

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Subject RFP #:	RFP-CATALYZE-Ethiopia-2021-0240
RFP Issue Date:	Dec 3, 2021
Terms of Reference / Specifications:	Enhancement of selected job placement platforms using job boards in their service delivery in Ethiopia
Project	Job Platforms Enhancement
The Company	Palladium International, LLC
Country of Performance	Ethiopia
Closing Date and Time	January 03, 2022 05:00PM, East Africa Time
Questions Deadline	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Bidders' Conference	Dec 20, 2021 please submit your indication of interest to attend the conference to EthiopiaMS4G.procurement@thepalladiumgroup.com
	N/A
Details for Submission	Submissions will be accepted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Electronically: email to EthiopiaMS4G.procurement@thepalladiumgroup.com <input type="checkbox"/> In hard copy (sealed bids)
Offer Validity Period	6 Months

Thank you for your interest in the above procurement. USAID CATALYZE Ethiopia: Market Systems for Growth (MS4G) funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Palladium invites you to submit a proposal for the scope of work attached in Annex A. Your proposal must be valid for the Validity Period.

Please email your notice of intention to participate in bidders conference prior to the conference date stated above.

Please submit your proposal in accordance with the Details for Submission above by the Closing Date and Time. This RFP in no way obligates Palladium to award a contract nor does it commit Palladium to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of a proposal. Palladium bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.

Yours sincerely,

CATALYZE Procurement Team

Terms and conditions

1. Proposal Conditions

By submitting a proposal, potential suppliers are bound by these terms and conditions. Potential suppliers must submit offers with all details provided in English and with prices quoted in a single currency.

2. Proposal Lodgement

The Company may grant extensions to the Closing Time at its discretion. The Company will not consider any quotes received after the Closing Time specified in the RFP unless the Company determines to do so otherwise at its sole discretion.

3. Evaluation

The Company may review all proposal to confirm compliance with this RFP and to determine the best proposal in the circumstances.

4. Alterations

The Company may decline to consider a proposal in which there are alterations, erasures, illegibility, ambiguity or incomplete details.

5. The Company's Rights

The Company may, at its discretion, discontinue the RFP; decline to accept any proposal; terminate, extend or vary its selection process; decline to issue any contract; seek information or negotiate with any potential supplier that has not been invited to submit a proposal; satisfy its requirement separately from the RFP process; terminate negotiations at any time and commence negotiations with any other potential supplier; evaluate proposals as the Company sees appropriate (including with reference to information provided by the prospective supplier or from a third party); and negotiate with any one or more potential suppliers.

6. Amendments and Queries

The Company may amend, or clarify any aspect of the RFP prior to the RFP Closing Time by issuing an amendment to the RFP in the same manner as the original RFP was distributed. Such amendments or clarifications will, as far as is practicable be issued simultaneously to all parties.

Any queries regarding this RFP should be directed to the Contact Person identified on the cover page of this RFP.

7. Clarification

The Company may, at any time prior to execution of a contract, seek clarification or additional information from, and enter into discussions and negotiations with, any or all potential suppliers in relation to their proposals. In doing so, the Company will not allow any potential supplier to substantially tailor or amend their proposal.

8. Confidentiality

In their proposal, potential suppliers must identify any aspects of their proposal that they consider should be kept confidential, with reasons. Potential suppliers should note that the Company will only agree to treat information as confidential in cases that it considers appropriate. In the absence of such an agreement, potential suppliers acknowledge that the Company has the right to disclose the information contained in their proposal.

The potential supplier acknowledges that in the course of this RFP, it may become acquainted with or have access to the Company's Confidential Information (including the existence and terms of this RFP and the TOR). It agrees to maintain the confidence of the Confidential Information and to prevent its unauthorised disclosure to any other person. If the potential supplier is required to disclose Confidential Information due to a relevant law or legal proceedings, it will provide reasonable notice of such disclosure to the Company. The parties agree that this obligation applies during the RFP and after the completion of the process.

9. Alternatives

Potential suppliers may submit proposals for alternative methods of addressing the Company's requirement described in the RFP where the option to do so was stated in the RFP or agreed in writing with the Company prior to the RFP Closing Time. Potential suppliers are responsible for providing a sufficient level of detail about the alternative solution to enable its evaluation.

10. Reference Material

If the RFP references any other materials including, but not limited to, reports, plans, drawings, samples or other reference material, the potential supplier is responsible for obtaining the referenced material and considering it in framing their proposal. And provide it to the Company upon request.

11. Price/Cost Basis

Prices or costs quoted must show the tax exclusive price, the tax component and the tax inclusive price.

The contract price, which must include any and all taxes, supplier charges and costs, will be the maximum price payable by the Company for the Goods and/or Services.

12. Financial information

If requested by the Company, potential suppliers must be able to demonstrate their financial stability and ability to remain viable as a provider of the Goods and/or Services over the term of any agreement.

If requested by the Company, the potential supplier must promptly provide the Company with such information or documentation as the Company reasonably requires in order to evaluate the potential supplier's financial stability.

13. Referees

The Company reserves the right to contact the potential supplier's referees, or any other person, directly and without notifying the potential supplier.

14. Conflict of interest

Potential suppliers must notify the Company immediately if any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest arises (a perceived conflict of interest is one in which a reasonable person would think that the person's judgement and/or actions are likely to be compromised, whether due to a financial or personal interest (including those of family members) in the procurement or the Company).

15. Inconsistencies

If there is inconsistency between any of the parts of the RFP the following order of precedence shall apply:

- (a) these Terms and Conditions;
- (b) the first page of this RFP; and
- (c) the Schedule

so that the provision in the higher ranked document will prevail to the extent of the inconsistency.

16. Collusion and Unlawful Inducements

Potential suppliers and their officers, employees, agents and advisors must not engage in any collusive, anti-competitive conduct or any other similar conduct with any other potential supplier or person or quote any unlawful inducements in relation to their proposal or the RFP process.

Potential suppliers must disclose where proposals have been compiled with the assistance of current or former the Company employees (within the previous 9 months and who was substantially involved in the design, preparation, appraisal, review, and or daily management of this activity) and should note that this may exclude their proposal from consideration.

Potential suppliers warrant that they have not provided or offered any payment, gift, item, hospitality or any other benefit to the Company, its employees, consultants, agents, subcontractors (or any other person involved in the decision-making process relating to this RFP) which could give rise to a perception of bribery or corruption in relation to the RFP or any other dealings between the parties.

17. Jurisdiction

This RFP shall be subject to the laws of the District of Columbia, United States of America. The language of the arbitration will be English.

The Potential Supplier and the Company will use their best efforts to settle amicably any dispute, controversy, or claim arising out of, or relating to this RFP or the breach, termination, or invalidity thereof. If no agreeable settlement can be found, any dispute, controversy, or claim arising out of or relating to this RFP or the breach, termination, or invalidity thereof, shall be settled by mediation through the American Arbitration Association by filing a request for mediation with the AAA and the other party. The Parties will be bound by any arbitration award rendered as a result of such arbitration as the final adjudication of any such dispute.

Company Information

Palladium is a global leader in the design, development and delivery of Positive Impact — the intentional creation of enduring social and economic value. We work with corporations, governments, foundations, investors, communities and civil society to formulate strategies and implement solutions that generate lasting social, environmental and financial benefits.

Project Background

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) CATALYZE: Market System for Growth (MS4G) program focuses on enhancing market systems in Ethiopia as a means of facilitating business growth, creating employment and fostering the development of the foundational elements for continued, transformational inclusive growth. As part of our efforts to strengthen Ethiopian services and institutions in job training and placement, the program aims at building the capacity of market-led workforce skill building institutions to meet the needs of the private sector, and also facilitating the development of a private sector-led digital economy. To achieve these goals, the program will enhance the capacity of job placement platforms to better serve both job seekers and employers.

Purpose

The purpose of RFP is to select a consultancy firm to enhance the service delivery of selected job placement platforms using job boards in service delivery in Ethiopia.

A complete scope of work is attached as Annex A.

Type of Contract

All awards will be pay-for-performance (P4P) subcontracts.

Anticipated Contract Period of Performance

Contracts will be offered to winning bidders for a period of 6 months

Place of Performance

The activities to be performed under this contract will take place in Ethiopia.

Key Deliverables and Timeline

No.	Deliverable	Due Date from Contract Date	Payment Amount
1	Submission of a detailed workplan	Within 10 days of signing the contract	10%
2	Mid-term report on the progress of the selected platforms based on search engine optimizations through Artificial Intelligence (AI), performance and usability	Within 12 weeks of signing of the contract	30%
3	Validation workshop	Within 8 weeks after receiving feedback on the midterm report	20%
4	Upon completion of the enhancement activity selected job platforms using job boards	Within 3 weeks from the validation workshop	40%

Instructions to Offerors

Separate technical and cost proposals must be submitted by email no later than the time and date specified on the cover page.

1. Technical Proposal

For the technical proposal, the offeror must submit:

- (a) Cover letter with the following information:
 1. Firm contact info. and address
 2. Type of Company or Organization
 3. DUNS Number (Company must have a DUNS number or obtain one within 5 days of being notified of selection)
 4. Signed by an authorized representative of the company
- (b) Background on the firm and relevant expertise (max. 2 pages)
- (c) Past Experience Information/Capability Statement
- (d) Technical Proposal & Management Approach
- (e) Description of relevant technological enhancement previously performed by the firm, demonstrating expertise in activities related with job platforms (max. 4 pages)
- (f) Contact details for three referees (max 1 page)
- (g) All supporting documentation specified below in the pass/fail evaluation criteria.

2. Cost Proposal

Offers must submit a cost proposal. CATALYZE will provide a budget template upon request through EthiopiaMS4G.procurement@thepalladiumgroup.com The cost proposal consists of:

- (a) Budget in Microsoft Excel with all formulas visible (unlocked)
- (b) Accompanying Word Document with all cost assumptions and explanations

Key assumptions

- Budget in Ethiopian Birr
- All prices are to be inclusive of relevant taxes
- Separate unit cost and number of units
- Break down activity costs into as much detail as possible
- Offeror should budget for: Labor, travel, and other direct costs

The selected offeror will be required to complete the Due Diligence Questionnaire (attachment 1) and provide a DUNS number within 5 days of being notified of selection.

Submission of Offers

Electronic proposals must be submitted by sending two separate emails, one for technical proposal and one for cost proposal with the RFP number in the subject lines. Ensure all required documents are attached. The RFP number can be found on the cover page.

Offers received past the deadline stated on the cover page will be deemed non-responsive and will not be considered for award.

Evaluation and Award Process

Proposals will be evaluated using a best value trade off methodology. This is a three-stage process.

- (1) The first set of criteria is graded on a pass/fail basis. Offerors must meet the following minimum eligibility qualification criteria and provide supporting documentation:

(2)

	Requirement	Supporting Documentation
(a)	Must be a registered legal entity in Ethiopia for a minimum of one year	Copy of certificate or articles and memorandum of associate
(b)	Must not have any active exclusions from the working with the US government (www.sam.gov), the UN (Sanctions List), or the US Department of the Treasury Office of Foreign Asset Control	N/A

(3) If these minimum criteria are met, the offer's technical proposal will be evaluated as follows:

Evaluation Criteria	Documents Evaluated	Points
1. Key personnel a. CVs of key personnel/ls demonstrating ability to support and carry out the SOW stated in this RFP.	Curriculum vitae of each key personnel/s	10
2. Past Performance a. Demonstrated experience in conducting technological enhancement of job platforms using job boards, websites and other related platforms including evidence and description of these assignments.	Evidence of description and impact of recent, relevant assignments, and references	30
3. Technical proposal a. Provide technical proposal for the technological enhancement of e-Job Matching Boards , including the use of Artificial Technology (AI) for selected job matching services to build efficiency and increase successful job placements. Include capacity building mechanisms to enhance service delivery for employers and job seekers, including women, and including secondary cities.	Technical approach. Breadth and depth of the Job platform enhancement. Quality and comprehensiveness of questions to be addressed	60
TOTAL		100

(4) The offeror's cost proposal will be evaluated for:

- Proposed total price, relative to other offers received.
- The cost proposal for this assignment will cover 30% score for the cost proposal and 70% score will be for the technical proposal
- Realism and reasonableness of the work to be performed.
- Price reflects a clear understanding of the requirements.
- Price is consistent with various elements of the technical proposal.
- Compliance with USAID cost principles (select one: Non profit entities – Cost Principles in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E or For profit entities – Cost Principles in FAR Part 31)

Palladium reserves the right to award under this solicitation without further negotiations. The offerors are encouraged to offer their best terms and prices with the original submission.

PROCUREMENT INTEGRITY AND ETHICS

It is Palladium's Policy that no gifts of any kind and of any value be exchanged between vendors/contractors and Palladium personnel. Discovery of the same will be grounds for disqualification of the vendor/contractor from participation in any Palladium's procurements and may result in disciplinary actions against Palladium personnel involved in such discovered transactions.

Resulting Award

This RFP in no way obligates Palladium to award a contract. Palladium may opt to select multiple offers in response to this RFP.

Any contract/purchase order resulting from this solicitation must be signed by both parties in order to be considered valid and in force. All costs associated with, but not limited to, production, preparation and/or delivery of goods or services, including deliveries, accepted by Palladium staff, without a fully executed (signed by both parties) contract/purchase order, are at the vendor's risk only. Palladium shall not pay for any costs, without limitation, associated with production, preparation or delivery of goods and/or services under this or any other contract/purchase order, which has not been signed by both parties.

If your proposal is successful, you will be required to enter into the Company's standard contract for the types of goods or services being provided. In the provision of the Goods and Services, you will be required to comply with the Company's policies, including (without limitation) its Business Partner Code of Conduct and any relevant client terms and conditions. Potential suppliers must also comply with the Company's Business Partner Code of Conduct in the submission of any proposals pursuant to this RFP.

If you are bidding as part of a joint venture, partnership or similar, please make this clear in your submission. Likewise, if you propose to subcontract any part of the goods or services provision, then disclose this fact within your submission. The Company may require additional information from you and approval for subcontracting will not be automatic as subcontractors will be subject to Palladium's Due Diligence process.

Attachments

Attachment 1- Due Diligence Questionnaire

Palladium Business Partner Code of Conduct and Child Protection Guidelines can be downloaded in full at: <http://www.thepalladiumgroup.com/policies> or request through email from Catalyze.procurement@thepalladiumgroup.com

Annex A: Scope of Work

1. Objective

Selected consultancy firm will enhance the service delivery and performance of selected job placement platforms using job boards in Ethiopia. The selected firm shall implement strategies to improve the service delivery, structural quality, usability content/job board and in general the job matching process using Artificial intelligence (AI). The following are major findings of the assessment conducted in selected job platforms in Ethiopia:

1. Accessibility of Job placement platforms

Given the large number of job seekers and the existing tough competition to find a job, it is essential that job placement platforms are made accessible to job seekers. Such initiative should also consider the following key points about the job seeker:

- Usage of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for a better profiling and recruitment of job seekers
 - availability and affordability of internet,
 - accessibility of smart phones and knowledge of basic computer skills
 - geographical location of the job seeker (urban vs rural),
 - level of education
2. Strengthening existing Job placement platforms (JPPs) using AI based on the gaps mentioned below:
 - Search engines are not responsive to query searches for a better job matching. Hence, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) will enhance the job matching service and responsiveness.
 - Some JPPs are not up to date to reflect recent job advertisements
 - Lack of diversified job adds that serve the youth and women with zero or minimum work experience
 - Not user friendly with a lot of add contents
 3. Lack of awareness on the benefits and advantages of job matching and placement platforms among job seekers, employers and government stakeholders. Hence, the use of AI will aware job seekers on fair and transparent recruitment process and for the employers increases the chance of getting a skilled labour based on their requirements.
 4. AI will also enhance the extent of Job placement platforms to meet the needs of youth and women.

Accordingly, the interventions shall mainly focus on technological enhancement for a better job matching services.

2. Activities:

A. Assessing and Identifying reasonable number job matching and placement platforms using job boards in Ethiopia

- Ensure the job matching and placement platforms, are serving secondary cities, the youth ages 18-35, the women, serving the Freelancing, Outsourcing, and Gigs (FROG) sector, prioritizing the agriculture and WASH sector value chain.

B. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) of job platforms in Ethiopia through AI and the following technical activities:

- Improving the job platforms through artificial intelligence component to define specific skillsets, years of experience and levels of education associated with particular job title.
- Tag Line (between 10 and 70 characters (including spaces)
- Meta Description Tag ((between 70 and 320 characters)
- H1 Header tag usage (signals a search engine what the content is about, and subsequently the keywords it should rank for)
- Key Word Consistency (Keywords are distributed on across important HTML tags)
- Amount of Content (at least 500 Characters)
- Image Alt Attribute (signals Search Engines what an image is about, and help it rank in image search results)
- SSL Enabled (a certificate used for secure data transmission and signals search engines that the site is secure)
- Robots.txt (provide important instructions to a search engine for how to most appropriately crawl a website as well as site areas that should be ignored)
- XML Sitemaps (includes a list of pages that are available for crawling, as well as other useful information for search engines such as last update times and priority of pages)
- Improving traffic to a page through analytics tools. Example, Google Analytics assist in measuring, analyzing and ultimately improving traffic to a page). With the ultimate goal of enhancing monthly traffic volume.

- Schema.org Structured Data (a structured data markup for web pages which helps Search Engines understand a site better and provide rich snippets directly in their search results).
- Usability
 - Device Rendering (demonstrates how the page renders on different devices)
 - **Usage of Flash** (Flash has a long history of security flaws, malware, and bugs)
 - **Usage of iFrames** (Bring Security Issues, Causes usability Issues and SEO Problems)
 - **Favicon** (are a way to increase brand visibility and make a page more recognizable when browsing amongst multiple browser tabs or bookmarks)
 - **Legible Font Sizes** (small and may not be legible enough for particular users).
- Performance
 - **First Contentful Paint** (How quickly content like text or images are painted onto your page. A good user experience is 0.9s or less.)
 - **Speed Index** (How quickly the contents of your page are visibly populated. A good user experience is 1.3s or less.)
 - **Largest Contentful Paint** (How long it takes for the largest element of content (e.g. a hero image) to be painted on your page. A good user experience is 1.2s or less.)
 - **Time to Interactive** (How long it takes for your page to become fully interactive. A good user experience is 2.5s or less.)
 - **Total Blocking Time** (How much time is blocked by scripts during your page loading process. A good user experience is 150ms or less.)
 - **Cumulative Layout Shift** (How much your page's layout shifts as it loads. A good user experience is a score of 0.1 or less).
 - **Page Size** (good for Page Load Speed and user experience if it's less than 3 MB)

c. Upon the submission of the mid-term progress report and review from the technical team, the firm will be expected to finalize the enhancement addressing the feedback and inputs forwarded.

C. The firm will also be required to present the technological enhancement of the job platforms during a validation session/workshop.

3. Acceptance of Deliverables

Deliverables will be reviewed by the technical team for completeness before being accepted and approved for payment.

No.	Deliverables	Acceptance Criteria
1	Detailed workplan	The detailed workplan shall outline how the team will accomplish the enhancement, approved by the Technical Lead
2	Mid-term report on the progress of the selected platforms based on search engine optimizations through AI, performance and usability	The major progress in the technological enhancement and capacity building will be evaluated by MS4G technical team and other experts
3	Upon completion of the enhancement activity selected job platforms using job boards	The final implementation shall include feedback and inputs from the technical team, approved by the Technical Lead and other experts
4	Validation and launching session/workshop	The firm shall present the outcome of the technical enhancement of the job platforms key stakeholders and USAID participants to demonstrate the validity of the enhancement, approved by the Technical Lead.

Payment Schedule

- First installment of 10% of the total agreed fee upon the submission of a detailed workplan.
- Second installment of 30% Mid-term report on the progress of the selected platforms based on search engine optimizations through AI, performance and usability
- Third installment of 40% Upon completion of the enhancement activity selected job platforms using job boards
- Final installment of 20% upon presenting the outcomes during a validation session/workshop.