

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Subject RFP #:	RFP-CATALYZE-Edu-2023-0100
RFP Issue Date:	August 15, 2023
Terms of Reference / Specifications:	CATALYZE Innovative Blended Finance
Project	
The Company	Palladium International, LLC
Country of Performance	Global
Closing Date and Time	September 5, 2023
Questions Deadline	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted at catalyze procurements@thepalladiumgroup.com by August 22, 2023 at 5:00pm (EST) <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Bidders' Conference	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Details for Submission	Submissions will be accepted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Electronically: email to catalyze procurements@thepalladiumgroup.com <input type="checkbox"/> In hard copy (sealed bids)
Offer Validity Period	60 Days

Thank you for your interest in the above procurement. As implementer for the CATALYZE Innovative Blended Finance Project 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 submit a proposal by the Questions Deadline. Answers to questions shall be distributed to all offerors that have indicated an intention to submit a proposal by the deadline.

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

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 CATALYZE Blended Finance Mechanism is a \$250 Million, 8-year contract (5-year base period, with a single 3 year option period) which uses a facilitated partnership model to craft solutions to crowd in \$2 Billion in blended finance (i.e. blended concessional and commercial finance) to USAID partner countries and initiatives. CATALYZE allows USAID Bureaus and Missions to efficiently deploy investment facilitation solutions that respond to the needs of specific sectors, issues, and geographies. Initial programs focus on education finance to implement sustainable education business models serving low-income communities, and achievement of the W-GDP objectives, but the mechanism can be applied to any development challenge or region.

Purpose

Palladium seeks to engage an ECCE evaluation consultant for the CATALYZE ECCE Paraguay activity. The consultant will be a key actor working with either the Palladium MELA evaluation team or an external firm, which will be conducting a quasi-experimental evaluation of the ECCE and GenDev LAC activities.

A complete scope of work is attached as Annex A.

Type of Contract

Palladium intends to issue a Labor-Hour Consultant Contract or Cost-Reimbursable Subcontract to the selected offeror.

Anticipated Contract Period of Performance

The anticipated period of performance is expected to be from October 2023 to March 2024. The estimated LOE for this assignment is 80-100 days. The consultant will bill monthly for time allocated to the tasks and deliverables.

Place of Performance

The activities performed under this contract will be remote. See the Instructions for Submission of Cost Proposal for travel assumptions.

Key Deliverables and Timeline

This will be a Level of Effort/Cost-Reimbursement based contract. The Subcontractor/Consultant will deliver the following outputs:

- Inception report.
- Selected tools for measuring learning and development with any required adaption.
- Relevant contributions (ECCE) to eval methodology and approach.
- MELQO (or similar) capacity building plan for local partner implementation.
- IRB/IRR inputs.
- Dissemination materials for baseline and longer-term dissemination recommendations.
- Analysis for baseline report of relevant contributions on the evaluation (ECCE).

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. Please note that requirements differ for firms and consultants.

1. Technical Proposal

For the technical proposal, the offeror must submit:

- (a) Cover letter with the following information (*for firms only*):
 1. Firm contact info and address
 2. Type of company or organization
 3. Unique Entity Identification (UEI) Number (Company must have a UEI 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) (*for firms only*)
- (c) Past Experience Information/Capability Statement
- (d) CV's of team member(s)
- (e) Description of relevant projects previously performed by the organization/consultant, demonstrating expertise in ECE and EGL assessments (max 4 pages)
- (f) Contact details for three referees (max 1 page)
- (g) Previous work sample of quasi experimental evaluation design
- (h) All supporting documentation specified below in the pass/fail evaluation criteria.

Note: GSA has developed a useful interactive PDF tool that guides through the most common scenarios about UEI (https://www.fsd.gov/sys_attachment.do?sys_id=af05f8fb1b44851006b09796bc4bcb6d)

2. Cost Proposal

Offerors must submit a cost proposal. CATALYZE will provide a budget template upon request through catalyze.procurements@thepalladiumgroup.com. The cost proposal consists of:

- (a) Budget in Microsoft Excel with all formulas visible (unlocked) (*for firms only*)
- (b) Proposed Daily Rate (*for consultants only*)
- (c) Accompanying Word Document with all cost assumptions and explanations (*for firms only*)

Key assumptions

- Budget in United States Dollar
- 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:
 - Defense Base Act (DBA) insurance in accordance with FAR 52.228-3, as applicable (*for firms only*).

The selected offeror will be required to complete the Due Diligence Questionnaire (attachment 1) and provide a UEI 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. If submitting in hard copy, the technical proposal and cost proposal must be in separate sealed envelopes. Mark envelopes with the RFP number and offeror's name. 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:

	Requirement	Supporting Documentation
(a)	Must be a registered legal entity in the country they are residing for a minimum of one year (for firms only)	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

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

Evaluation Criteria	Documents Evaluated	Points
Experience and expertise in ECE and EGL assessments	Team member(s) CV, Document of Description of Relevant Projects, Work Sample.	25
Experience in capacity building with local partners on ECE assessment tools/approaches	Team member(s) CV, Document of Description of Relevant Projects.	15
Experience leading the design and implementation of quasi-experimental evaluations	Team member(s) CV, Document of Description of Relevant Projects.	15
Experience working with MOEs and Local Partners on dissemination of evaluation learnings	Team member(s) CV, Document of Description of Relevant Projects.	15
Familiarity of USAID guidance on evaluations	Team member(s) CV, Document of Description of Relevant Projects.	15
Experience with school management monitoring	Team member(s) CV, Document of Description of Relevant Projects.	5
Experience with budgeting and a demonstrated knowledge of the importance of evaluation costs	Team member(s) CV, Document of Description of Relevant Projects.	10
TOTAL		100

In addition to evaluating documents, offerors will potentially be invited for an interview should the team proceed to move forward with their application.

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

- Proposed total price, relative to other offers received
- 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

Please review the additional documentation and proposed contracts terms and conditions which should be given consideration when preparing your proposal. By submitting your bid you will certify that that you are in agreement with the contract terms and conditions as included in this solicitation and that all prices include all aspects of the required compliance with the terms and conditions of the proposed contract.

Attachment 1- Due Diligence Questionnaire

Attachment 2- FFATA Form (will be required only for successful offeror, where applicable – included for awareness only)

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

SCOPE OF WORK ECCE Evaluation Consultant CATALYZE ECCE LAC—Paraguay

A. COMPANY OVERVIEW

Palladium International LLC is a leading global consulting firm that manages nearly \$2 billion in donor-funded projects in more than 90 countries while simultaneously providing management consulting advice to private sector firms and local and national governments throughout the world. It is well-known for its work in private sector development, market systems, innovative/inclusive finance, and the formation of public-private alliances. Palladium adds value by aligning business interests with development objectives, leveraging donor resources with commercial assets and vice versa. This market-driven approach ensures interventions are impactful, inclusive, and address the root causes of today's biggest development challenges while also being sustainable beyond the life of a particular donor-funded program.

B. PROJECT AND BUY-IN OVERVIEW

Palladium International, LLC is implementing the \$250 million, 8-year USAID CATALYZE contract which offers a facilitated partnership model that will craft solutions to crowdsource \$2 billion in blended finance (i.e., blended concessional and commercial finance) to USAID partner countries; it can work in any development sector or region.

The **CATALYZE Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) activity** aims to enhance access to low-cost and high-quality ECCE which unlocks inclusive development, improving child outcomes, promoting women's economic empowerment, enhancing family welfare, and driving overall economic growth. ECCE seeks to fill the gap in education that nearly 593 million children below primary school age currently experience; specifically, they lack access to appropriate childcare in emerging economies, constraining human capital growth. Meanwhile, women, who assume an estimated 75% of childcare responsibilities worldwide are often unable to pursue economic opportunities given care responsibilities. As a result, 606 million women worldwide are excluded from the global labour force, with consequent impacts on productivity and economic growth.

The gap in access to high-quality ECCE results from both supply and demand-side constraints. While the public sector provides ECCE in most markets, coverage is often incomplete or poorly aligned with household needs. Non-state, including private, faith-based, philanthropically supported, and community-led ECCE are an important complement to government provided ECCE, but non-state ECCE providers are scarce in many markets. Barriers to offering non-state ECCE services include inconsistent or fragmented registration and accreditation requirements, limited access to financing, and limited profitability given substantial operating costs resulting from high caregiver-child ratios. Even when childcare providers exist, accessible options are often low-quality due to a lack of trained professionals in the field. On the demand-side, many families do not access ECCE due to high cost, low-quality provision, misalignment between existing services and their needs, and cultural norms discouraging use of childcare outside the home.

In addition to expanding equitable access to high-quality ECCE to improve learning outcomes for children and improving livelihood outcomes for women, the ECCE Family of Investments aims to building an evidence base around the most effective models and approaches for leveraging multi-stakeholder investment and innovation to reach these goals. These interventions serve as the innovation incubator aimed at providing evidence to clarify how blended finance approaches and public-private partnership models can efficiently improve outcomes for young learners and their families.

C. OBJECTIVE and PURPOSE OF ECCE LAC—Paraguay

The LAC-Paraguay buy-in has two components. The first is ECCE focused and aims to:

- **Increase equitable access to ECCE.** Per [USAID's How -To Note on Developing High-Quality Pre-Primary Programs](#), all children between ages 3-6 should have at least one year of steady access to quality ECCE (where availability is limited), but children should ideally be enrolled in ECCE for two to three years. Likewise, access to quality ECCE is also important for younger children between 0-3 as it provides a safe, nurturing environment for care and quality education outside the home, enabling female caregivers pursue economic opportunities. Access is defined along five key dimensions:
 - **Availability:** ECCE should be available during hours that facilitate the engagement of women in the formal labour force, although half-day programs are not inappropriate for improving children's learning and development outcomes.
 - **Accessibility:** High-quality ECCE services targeting children ages 0-6 should be present in urban, peri-urban and rural communities, including and households should not be required to put forth undue effort to use ECCE services.
 - **Accommodation:** ECCE service provision should be adapted to address the specific needs of the poor, children with disabilities, and ethnic or religious minorities between ages 0-6.
 - **Affordability:** The cost of ECCE should be commensurate with household income levels in a given community such that no children are unable to attend on the basis of cost.
 - **Acceptability:** Social norms should not stigmatize the use of ECCE services or otherwise hamper women's ability to access childcare.
- **Improve program quality.** "Program quality" includes issues of structural quality such as teacher training (see also below), class size/student-teacher ratio, access to adequate nutrition, and the physical safety of the learning environment. Program quality also encompasses process quality; for example, are curricula developmentally appropriate? Are there positive teacher-student interactions? Does the program follow play-based pedagogy with appropriate learning materials readily available? Do ECCE providers appropriately engage with families and communities to encourage better learning outcomes, etc.? Is the provider using validated metrics to monitor and evaluate learning and child development? Is the provider using regular formative assessment data to inform the provision of education including appropriate play?
- **Support the professionalization of ECCE providers.** Per the USAID How-To Note, a pre-primary "teacher" is anyone who leads a group of children with the aim of improving their early learning skills, including people recognized by an authority as a professional, as well as those who are not. This could include teachers, teaching assistants, facilitators, paraprofessionals, care providers, volunteers, etc. Ideally "teachers", as broadly defined above, would receive specialized pre- and in-service training, and be guided by a professional competency framework that details the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviours needed to provide quality ECCE. Professionalization also includes strengthening management practices and establishing payment systems for teachers, among other tasks.
- **Design and promote market-based solutions that increase formal employment and self-employment opportunities both inside and outside the ECCE sector.** The workforce in the care economy (including ECCE) is largely female and offers employment and income generation opportunities for women who expand affordable childcare to underserved communities. Additionally, expanded access to high-quality ECCE may enable female caregivers to access childcare to pursue income-generating opportunities outside the ECCE sector.

The second ECCE LAC Activity, funded by the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Hub (GenDev) office at USAID, will provide technical and vocational training as well social norm engagement activities. This component aims to:

- **Increase women's advancement, economic security, and empowerment** (formality of sector, pay, and women's flexibility, e.g., with schedules).
- **Increase intrahousehold impacts**, including but not limited to bargaining power, IPV, and time use (both paid and unpaid for women and men).
- **Improve wellbeing**, including but not limited to, mental health, and physical, and stress.

D. THE EVALUATION

The ECCE Evaluation consultant will be part of an evaluation team which will be conducting a quasi-experimental evaluation of the ECCE and GenDev LAC activities (section C). While research design is being finalized, the anticipated approach will likely include an evaluation of:

1. ECCE centers with an emphasis on: a) access, b) quality, c) learning and development materials, d) teacher and management professional development, incentives and coaching, e) assessment of: policies, center quality, and formative assessment of learners, and f) parent and community engagement including parenting support.
2. Vocational training, matching or support of mothers of young ECCE learners: activities could include linkages with existing vocational training programs, additional supports for training programs, small loans to participate in training, or linkages with apprenticeship or similar programs or activities.
3. Social norms engagement activities will also be introduced to discourage backlash and increase women's empowerment. Some of the social norms which may be addressed include: household and caregiving work responsibilities for women, jobs considered acceptable for women, and gender based violence.

These interventions would support the primary learning objectives of the activities. Research questions, yet to be finalized, could include:

1. Has access to high quality ECCE improved and for whom?
2. Has quality of ECCE service delivery (facilitation of learning and development in centers) improved and to what extent?
3. Do ECCE and related supports improve children's learning and development outcomes?
4. Do more women enter the labor market as a result of their children's participation in ECCE programs, vocational training, and/or social norms engagement interventions?
5. Do more women participating in the labor market improve their situation with better, higher paying, or more secure positions as a result of their children's participation in ECCE programs, vocational training, and/or social norms engagement interventions?
6. Does participation in ECCE programs, vocational training, and/or social norms engagement interventions improve intra-household dynamics?
7. What changes are observed in women's physical and emotional wellbeing due to participating in ECCE programs, vocational training, and/or social norms engagement interventions?

E. TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Subcontractor/Consultant will work with an external firm or Palladium MELA team (TBD) to:

- Lead on the design, implementation, training, and analysis of all early childhood care and education-specific baseline efforts including selection of appropriate child development assessment measures (e.g., IDELA, MELQO, or ECDS).
- Select and adapt tools to identify most vulnerable learners such as those with disabilities and learning differences, as needed.
- Develop/adapt tools for data collection which may include ECCE observation, changes in coaching or peer support, school management improvements, and use of assessment (including formative) data.
- Assist with integration of ECCE and GenDev items into shared data collection tools, such as household surveys and focus group interviews.
- Support ethical clearance process (IRR/IRB).
- Coordinate, as needed, with local stakeholders including ministry staff and local partners.
- Advise on assistance with development and facilitation of training for enumerators.
- Provide guidance to local partners on provision of on-the-job training on use of learning and development assessment tools.
- Provide advice on software for data analysis (qualitative and quantitative).
- Serve as a resource to staff and local partners as they analyse ECCE qualitative and quantitative data.

- Lead the dissemination process of evaluation findings, successes and lessons learned.
- Other tasks as required and relevant.

F. DELIVERABLES

This will be a Level of Effort/Cost-Reimbursement based contract. The Subcontractor/Consultant will deliver the following outputs:

- Inception report.
- Selected tools for measuring learning and development with any required adaption.
- Relevant contributions (ECCE) to eval methodology and approach.
- MELQO (or similar) capacity building plan for local partner implementation.
- IRB/IRR inputs.
- Dissemination materials for baseline and longer-term dissemination recommendations.
- Analysis for baseline report of relevant contributions on the evaluation (ECCE).

G. MINIMUM/PREFERRED REQUIREMENTS

The ideal candidate will have the following qualifications and experience:

- Significant experience implementing and providing analysis on ECE and EGL assessments.
- Experience building capacity of local partners on ECE assessment tools and approaches.
- Experience working with MOEs and local partners on dissemination of evaluation learnings.
- Familiarity of USAID guidance on evaluations.
- Experience with school management monitoring.
- Experience with budgeting and a demonstrated knowledge of the importance of evaluation costs.
- Experience leading or contributing to impact evaluations.

The following qualifications and experience are preferred:

- Teaching experience at the University level.
- Proficiency in Spanish.
- Familiarity with LAC region.
- Experience with gender and women's empowerment assessment.

H. MONITORING

The Subcontractor/Consultant will be overseen by Principal Investigator of an external firm or the Palladium MELA team. The Consultant and the supervisor will meet 2x monthly at a minimum and will often be consulting and collaborating on a daily basis.

I. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY TIMING

This will be a remote position with the anticipated period of performance lasting from October 2023 to March 2024. The estimated LOE for this assignment is 80-100 days. The consultant will bill monthly for time allocated to the tasks and deliverables.