported based on set indicators in adherence to the Trade Hub's Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. (See Attachment 3: Trade Hub Performance Indicators Table)
- b. **Gender:** Activities under the Trade Hub seek to reduce gender disparities in access to and benefits from investments. To that end, potential applicants will be expected to outline how their activities will increase access to technologies to improve production, expand access to and enhance women's skills and access to better paid opportunities. Applicants who demonstrate the potential for large scale impacts on women will be prioritized.

If selected to submit a full application, applicants will be expected to participate in a training that the activity will provide on gender and work with Trade Hub designated staff in the co-creation phase to ensure gender is adequately addressed in the proposal. (See Attachment 4: Guide on Gender and Youth Integration for Applicants).

- c. **Youth:** In addition to promoting gender equality, the Trade Hub also strongly promotes integrating a growing youth population within the workforce (age 15 to 29). Applicants should describe how youth

will benefit from the grant and serve as agents for sustained business growth. Applicants that include elements to promote vocational training and internship programs, offer technical training to facilitate youth integration, and/or target private-sector investment to meet workforce demand of the youth will be prioritized. (See Attachment 4: Guide on Gender and Youth Integration for Applicants).

- d. **Environmental considerations:** All activities implemented under the Trade Hub must adhere to 22 CFR 216 on environmental compliance. Please refer to the following links for additional information:

Environmental compliance background information:

https://www.usaid.gov/our_work/environment/compliance

Information on how the Agency will ensure environmental soundness and compliance in design and implementation when required by the 22 CFR 216 determination (ADS 204):

<http://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/agency-policy/series-200>

- e. **Source Nationality:** Grantees will be required to procure all commodities and services in accordance with 22 CFR 228 “Rules on Procurement of Commodities and Services Financed by USAID Federal Program Funds.” The authorized source for procurement is Geographic Code 937, which means that the procurement of commodities and/or services can be from the United States, the recipient country, and developing countries other than advanced developing countries, but excluding any country that is a prohibited source.

See ADS 310 for further details (<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1876/310.pdf>).

Profit/Income: Grantees must account for all income earned under the implementation of the grant in accordance with 2 CFR 200.307 (or the Standard Provision entitled Program Income for non-U.S. organizations). Income earned under the implementation of a grant shall be added to the Activity. According to 2 CFR 200.80, Program Income means gross income earned by the recipient that is directly generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the award (see exclusions in 2 CFR 200.307 (f) and (g)). Program income includes, but is not limited to, income from fees for services performed, the use or rental of real or personal property acquired under the award being implemented, the sale of commodities or items fabricated under the award being implemented, license fees and royalties on patents and copyrights, principal and interest on loans made with funds received from the Trade Hub. Interest earned on advances of funds received from the Trade Hub is not program income. Except as otherwise provided in Federal statutes, regulations or the terms and conditions of the award, program income does not include rebates, credits, discounts, and interest earned on any of them. See also 2 CFR 200.407.

B. AWARD INFORMATION

1. Application Process

An applicant interested in this opportunity must submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) electronically to the Trade Hub using the form available at <https://smart.fluxx.io/apply/watihcovid>. The form requests the applicant to provide general information about its organization, contact details for its authorized representative and project point of contact, and a summarized description of its proposed project for initial consideration by the Trade Hub, including the estimated amount it is requesting from the Trade Hub and the amount it will co-invest in leverage/cost share.

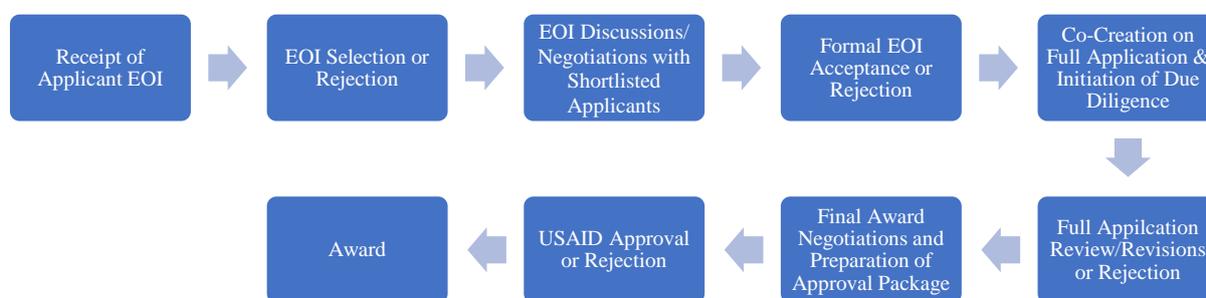
EOI submissions will be received on a rolling basis from the date of issuance up until the closing date stated on the cover page of this APS. The Trade Hub will only contact applicants who submit EOIs considered practical for further development/negotiation. Therefore, applicants should not contact the Trade Hub after their submission. Please note that EOIs submitted after the closing date will be marked “late”. See Section D.6 for the Trade Hub’s policy on late submissions.

EOI submissions will be evaluated by the Trade Hub against the objectives in Section A.3 and the evaluation criteria in Section E.1. If an applicant’s EOI is selected for further consideration, the Trade Hub will contact the applicant to initiate negotiations and seek clarification on the proposed project. If, following these discussions,

the Trade Hub determines that the project should be developed further, the EOI will be formally accepted and the applicant will begin co-creating a full application in collaboration with technical staff from the Trade Hub. Concurrently, the Trade Hub will request information (e.g., registration documents, audited financial statements) from the applicant(s) and require evidence (e.g., a fully executed loan agreement and/or an investment commitment) from the financial institution(s) or outside investor(s), including their contact details, to complete its pre-award due diligence process and determine the applicant’s viability as a grantee and co-investment partner. This will also help inform a final pre-award assessment that determines the appropriate award mechanism.

The commencement of co-creation and work on a full application does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Trade Hub. Once a full application is received from the applicant, it will again be evaluated against the objectives in Section A.3 and the evaluation criteria in Section E.1. After evaluations and any necessary revisions to the application, the Trade Hub will work with USAID to make a final determination on whether to award a grant agreement.

The graphic below illustrates the Trade Hub’s pre-award process from EOI submission to award:



2. Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Contemplated

Subject to the availability of funds, the total estimated amount of funding available is USD14,400,000. The total value of each award is estimated to range from USD250,000 to USD2,000,000. As the amount of an award is subject to negotiation, a final negotiated award amount may or may not fall within this range. Furthermore, the Trade Hub is not obligated to issue awards up to the amount of funds available.

The Trade Hub reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted against approved Expressions of Interest.

3. Period of Performance

The start date of any award resulting from this APS will be upon signature; however, all awards are anticipated to be approved and signed by late August 2021. The duration of each award is subject to the program requirements and negotiations. Preference will be given to applicants proposing quick mobilization of private capital and disbursement of investments.

4. Award Mechanisms

It is expected that all grants awarded under this APS will be performance-based with appropriate means of verification for agreed upon milestones. These milestones will be determined in collaboration with the applicant prior to signing the grant agreement. However, the Trade Hub’s final determination on award mechanism will be based on its assessment of an applicant’s risk prior to award. If the Trade Hub’s assessment identifies weaknesses or deficiencies that call into question the applicant’s ability to manage an award, the Trade Hub may elect to remove the applicant from consideration under this funding opportunity or select a mechanism more appropriate for the applicant’s current financial, administrative, and operational capacity.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

To be eligible for award under this opportunity, an applicant must demonstrate that it falls into one of the grantee categories below:

- a. Private Sector Companies – both local and international firms.
- b. Foreign Organizations (referred to as non-U.S. NGOs): either nonprofit or for-profit organizations that meet the definition in 2 CFR 200.47.
- c. Non-profit Organizations: Organizations that meet the definition of 2 CFR 200.70.
- d. For-Profit Organizations

Government entities are not eligible to apply.

In addition, an applicant must be officially registered and working in compliance with all applicable civil and fiscal regulations, including but not limited to pertinent local laws and status. In lieu of official registration, an applicant may still be eligible for award if it shows proof of effort to secure registration, exemption from registration, or cause for why registration is not optional or practicable.

2. Cost Sharing or Leverage

Cost share/leverage **is required** under this funding opportunity.

All grants must include cost share/leverage of private sector resources, assets, capabilities, and expertise. The value of private sector resources, assets, capabilities, and expertise (cash and in-kind) contributed to the implementation of the grant activity must at least equal (1:1 match) the monetary resources provided by the Trade Hub; however, co-investments with an up to 5:1 leverage ratio or higher are preferred. It is strongly encouraged that companies/organizations propose private sector resources, assets, capabilities, and expertise that exceed the 1:1 match minimum. As such, proposed projects that exceed the 1:1 match minimum will be prioritized.

The Cost-Share/Leverage may be structured into grants (i.e., starting three to six months after grant award) when markets revive and trade resumes.

Cost-Share or Leverage can be either cash (e.g., from operating cash flow, donor funds or other), rate discounts, services, material or third-party contributions, such as equity investors loans from financial institutions, or a combination thereof. Other USG funding sources are not accepted for cost-share or leverage requirements. Examples of in-kind contributions that may be counted include:

- Commodities;
- Use of training or other purpose-specific facilities necessary to a program's implementation;
- Value of time donated by technical consultants or company employees whose work and expertise are necessary to a project;
- Value of salaries for staff dedicated to a project;
- Technology, communications and capital assets;
- Intellectual property rights; and/or
- Licenses.

When determining whether the private sector resources and contributions can count toward meeting the 1:1 (preferably up to 5:1 or more) matching requirement, the Trade Hub will consider the following criteria:

Attribution and Additionality

- The contribution must support and advance the objectives and activities of the project;
- The contribution must be based upon the active engagement of the private sector partner in the design and development of the partnership;

- The application of the resources and contributions to activities under the proposed alliance must be attributable to the private sector entity's anticipated or actual engagement with the Trade Hub; and
- The provision or application of the resources must be qualitatively and/or quantitatively different than what the entity would have done in the absence of anticipated or actual engagement with the Trade Hub.

Nature and Origin – The contributions and resources must be private in nature and origin, come from a critical and core partner to the partnership; and come from one or more of the following sources:

- Private for-profit entities such as a business, corporation, or private firm;
- Private equity or private financial institutions, including private investment firms, mutual funds, or insurance companies;
- Private investors (individuals or groups);
- Private business or industry associations, including but not limited to chambers of commerce and related types of entities;

Value Proposition and Development Impact – The resources and contributions mobilized from the private sector should, in combination with the support provided by the Trade Hub, provide the partnership with a comparative advantage in achieving significant and sustainable impact on the targeted development challenge.

Measurability – The resources and contributions must be something of value that can be measured in some form that permits evaluation of the contribution's impact on achieving desired results.

Composition – Most of the private sector resources should come in the form of cash, equity capital, with a letter of intent from the equity investor, and or debt capital with a letter of commitment from the financial institution.

Timing of Private Sector Resource Commitments and Contributions – The mobilization, contribution, provision and/or application of the resources can take place at any time during the development or implementation of the partnership.

Cost-share and leverage comprise resources, assets, capabilities, and expertise that are not part of the amount in grant funds contributed by the Trade Hub. They are, however, treated differently:

- a. Leverage strictly comes from the private sector, while cost-share does not;
- b. Cost-share is binding and auditable under an award agreement, while leverage is not;
- c. The determination of what constitutes leverage is based on the objectives, considerations, and criteria set forth at: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/15396/GDA%20APS_APS-OAA-16-000001_2016-2018.pdf. The determination of what constitutes cost-share is set for at 2 CFR 200.306 and ADS 303.3.10.

For further guidance, see Attachment 5: Trade Hub Leverage & In-Kind Contribution Policy.

3. Limit on Number of EOI Submissions

An eligible organization may submit only one EOI. Please note that issuance of this APS does not in any way obligate the Trade Hub to pay for costs incurred by a prospective applicant to prepare and submit an EOI or subsequent full application.

D. APPLICATION & SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Submission of Initial EOI

As a first step, interested applicants are requested to submit an EOI using the online form available at <https://smart.fluxx.io/apply/watihcovid>. A link to a Microsoft Word EOI template titled "EOI Template (COVID)" is available at the top of the online form. The template, which contains detailed instructions specific to this APS, has also been included as Attachment 2. As the online form cannot be saved, applicants are

encouraged to use the MS Word template to prepare their EOI, copy and paste their finalized language into the fields in the online form, then click “Submit”. A notification will then appear on the screen confirming that the EOI was received by the program’s grants management system, SMART. The Trade Hub reserves the right to reject any EOI not submitted via the online form in SMART.

The Trade Hub will accept and give equal attention to English, French, and Portuguese submitted EOIs.

2. Submission of Full Application

For applicants that make it past the EOI stage, their full application must be submitted in two separate parts: a) Technical Application and b) Cost Application. To prepare both parts, an applicant must use the templates provided by the Trade Hub, which provide instructions on the required content and format. An applicant not adhering to these instructions risks being considered nonresponsive to the requirements of the APS and eliminated from further consideration.

The Trade Hub will accept and give equal attention to English, French, and Portuguese submitted full applications.

3. Submission Guidance and Assistance

After an applicant’s EOI is accepted, the Trade Hub may provide guidance to the applicant while it prepares a full application. When such guidance is offered, the Trade Hub’s role is limited to facilitating the application process, ensuring that proposed activities contribute to the program objectives stated in Section A, and co-designing activities with the applicant. Actual preparation and submission of the technical and cost applications is the strict responsibility of the applicant.

4. Method for Submission

The Trade Hub will only receive EOIs electronically via its online grants management system, SMART. If the applicant’s EOI is accepted, its authorized representative and project point of contact will receive a username and password for SMART if they have not already been registered in the system. At that stage, they will be able to use the system to share organization details (e.g., proof of registration and other due diligence documents), access technical and cost application templates, and formally submit their applications electronically.

An applicant should retain for its records one (1) copy of its EOI/full application and all enclosures that accompany it.

Should an applicant experience any difficulties submitting an EOI or a full application, it should contact the Grants Department via email at (grants@westafricatih.com).

5. Registration Requirements for U.S. Government Funding

To be eligible for award under this solicitation, a non-U.S. NGO applicant may be required to obtain a valid Duns & Bradstreet number (DUNS). Information regarding DUNS registration can be found at <http://www.dnb.com/get-a-duns-number.html>. The program will notify non-U.S. NGO applicants of DUNS requirements where applicable. A U.S. NGO applicant must provide a valid DUNS number, be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting its application, and continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has: a) an active award with the U.S. Government or b) an application or plan under consideration by the U.S. Government or a U.S. Government implementing partner. Information regarding SAM registration can be found at: <http://www.sam.gov>.

If DUNS is required, the Trade Hub will not issue an award to an applicant until it has complied with this requirement. As the registration process may take several weeks to complete, applicants are encouraged to register early. Please note that completion of an early registration does not constitute any commitment on the part of the Trade Hub to make an award.

6. Submission Deadline

Applicants must submit their EOI prior to the closing date listed on the cover page. EOIs that are submitted late are at risk of not being considered for review. Late submissions are marked as “late”.

7. Funding Restrictions

An applicant that receives an award under this APS is responsible for ensuring that it only incurs post-award costs that were approved and determined to be allowable, allocable, and reasonable by the Trade Hub during pre-award negotiations. Furthermore, the Trade Hub will not reimburse a successful applicant for any costs it incurs prior to the date it signs a grant agreement with the Trade Hub.

8. Questions & Answers

Any questions concerning this APS must be submitted in writing to grants@westafricatih.com. All questions must be received no later than the Deadline for Questions/Clarifications stated in the cover letter. Responses to questions received prior to this deadline may be furnished to all potential applicants through periodic amendments to the APS.

Any information related to this APS that is provided to a prospective applicant may be furnished to all other prospective applicants as an amendment to the APS on condition that: a) it is required to submit an EOI and/or b) its exclusion would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicant.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Criteria

Each EOI received by the closing date will initially be reviewed against the objectives stated in Section A.3, the eligibility criteria outlined in “Section C. Eligibility Information”, and the evaluation criteria below. EOIs that fail to adequately respond to at least one of these objectives and the eligibility and evaluation criteria risk being removed from further consideration. EOIs that are incomplete will be determined nonresponsive and also not considered for co-creation.

Full applications submitted by eligible, responsive applicants that advance beyond the EOI stage will be reviewed in accordance with the criteria set forth below:

No.	Description	Scoring
1	Relevant Investment Experience Points assigned will be based on the applicant’s: 1) demonstrable strong experience investing in or providing investment services to SMEs in relevant sectors and/or geographies, 2) demonstrable success improving SMEs’ business performance using strategic governance and financial management, and 3) favorable market reputation, especially in sectors and geographies targeted.	0-10%
2	Readiness to Implement Points assigned will be based on the extent to which the co-investment project is cost-efficient, practical, implementable, and can be implemented rapidly to curb the impact of Covid-19.	0-20%
3	Private Capital Mobilization Points assigned will be based on the amount of private capital leveraged to invest in numerous SMEs affected by Covid-19. As such, applicants must show substantial funding leverage of at least a 1:1 ratio. Activities with higher leverage ratios are strongly preferred. Cash leverage is preferred over in-kind leverage. Therefore, the higher the cash contributions, the higher the application will score on this criterion.	0-20%

4	<p>Job Retention and/or Creation Points assigned will be based on the projected impact the proposed co-investment project will have on jobs. The following key factors will be taken into consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of jobs retained • Percent of lost jobs recouped and time to reach pre-Covid-19 job levels • Number of jobs created • Applicant’s ability to describe the project’s anticipated impact on livelihoods 	0-20%
5	<p>Gender and Youth Approach Points assigned will be based on the extent to which women and youth, as direct and indirect beneficiaries, will be engaged/participate in the proposed co-investment project. Also, a target of at least 50% job creation for women and 50% for youth must be met.</p>	0-10%
6	<p>SME Business Resilience Points assigned will be based on the applicant’s ability to address as many of the following key factors as possible in its proposed co-investment project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in SME business operations resulting in sustainable free cash flows • Improvement in sales/revenues to pre-Covid-19 levels • Promotion of climate resilience • Promotion of food and nutrition security • Provision of medical products and services in the context of Covid-19 • Promotion of global value chains and regional trade • Focus on Trade Hub’s targeted geographic areas (e.g., ZOI, fragile and frail states, etc.) 	0-20%
Total Score		100%

2. Evaluation Process

An applicant’s EOI/full application will be reviewed by the Trade Hub’s program staff to ensure that the activities proposed contribute to the program objectives in Section A.3 and the evaluation criteria above. During these reviews and co-creation, the applicant may be requested to respond to clarifying questions and/or submit a revised full application. However, the Trade Hub reserves the right to accept an EOI/full application without requesting clarifications or additional detail.

The Chief of Party or authorized delegatee makes the final decision on all awards made under this APS.

3. Conflict of Interest

Throughout the evaluation process, the Trade Hub will take every step to ensure that Trade Hub staff do not have any conflicts of interest or the appearance of such with any organization/individual submitting an EOI/application in response to this APS. An individual shall be considered to have the appearance of a conflict of interest if that individual or that individual’s spouse, partner, child, close friend, or relative works for, is negotiating to work for, and/or has a financial interest (including being an unpaid member of a Board of Directors) in any organization that has submitted an EOI/application for review by the Trade Hub. Trade Hub staff shall neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from any applicant.

F. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Award Notices

For an applicant progressing beyond the EOI stage, a Notice of Intent to co-create will be provided to the point of contact listed in the full application submitted by the apparently successful applicant. **Please note that such notification does not constitute or guarantee an award.** An apparently successful applicant must first demonstrate that it possesses or has the ability to obtain the necessary management competence to practice

mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided. To this end, the applicant may be required to submit additional information about its organization (e.g., Articles of Incorporation or other documentation substantiating the legal character of the applicant or key individuals within its organization) for vetting purposes. Final issuance of an award will be contingent upon the timely receipt of the information requested and the successful completion of the Program's vetting process and pre-award capacity and risk assessment.

The Trade Hub will complete the pre-award capacity and risk assessment while the applicant's full application is being reviewed. The results will be used by the Trade Hub to make a responsibility determination and, if a decision is made to proceed with award, select the appropriate award mechanism.

2. Award Administration

Any award resulting from this APS will be administered in accordance with the provisions in Attachment 7.

3. Reporting

Reporting requirements (including a reporting schedule) will be provided in the award document for any award resulting from this APS. The specific reports required will depend on the award type and project duration; however, examples may include the following:

- Quarterly Report(s) with updates on progress made during the reporting period, photos of program activities, challenges encountered during implementation, activities planned for the next reporting period, etc.
- Final Program Report including lessons learned, success stories, any impacts achieved vis-à-vis the funded project's goal and objectives, etc.
- Financial Reports including planned obligations, actual expenditures, funds remaining, etc. as well as a detailed Final Financial Report.
- Reporting on program income (if required).

Please note that issuance of final payment will be contingent upon the Trade Hub's receipt and acceptance of the Final Financial Report and/or Final Program Report. For Fixed Amount Awards (FAAs), final payment is also contingent on the completion of the final milestone and acceptance of its deliverables/means of verification.

The Trade Hub reserves the right to co-create with and fund one, some, or none of the applications received. The Trade Hub does not use third-party persons, companies, or organizations to facilitate grant submissions. The Trade Hub does not charge a fee for any grant submission.

Please report any suspected fraudulent activity to grants@westafricatih.com or hotline@createdc.com.

Attachment 2: EOI Submission Template

Click [here](#) for *EOI Submission Template*.

Attachment 3: Trade Hub Performance Indicators Table

Click [here](#) for *Trade Hub Performance Indicators Table*.

Attachment 4: Guide on Gender and Youth Integration for Applicants

Click [here](#) for *Guide on Gender and Youth Integration for Applicants*.

Attachment 5: Trade Hub Leverage & In-Kind Contribution Policy

Click [here](#) for *Trade Hub Leverage & In-Kind Contribution Policy*.

Attachment 6: Provisions

Standard Provisions for U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/303maa.pdf>

Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/303mab.pdf>

Standard Provisions for Fixed Amount Awards to Nongovernmental Organizations
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/303mat.pdf>

Attachment 7: Certifications

A. CONFLICT OF INTEREST AVOIDANCE CERTIFICATION

When signing a grant agreement with the Trade Hub, a successful applicant's authorized representative will also be required to sign a certification affirming that the entity she/he represents (the Grantee) does not have any conflicts of interest pertinent to the award. Such conflicts would include, for instance:

- Personal or professional relationships with entities that could directly benefit from the award;
- Personal or professional relationships with other staff persons involved in administering the award;
- Personal or professional relationships with government officials that may have influence or oversight of matters directly pertaining to the award;
- Holding formal or informal positions in organizations that would be relevant to the award;
- Holding any financial interest in any entity that would be impacted by the award.

By virtue of the Grantee's actions in carrying out the award, the authorized representative's certification will affirm that she/he would endeavor to ensure that conflicts of interest or their appearance do not arise, understanding that such conflicts of interest would arise when there are situations in which the Grantee is involved in multiple interests (financial, personal, or otherwise) that could be conceived of as corrupting the motivation of herself/himself or the Grantee in the discharge of duties pertinent to the award.

Should such real or perceived conflicts arise, the authorized representative's certification will affirm that the Grantee will immediately inform the Chief of Party of the Activity to discuss the matter.

B. OTHER CERTIFICATIONS

When signing a grant agreement with the Trade Hub, a successful applicant will be required to sign the *Certifications, Assurances, Representations, and Other Statements of the Recipient* referenced here: <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mav.pdf>.