

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Subject RFP #:	RFP-CATALYZE-Edu-2024-0117
RFP Issue Date:	April 3, 2024
Project:	CATALYZE Innovative Blended Finance
The Company:	Palladium International, LLC
Country of Performance:	Global
Closing Date and Time:	April 17, 2024 23:59 PM EST
Questions Deadline:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Bidders' Conference:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Details for Submission:	Submissions will be accepted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Electronically: email to catalyze_procurements@thepalladiumgroup.com
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

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 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

The Palladium MELA team seeks to engage an impact evaluation consultant for the CATALYZE Early Childhood Care and Education Buy-In in Paraguay. This consultant will work closely with the MELA team to deliver technical assistance to finalize the methodology and data analysis plan, among other things. A complete scope of work is attached as Annex A.

Type of Contract

Palladium intends to issue a Level of Effort (LOE) consulting agreement to the selected offeror.

Anticipated Contract Period of Performance

This will be a remote position with the anticipated period of performance will be from April 2024 through March 2025, with an estimated LOE of 15 days.

Place of Performance

This will be a remote consultancy. See the Instructions for Submission of Cost Proposal for travel assumptions.

Key Deliverables and Timeline

See Annex A for further information.

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) CV/Resume
- (b) Cover letter outlining past experience as listed in the requirements and previous relevant projects.
- (c) Contact details for three referees (max 1 page)

2. Cost Proposal

Offerors must submit a cost proposal. The cost proposal consists of the consultant's daily rate.

Submission of Offers

Electronic proposals must be submitted by sending one email to catalyze.procurements@thepalladiumgroup.com, which includes both the technical and cost proposal, with the RFP number in the subject line.

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
(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
Significant experience leading impact evaluations.	CV, Cover Letter	25
Familiarity with USAID guidance on evaluations.	CV, Cover Letter	25
Experience with the design of impact evaluation of interventions with women and men in developing countries.	CV, Cover Letter	20
Experience analyzing data resulting from Difference-in-Difference (DiD) and Propensity Score Matching (PSM) study designs.	CV, Cover Letter	20
Experience with gender and women's empowerment assessment and measurement.	CV, Cover Letter	10
TOTAL		100

(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

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.procurements@thepalladiumgroup.com

Annex A: Scope of Work

SCOPE OF WORK ECCE Women Impact 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.

1. 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 social norms engagement activities around women’s workforce participation. This component aims to:

- **Increase women’s advancement, economic security, and empowerment** (formality of sector, pay, and women’s flexibility, e.g., with schedules).
- **Improve intrahousehold dynamics**, 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, physical and emotional health, mental health 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 select ECCE and GenDev LAC activities (section C). The goal of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which pairing ECCE with engaging female caregivers and male household members on social norms around women’s workforce participation can lead to improvements in women’s livelihoods, intra-household dynamics, and physical and emotional wellbeing. Although still be finalized, social norms engagement activities around women’s workforce participation may include gender-segregated and joint sessions addressing household and caregiving work responsibilities for women and men, jobs considered acceptable for women and men, and gender-based violence.

To achieve this goal, the evaluation will be guided by the following research questions:

- What impact does female caregivers’ participation in ECCE and their and male household members’ participation in social norms engagement activities have on female caregivers’ livelihoods, intra-household dynamics, and physical and emotional wellbeing?
 - Does participation in the layered interventions increase the proportion of female caregivers who enter better, formal, or higher paying positions compared to the proportion of female caregivers of children in ECCE centers who did not receive the interventions?
 - Does participation in the layered interventions increase the proportion of female caregivers who report improved intra-household dynamics compared to the proportion of female caregivers of children in ECCE centers who did not receive the interventions?
 - Does participation in the layered interventions increase the proportion of female caregivers who report improved physical and emotional wellbeing compared to the proportion of female caregivers of children in ECCE centers who did not receive the interventions?
- Do children aged 3-5 attending the participating ECCE centers demonstrate improved developmental and learning outcomes compared to children who do not attend ECCE centers?

E. TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The consultant will work with the Palladium MELA team and a Paraguay-based sub-contractor to:

- Support finalization of the methodology section of the protocol for the impact evaluation.
- Support the implementation of the baseline and endline assessments, with a focus on issues of sampling, data quality, and quantitative analysis.
- Provide technical assistance to the research firm in the analysis of the impact evaluation data, as needed.

- Support in the preparation and review of baseline and endline assessment reports, dissemination meeting and webinar materials.

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

- Technical inputs on data collection and fieldwork/logistics plan/schedule and final version of quantitative questionnaires
- Technical inputs on plan for assignment of centers to treatment or comparison arms
- Technical inputs through participation in progress update/troubleshooting calls with Paraguay-based subcontractor
- Technical inputs on data analysis plan, including relevant statistical software code
- Technical inputs on draft baseline, midline, and endline assessment reports, dissemination meeting and webinar materials.

F. MINIMUM/PREFERRED REQUIREMENTS

The ideal candidate will have the following qualifications and experience:

- Significant experience leading impact evaluations.
- Familiarity with USAID guidance on evaluations.
- Experience with the design of impact evaluation of interventions with women and men in developing countries.
- Experience analysing data resulting from Difference-in-Difference (DiD) and Propensity Score Matching (PSM) study designs.

The following qualifications and experience are preferred:

- Experience with gender and women's empowerment assessment and measurement.

G. MONITORING

The consultant will be overseen by the MELA team undertaking the impact evaluation.

H. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY TIMING

This will be a remote position with the anticipated period of performance will be from April 2024 through March 2025. The estimated LOE for this assignment is 15 days, dependent on the consultant's daily rate. The consultant will bill monthly for time expended on the tasks outlined above.