



Issuance Date: *November 22, 2023*

Due date for submission of questions (First Round): *December 1, 2023, at 17:00 ET (UTC-4)*

Pre-application Conference Date (First Round): *December 5, 2023, at 16:00 ET (UTC-4)*

Closing Date for Receipt of Concept Papers: *December 8, 2023, at 17:00 ET (UTC-4)*

Due date for submission of questions (Second Round): *December 19, 2023, at 17:00 ET (UTC-4)*

Pre-application Conference Date (Second Round): *December 20, 2023, at 16:00 ET (UTC-4)*

Closing Date for Receipt of Full Applications: *January 5, 2024, at 17:00 ET (UTC-4)*

Total funding available (all grants): \$900,000.00

Anticipated Number of Grants: 1-3

REF: USAID/CATALYZE Blended Capital Investment Platform

Prime Contract Number: 7200AA19C00080

Subject: Palladium's Request for Applications (RFA) Number CATALYZE-217772-APEP-2023-0074:

Dear Prospective Applicants,

The CATALYZE Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity (APEP) Accelerator, an initiative funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Palladium LLC, is seeking applications from local accelerators and startup enterprise support organizations that are interested in scaling and increasing the capacities of social and impact focused startup enterprises within Latin America and the Caribbean. The CATALYZE APEP Accelerator is facilitating resources to startup ecosystems in 10 target countries, with an objective of improved socioeconomic and climate impact under USAID Prime Contract #AID-7200AA19C00080.

The RFA is comprised of the following main sections:

- I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION
- II. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS
- III. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS
- IV. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION
- V. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Successful Applicants will be responsible for ensuring achievement of the program objectives. Please refer to Section I of this RFA entitled Funding Opportunity Description for a complete statement of goals and expected results.

Subject to availability of funds, Palladium intends to provide up to \$900,000.00 in total funding for results achieved from February 2024 to January 2025, with potential for a costed extension of one more year possible if the grantee reaches agreed milestone. Palladium reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

To be eligible for award, Applicants must provide all required information in their application, including the requirements found in any attachments to this RFA. Applications that are submitted late, incomplete, or are non-responsive will not be considered. Awards will be made to the

responsible applicant(s) whose application(s) best meet the requirements of this RFA and the evaluation criteria contained herein.

Palladium intends to use a two-stage application process to evaluate and select one or more grantees under this RFA. The initial stage requires the submission of a Concept Paper, which will be evaluated in accordance with Section IV, Step 1 of this RFA. If selected to proceed to the next stage, prospective grantees will be asked to submit a full application package, which will be evaluated in accordance with Section IV, Step 2 of this RFA.

Palladium requires that both concept papers and full applications be submitted electronically (e-mailed) to catalyze.procurements@thepalladiumgroup.com no later than the respective due dates shown above, following the instructions included in Section III of this RFA.

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

Sincerely,

CATALYZE APEP Accelerator Team

Annexes:

A. *Geographic Scope*

Attachments:

- A. Concept Note Template
- B. Full Technical Application Template
- C. Full Cost Application/budget Template
- D. Required Representations and Certifications of Offeror
- E. Fixed Amount Award (FAA) Template

SECTION I: FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Program Description

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.

Within CATALYZE, the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity (APEP) Accelerator Activity is a two-year initiative focused on promoting the inclusive growth of social and impact startup enterprises¹ within the Americas Partnership countries, which include Barbados, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay. The Activity aims to facilitate socioeconomic and climate impacts, improve employment, and increase incomes in the target region.

The CATALYZE APEP Accelerator Activity will facilitate resources to strengthen startup enterprises, strengthen regional networks, and establish market linkages to address current gaps in the ecosystem, providing these enterprises with a range of capacity building and investment readiness support and building links to markets, investors, other entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders. Through these resources, startup enterprises will be better able to improve business productivity and access new markets and financing to scale their businesses², leading to financial returns alongside positive socioeconomic and climate impacts in the region.

The CATALYZE APEP Accelerator Activity objectives are:

- 1) Improve the internal capacities and performance of startup enterprises.
- 2) Mobilize appropriate, additional investment to startup enterprises in the target countries.
- 3) Strengthen and better integrate regional entrepreneurial networks and ecosystems.

The Activity will provide or facilitate mentorship and tailored technical assistance to social and impact enterprises to improve their financial performance, growth prospects, investment readiness, access to regional or global markets, and financing. This support explicitly includes capacity building for businesses developing and/offering products and services that can improve livelihoods, productivity, and economic outcomes for individuals operating in or employed by the informal economy.

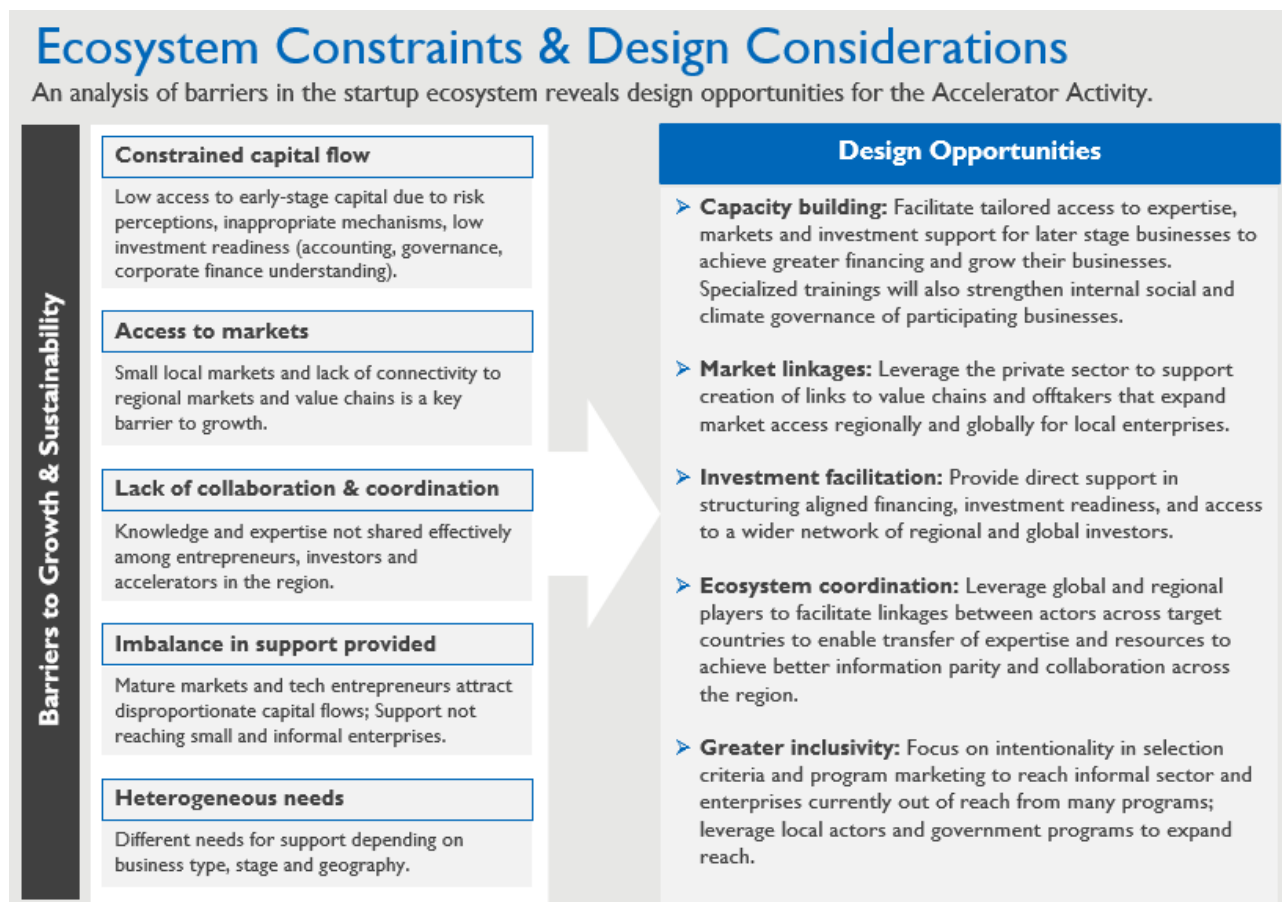
The Activity will attract additional investment to participating startup enterprises by improving their performance and capacities, facilitating access to investors and markets, and by strengthening entrepreneurial networks in the region.

As an initial step, to inform the Activity as to the current gaps in the startup ecosystem, the CATALYZE APEP Accelerator team conducted a Rapid Market Assessment which covered the activity's 10 target countries.

¹ For the purposes of this Activity, social and impact enterprises are for-profit businesses developing or offering products and services with the potential for positive impact on socioeconomic issues and/or the climate/environment.

² Support should aim to help participating startups access the form(s) of capital best suited for their individual needs, which could include equity investment, loans, quasi-equity products, factoring, leasing, etc.

The assessment was conducted through desk research, interviews with relevant ecosystem actors, and feedback received from a preliminary co-creation event with various stakeholders with the aim of guiding the activity's strategy. As a result of this assessment, the activity identified key ecosystem constraints as well as potential opportunities that can be leveraged to create greater impact across the activity's anticipated objectives.



1. Scope

The CATALYZE APEP Accelerator Activity intends to award one or more grants to enterprise support organizations. The grantee(s) will provide capacity building and other types of support to a range of startup enterprises:

The provided support will serve social impact enterprises with validated business models, established revenue streams, demonstrated ability to scale their business and impact beyond local markets. Target program participants must also have the ability to reach at least 100 beneficiaries through products and services which (1) improve climate resilience, adaptation and mitigation of micro, small, and medium businesses, (2) promote financial inclusion of and/or access to markets for previously excluded communities, (3) provide access to job training or education leading to improved economic outcomes; and/or (4) otherwise promote improved outcomes for the informal sector.

Support for entrepreneurs may be provided in multiple stages, including the possibility of starting with a larger group from which a smaller group will be selected to receive more intensive services. The support and mentorship will be tailored to enterprise needs and could include, but is not limited to: (1) development and execution of growth strategy, (2) entering new markets, (3) capitalization strategy, (4) investment readiness, (5) leadership, and (6) management, among other topics. Given the higher touch nature of the support, we anticipate cohorts for this intensive customized support to be smaller (15-25 enterprises per cohort with

minimum of 100 enterprises supported within the Activity year and representation of each of the 10 target countries).

Key components of the support are also to include market linkages to corporate or other private sector partners, and potential investors. At least one in-person convening per cohort is anticipated to enable greater connectivity among participants, to strengthen and connect the regional entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The Activity will prioritize support that brings additionality³ to the regional startup ecosystem such as through specialized trainings that current startups are not receiving to strengthen their capacities or support offered to startups operating in underserved sectors. The grant program will also aim to create a sustainable regional capacity support model that will allow for startups to continue receiving similar capacity building support after the grant program has come to an end. The grantee(s) are encouraged to leverage existing internal capacity or local partners to expand their reach and scale of the Activity.

In addition to the grants to be awarded for this opportunity to provide capacity building support of enterprises, supplemental sub-awards may be available and competed in a separate selection process for (1) transaction advisory services and investment facilitation, (2) strengthening capacity of local entrepreneur support organizations reaching the informal economy, and (3) entrepreneurial ecosystem and network building across the region.

2. Objectives

By partnering with one or more startup enterprise support organizations, the CATALYZE APEP Accelerator expects to support a minimum of 100 social impact enterprises across its target countries in the first year of Activity through enterprise capacity support in the form of an acceleration program. The supported social impact enterprises will complete the acceleration program with improved growth strategies, investment readiness, leadership/management skills, and access to new markets and financing opportunities.

In addition, grantees will be responsible for ensuring that they meet with the Activity's cross-cutting objectives to create a positive impact on the informal sector, positive climate impact, and/or economic inclusion. To this end, grantees will be responsible for ensuring that the mentorship and trainings they offer to participating enterprises assist them, where applicable, in reaching the informal sector in a meaningful/impactful way. The offered trainings should also include those that are meant to improve the business models of the participating enterprises such that they can generate a positive climate impact, either through improved climate considerations within their operations or value chains, services that offer climate resilience to beneficiaries, or a combination of both. The Activity has identified a set of target sectors that should be considered by potential grantees to achieve scale and meet overall objectives, which include Climate (such as AgTech, Climate Tech, Clean Energy, and Blue Economy), Financial Inclusion and Access to Markets (in particular for the informal sector), Ed Tech (with focus on upskilling and job training for women and youth), and other products and services improving the productivity and outcomes for the informal sector.

Finally, selected grantees will be intentional within their selection of enterprises that participate in the program to promote participation from groups that are not regularly represented within the current startup ecosystem such as indigenous-led, women-led, or other enterprises not served by existing acceleration programs. To facilitate establishing linkages between enterprises, investors, financial institutions, offtakers, and other relevant actors, the grantee will hold at least one in person convening for the cohort participants. As a result of this support, enterprises will have increased productivity leading to generation of new jobs, their products/services will generate a positive impact on the informal sector, assistance to the enterprises will lead to improved climate impact/resilience, and the growth achieved by participating enterprises through facilitated financing will lead to scalable businesses which will attract additional investment.

³ "Additionality" refers to results that are unlikely to occur in the absence of that intervention. In this context, it is key that support targets market gaps rather than undermining the existing ecosystem.

3. Eligibility and Geographic Scope

This initiative is targeted towards established and proven startup enterprise support organizations with operations in Latin America and the Caribbean and the capacity to provide assistance to social impact enterprises within the initiative’s targeted countries .

Annex A: Geographic Scope

CATALYZE APEP Accelerator will operate in the following 10 countries and expects selected grantee(s) to provide assistance to social impact enterprises from these target countries:

Barbados, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay.

4. Requirements

Concept Notes must conform to the structure included in Attachment A, Concept Note Format, which includes the elements included in SECTION III - STEP 1 of this RFA.

Full Applications must conform to the structure in Attachment B, Technical Application Format, which includes the following sections, described in more detail in SECTION III - STEP 2 of this RFA:

5. Anticipated Outcomes

Through Fixed Amount Awards (FAAs) issued to one or more startup enterprise support organization, CATALYZE APEP Accelerator aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Minimum number of 100 social impact enterprises with strengthened business capacities and including representation from each of the 10 target countries and at least 50% women-led, indigenous-led, or other underrepresented businesses.
- Improved environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) practices in participating enterprises.
- Minimum of 10,000 informal beneficiaries assisted through products or services provided by participating social impact enterprises.
- Improved access to appropriate financing for participating enterprises (measurement to be confirmed in coordination with selected grantees).
- Improved access to regional markets for participating enterprises (measurement to be confirmed in coordination with grantees).

6. Illustrative Deliverables

The below table demonstrates *an illustrative example* of what the final deliverable table could potentially look like with fixed price milestones over the course of a year. The final deliverable table will be tailored around the selected applicant’s technical proposal and budget will be determined by the number of selected applicants to receive a grant.

#	Deliverable	Deadline	Payment Amount (as % of total grant amount)	Authorized Acceptance Representative of Palladium
1	Program Workplan: - Including cohort dates, size, and entrepreneur selection criteria.	1 month after contract signature	25%	CATALYZE APEP Accelerator Team Lead

#	Deliverable	Deadline	Payment Amount (as % of total grant amount)	Authorized Acceptance Representative of Palladium
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan of services covering the specific support to be provided to participating enterprises. - Plan to reach target number of informal beneficiaries. - Plan to reach target capital raised. 			
2	Launch Event of Acceleration program.	3 months after contract signature	10%	CATALYZE APEP Accelerator Team Lead
3	Recruitment of entrepreneurs for Cohort 1 of acceleration program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confirmed inclusivity of indigenous- led, women- led, and/or other underrepresented groups. 	5 months after contract signature	15% <i>(Each recruited cohort would have a corresponding milestone payment)</i>	CATALYZE APEP Accelerator Team Lead
4	Completion of Cohort 1 by X number entrepreneurs with evidence of improved outcomes in XYZ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E.g., Evidence of improved business capacities, access to markets, climate resilience, access to financing, etc. 	9 months after contract signature	30% <i>(Each completed cohort would have a corresponding milestone payment)</i>	CATALYZE APEP Accelerator Team Lead
5	Improved Access to Financing for Entrepreneurs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capital raised by enterprises as a result of assistance provided by the program. - Evidence of investor connections made, progress in due diligence or other (to be co-designed with selected grantees). <i>We acknowledge the anticipated lag in reporting capital raised of participating enterprises.</i>	12 months after contract signature	20%	CATALYZE APEP Accelerator Team Lead

7. Schedule

Project anticipates awarding one or more Fixed Amount Award (FAA) grants as a result of this solicitation process by February 2024. The expected performance period is one year with an option for extension for another year based on performance.

8. Project Guidance and Post-Award Support

During the grant period, the Grantee will report to the CATALYZE APEP Accelerator Team for overall guidance related to this grant, technical matters, and monitoring deliverables. Palladium will provide the following to the selected Grantee(s):

- Project activity brief.
- Simplified report template.

In addition, after grant award, Palladium will provide targeted training/guidance to build capacity of the awarded Grantee's project staff on the following topics:

- Kick-off meeting, including administrative and technical orientation.
- Support in local stakeholder engagement.
- Other technical guidance as required.

9. Monitoring

CATALYZE APEP Accelerator/Palladium will monitor implementation of the grant to enable sound oversight and management; examples of such monitoring include:

- Monthly meetings with Project Team.
- Quarterly Program Reviews and associated quarterly reports in line with scheduled CATALYZE reporting, including:
 - Accomplishments in prior period.
 - Planned activities for the upcoming period.
 - Identification of any problematic issues and strategies for resolution.
 - Action items list, if any.
 - Modification of deliverables, if required.

SECTION II: ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The USAID CATALYZE grants program is designed for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), non-profit, and for-profit entities. NGOs are organizations that act neither in governmental capacity nor as agents of the government. Both U.S. and non-U.S. NGOs are eligible to receive grant funding. An international NGO is eligible if the majority of its constituent members are NGOs. The CATALYZE APEP Accelerator will accept grant applications from both not-for-profit and for-profit organizations.

In order to be considered eligible for a grant award, prospective grantees must:

- Be legally registered in accordance with the laws of respective country (registration documents required).
- Not be part of a government or any government structures.
- Not appear on any list of debarred or suspended entities (as found on www.sam.gov), or on any terrorist watch list or other published list of ineligible recipients.
- Certify that they are not affiliated with any political party nor engaged in any partisan activities.
- Submit the concept paper and, if applicable, the full application, including all mandatory attachments in accordance with the terms and conditions of the RFA, by or before the time and date deadline(s) stipulated in the RFA.
- Comply with the application format guidelines mandated in the RFA, including submitting a budget within the identified funding limitations of the RFA.
- Be currently active in the targeted region or with targeted beneficiaries with existing programs and have relevant previous work experience.
- In addition, all prospective Grantees under consideration for an award exceeding \$25,000 (or local equivalent) must have or be able to obtain a Unique Entity Identification (UEI) Number.

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)

SECTION III: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Activity Name: CATALYZE APEP Accelerator Enterprise Capacity Building

Palladium will award one or more grants resulting from this solicitation to the responsible applicant(s) that demonstrate the capability to carry out activities conforming to the project objectives and within the funding and other parameters set by this RFA.

This solicitation does not commit Palladium to make an award. Palladium may at its sole discretion (a) accept or reject any or all applications, at any step in part or in full without assigning a reason; and (b) waive informalities or irregularities in applications received.

STEP I – CONCEPT NOTE

Applicants meeting the eligibility criteria discussed in Section II of this RFA should submit a not-more-than three-page concept note to the CATALYZE APEP Accelerator Team *using the template included as Attachment A to this RFA*, and which reflects the following information:

- The name, title, telephone number, and email address of the authorized contact person in your organization.
- The purpose (mission) and objectives of the organization.
- A description of how and by whom the activities will be implemented, including leadership and number of staff or workers (where applicable). Description should include structure of the program including cohort timeline, selection criteria, assistance/training offered, organizational resources available to carry out activities to reach 10 target countries, and additionality to current offerings available.
 - Applicants are not required to directly operate in 10 target countries, but concept notes should detail a strategy that will be employed to reach target countries (such as coordinating with local partners to increase geographic coverage). Applicants not intending to cover all 10 target countries must adjust their budget and outcome targets accordingly.
- An estimate of the total amount of funding required to implement the proposed activities, including for goods or services, as well as details of what resources the applicant will contribute to the program in cash and/or in kind through other funding sources (if applicable).
- A brief list of the organization's past history, and specific past programs and their outcomes.

The concept note must be signed by an authorized agent of the applicant and must be submitted in either English or in Spanish. Concept papers and all annexes may be submitted electronically via email (catalyze.procurements@thepalladiumgroup.com) to the CATALYZE APEP Accelerator Team.

Submission of the Concept Note:

Concept Notes must be submitted no later than December 8, 2023, at 17:00pm ET (UTC-4) electronically (via email) to catalyze.procurements@thepalladiumgroup.com

Information about the evaluation of concept notes is included in Section IV of this RFA.

STEP II – FULL APPLICATION

Upon evaluation of the concept notes, the CATALYZE APEP Accelerator will notify applicants whether they have proceeded into the full application phase. Applicants selected to continue with the full application should prepare their application following the instructions and format below.

a. Instructions for Preparation of the Technical Application (maximum 15 pages total Word document or equivalent in PowerPoint, excluding annexes)

The Technical Application should be submitted in English or Spanish, and attached with the following annexes, using the template included as Attachment B to this RFA:

- i. Project Description (expanded concept note, use provided template):**
Describes the proposed program activities and overarching program elements, such as the objective of the grant and the linkage to the project objectives, or how the proposed activities will contribute to these objectives; results and indicators for measuring results, intended beneficiaries, and plans for disseminating activity deliverables. Outline how the proposed elements will support progress toward organizational sustainability.
- ii. Project Implementation Plan (1 page, annex):**
This section may be a Gantt chart of planned activities and a timeline with a brief narrative.
- iii. Project Milestone Schedule (for Fixed Amount Award FAA - grants only) (included in template):**
Milestones are for a verifiable product, task, deliverable, or goal of the recipient. The milestones will generally have three parts: (1) a description of the product, task, deliverable, or goal to be accomplished; (2) a description of how the recipient will document the completion of the product, task, deliverable, or goal; and (3) the amount that CATALYZE APEP Accelerator will pay the recipient for the deliverable. Some milestones may also have dates indicating when the milestone is expected or required to be completed. Milestones must be objectively verifiable regarding completion and quantity and within the recipient's span of management control to successfully complete as designed. An FAA is appropriate when 1) the program scope has measurable goals and objectives, and 2) it has adequate cost and historical or pricing data that is available to establish an FAA with the assurance that the recipient will realize no increment above the actual cost.
- iv. Experience and Capacity (included in template):**
The applicant lists previous and ongoing experience implementing similar activities. This is a critical factor in assessing the capacity of the grantee to implement the activity. The applicant also provides contact information of at least three references that can speak to the applicant's performance and capabilities.

b. Instructions for Preparation of the Cost Application

As part of the Cost Application and in addition to the Budget Template (Attachment C), the applicant shall include the following:

i. Transmittal Letter

The applicant must be signed by an individual authorized to commit the organization.

ii. Organizational Information and Certifications

The applicant shall submit the following annexes to the cost application:

- "ADS 303mav: Certifications, Assurances, Representations, and Other Statements of the Recipient" found in Attachment D of this RFA.

- Copy of the organization's chart and bylaws and power of attorney of the authorized signer.
- Copy of the organization's legal registration under the laws of the country they would be operating out of you with presence in the project's target regions.
- Copies of the last annual financial report(s) completed by an authorized/certified accountant.

iii. Budget Narrative and Detail

The applicant shall include a budget narrative which breaks down proposed costs in sufficient detail corresponding to the attached budget template to permit cost analysis. The budget shall be denominated in United States dollars (USD).

Cost estimates must be submitted **in Excel format using the attached budget template**. The file must be unprotected and there should be no hidden columns/rows/cells. Each cost element must include a basis for estimate or rationale. Any budget submitted without the accompanying narrative or in a different template will not be accepted and the application will not be considered. **Please note that applications will be judged based on efficiency of costs vs. proposed performance targets.**

The budget template contains the following budget categories:

a. Salaries (activity staff)

The applicant shall provide the individual's name, position title, the unit (days), the number of units (i.e. the level of effort), the unit salary or consultant fee and the total salary or consultant fee. Unit salaries shall be stated in days. Benefits, fees, and indirect costs should not be included in the unit salary.

b. Fringe Benefits

This could include social security, health insurance, and other mandatory withholdings for relevant grantee staff.

c. In-Country Travel and Transportation

Travel and Transportation includes per diem and shall be broken down by traveler, transportation vehicle, number of trips and the corresponding number of days of per diem. Include a basis of estimate for each trip.

d. Other Direct Costs (ODCs)

As part of the detailed budget breakdown, the applicant shall submit details of all other direct costs (ODCs) required for undertaking the award grant. ODCs include costs of direct program implementation, as well as costs for communication, meetings, expendable supplies and materials, report preparation/reproduction and publications. Include a basis of estimate for each item.

As illustrative examples only, program implementation costs could include the following (or many others):

- Marketing costs: The applicant should provide details of marketing costs that would promote its services. Illustratively, marketing costs could include events, signage, and promotional print materials.

- Assurance costs: The applicant should provide details of costs for quality improvement/assurance that could include supervisory visits, monitoring mechanisms.
- e. Applicant Co-Financing (Leverage)

Under fixed amount award grants co-financing⁴ & leverage⁵ are not required and are not auditable, however applicants should detail potential leverage and resources they can utilize to achieve greater results under the grant. Additional results achieved as a result of potential leverage will be used as evaluation criteria in the full application.

NOTE: USAID Policy Prohibits the Payment of Fee/Profit to recipients under assistance instruments.

Submission of the full Application:

Full applications must be submitted no later than January 5, 2024, at 17:00pm ET (UTC-4) electronically (via email) to catalyze.procurements@thepalladiumgroup.com.

Information about the evaluation of concept notes is included in Section IV of this RFA.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Technical and financial applications should be submitted in two separate electronic files.

SECTION IV: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

The application must be fully completed in all aspects in each Step. An application may not be considered if it is received after the submission deadline. Costs associated with preparation of the concept note and the full application shall be at the expense of the applicant.

This RFA includes a two-step review and selection process, which includes the following elements:

- i. Initial evaluation of concept notes received as a result of Step 1
- ii. Notification to applicants of inclusion in or exclusion from Step 2
- iii. Review and evaluation of full applications received in Step 2
- iv. Selection and notification of apparently successful applicant(s)

STEP 1 – EVALUATION OF CONCEPT NOTES

All concept notes will be reviewed by an officially convened Grants Evaluation Committee and evaluated and scored objectively using an established criteria presented below.

Only concept notes from applicants that meet the eligibility requirements included in Section II of this RFA will be formally evaluated using the following criteria:

⁴ Cost Share or “matching” refers to the total amount of resources the recipient contributes to the agreement. It must be verifiable and can be audited.
⁵ Leverage: Resources that a non-traditional USAID partner brings to a public-private partnership, i.e., the portion not being borne by USAID. These non-traditional resource partners are typically NOT receiving USAID funds. It can be a variety of forms—anything of value that is measured, financial contributions, third party contributions, donated services or property, or intellectual property. It *cannot* be audited.

Criteria	Eligibility Factors	Scoring (Exceptional, Very Good, Satisfactory, Poor, Unacceptable)
Technical Focus	<p>Concept note provides a clear explanation of how the applicant will address the Scope of Work in the RFA, addressing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed methodology to build capacities of participating startup enterprises; including recommended trainings, cohort size, cohort duration, etc. • Additionality of offered services/trainings to fill gaps in the ecosystem or serve underrepresented sectors and/or startup enterprises. • Methodology demonstrated measurable increase to finance for participating enterprises. • Potential sustainability of enterprise capacity support following close of the Activity and grant. 	
Potential Impact/Leverage	<p>Proposed approach details potential impact proposed by the applicant, as well as leverage/resources that the applicant will contribute to USAID resources to achieve greater results alongside the awarded grant. Applications should detail the nature of the potential leverage (in-kind resources, third party contributions, etc.) and expected additional achievements as a result of the support.</p>	
Inclusivity of Approach	<p>Concept note demonstrates how the work conducted under the proposed grant would lead to increased inclusivity of underrepresented enterprises and benefit actors within the informal sector and upstream actors, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased access to resources to increase productivity/revenue (access to internet, financial inclusion tools, access to new markets, etc.) of informal actors which can be attributed to startup enterprises participating in the program. 	

Criteria	Eligibility Factors	Scoring (Exceptional, Very Good, Satisfactory, Poor, Unacceptable)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed selection criteria to promote participation of indigenous-led, women-led, and other underrepresented businesses. 	
Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Strengthening	<p>Concept note details applicant’s methodology to facilitate and strengthen regional entrepreneurial ecosystem, allowing for improved connectivity between the various actors. Potential activities and considerations could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed events to connect participating enterprises with investors, funds, offtakers, corporations, etc. Knowledge sharing facilitation across ecosystem actors to improve information parity and collaboration. 	
Past Performance	<p>Concept note demonstrates applicant’s past experience with similar acceleration programs and models as well as results/success of those programs. Concept note should also detail applicants experience working within the activity’s 10 target countries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the grantee have, or can it obtain, administrative and financial systems sufficient to manage the grant. Does the grantee have, or can it obtain, the capability of maintaining adequate accounting records and complying with USAID standards (if needed). Is the composition of the team and the associated staff experience appropriate to the activities proposed. 	

STEP 2 – EVALUATION OF FULL APPLICATIONS

Palladium intends to issue a grant to the organization(s) considered to provide the best strategic fit, technical approach, past performance/organizational capacity, and gender considerations for the

overall project. The criteria below will serve as the basis upon which the application will be evaluated. Selection will also be based on the capabilities of the organizations as detailed in the application.

a. Evaluation Criteria

The technical applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria, which are listed in order of importance, with the most important listed first. Additional details are included below.

Criteria	Eligibility Factors	Scoring (Exceptional, Very Good, Satisfactory, Poor, Unacceptable)
Technical Approach	<p>Application clearly detailing how the applicant will go about achieving the anticipated outcomes to strengthen the business capacities of participating enterprises, improve their access to capital, and link them to new markets. The application should include proposed cohort size, duration, anticipated trainings, and anticipated events to promote connections among program participants.</p> <p>Applications should also note the intended strategy that will be utilized to reach the grant’s objectives such as informal beneficiaries reached, % of participating underrepresented businesses, demonstrated improved access to finance, etc. Other considerations for these criteria include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The technical approach is inclusive, innovative, cost-effective, transformative, additional, and sustainable. • The approach details a clear path to facilitating innovative products, services, and financing mechanisms are included, including those that can benefit the informal sector. • Proposed plan is realistic and demonstrates that the assisted enterprises are moving toward self-sufficiency. 	
Potential Impact and Leverage	<p>Proposed approach details potential impact proposed by the applicant, as well as leverage/resources that the applicant will contribute to USAID resources to achieve greater results alongside the awarded grant. Applications should detail the nature of the potential leverage (in-kind resources, third party contributions, etc.) and expected additional achievements as a result of the support. Other considerations for these criteria include:</p>	

Criteria	Eligibility Factors	Scoring (Exceptional, Very Good, Satisfactory, Poor, Unacceptable)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratio of potential leverage that the applicant will proportion. 	
Past Performance	<p>Past performance of the applicant developing and carrying out similar acceleration programs within Latin America and the Caribbean. Demonstrated track record increasing the capacities of startup enterprises as well as raising capital for assisted enterprises. Application should include an organizational chart of the applying organization as well as CVs for any key personnel.</p> <p>Has operations within the Latin America and the Caribbean region as well as a strategy detailing how the applicant will reach enterprises within the project's 10 target countries (either through direct intervention or by collaborating with local partners to reach a wider geographic scope). Other considerations for these criteria include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of target countries that the applying organization has presence in, as well as a strategy detailing how the organization will reach a wider geographic scope (such as through partnering with local partners). Minimum of two professional references that the CATALYZE APEP Accelerator team can contact to confirm past performance of applicant. 	
Sustainability of Approach	<p>Approach provides additionality to the regional startup ecosystem such as providing trainings that aren't currently offered or assisting underserved startup enterprises.</p> <p>Application includes considerations for ensuring the sustainability of the methodology for business capacity support to startups continuing beyond the Activity's intervention.</p>	

Proposed costs will be evaluated for reasonableness, completeness, and overall efficiency in meeting the proposed performance targets, and will play a larger determining factor in instances where bidders are reasonably close in technical evaluation.

SECTION V: AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

a. Award Notices

Successful applicants can expect to receive the following upon approval by USAID:

- A notice of USAID approval
- Draft Fixed Amount Award grant agreement

b. Award Administration Standards

Grants resulting from this solicitation will be administered in accordance with the approved Project Grants Manual, and the following regulations (as applicable):

- FAR Part 31 – Cost Principles for For-Profit organizations used to negotiate award amounts and terminations per 2 C.F.R. 200.201 (b)(1)).
- Automated Directives System (ADS) Chapter 303 Grants & Cooperative Agreements to Non-Governmental Organizations: 303.3.25 Fixed Amount Awards to Non-Governmental Organizations.
- A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 303: 303_mak Fixed Amount Award Entity Eligibility Checklist – as adapted by Palladium.
- A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 303: 303_mat Fixed Amount Awards to Non-Governmental Organizations - as adapted by Palladium.
- ADS 302.3.4.13 Grants Under Contracts (GUCs).
- 2 C.F.R. 200.1 Definition Fixed Amount Awards.
- 2 C.F.R. 200.201 Use of grant agreements (including fixed amount awards), cooperative agreements, and contracts (as referenced in ADS 303.3.25.a.).
- 2. C.F.R. 200 Subpart E – Cost Principles for non-profit and educational organizations – used to negotiate award amounts and terminations per 2 C.F.R. 200.201 (b)(1)).

c. Reporting

The CATALYZE APEP Accelerator Team will work with apparent successful applicants (ASAs) to finalize a Milestone Payments Schedule with clear milestones and verifiable deliverables for which payments under the FAA will be made. The ASA's will be responsible for tracking key indicators relating to these milestones such as number of enterprises assisted, evidenced of improved business capacities for participating enterprises, number of informal beneficiaries reached, investor connections facilitated, and evidence of improved market access among others. Applicants should also note other indicators that they will track during the life of the anticipated grant.

The CATALYZE APEP Accelerator Team reserves the right to audit documentation of results at any time, as the project conducts Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) verifications. The CATALYZE APEP Accelerator will obtain both the grantees and assisted enterprises' approval to release information in publicly reported success stories, periodic reports, and lessons learned reports. The grantee may be required to submit additional reporting periodically (reporting format will be provided by the CATALYZE APEP Accelerator Team). The participating grantee agrees to comply with and respond to CATALYZE APEP Accelerator requests for information.

Successful applicants will be required to also submit concise quarterly reports in line with the required CATALYZE reporting timeline and indicators as per the Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan which will be developed by CATALYZE following the award of this grant.

d. Branding & Marking Requirements

Apparently successful applicants will be required to submit a Branding Strategy and a Marking Plan that complies with approved Branding and Marking Plan for the project and must follow the mandatory standard provision entitled "MARKING AND PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS UNDER USAID-FUNDED ASSISTANCE (DECEMBER 2014)" (for standard cost type grants) or "MARKING AND PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS UNDER USAID-FUNDED ASSISTANCE (JULY 2015)" (for FAAs) in preparing the Branding and Marking Plan.

e. Environmental Compliance

Palladium will ensure all stipulated environmental measures and conditions in the award are implemented throughout the life of the award, and that timely amendments are undertaken, as needed, by obtaining the relevant USAID Environmental Officer's prior approval in writing to ensure compliance with 22 CFR 216 and the applicable USAID Environmental Guidelines.