

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Subject RFP #:	RFP-CATALYZE-217772-Ethiopia-2024-0032-01
RFP Issue Date:	June 18, 2024
Terms of Reference / Specifications:	For the procurement of organic certification and/or surveillance audit services
Project	CATALAYZE MS4G
The Company	Palladium International, LLC
Country of Performance	Ethiopia
Closing Date and Time	June 27, 2024
Questions Deadline	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted at ethiopiams4g.procurement@thepalladiumgroup.com by June 21, 2024 at 5:00 PM, Addis Ababa (UCT+3). Answer to questions will be distributed by June 21, 2024
Bidders' Conference	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Details for Submission	Submissions will be accepted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Electronically: email to ethiopiams4g.procurement@thepalladiumgroup.com
Offer Validity Period	90 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, and environmental benefits.

Project Background

USAID CATALYZE Market Systems for Growth (MS4G) is designed to support private ecosystem actors in building robust and resilient markets to enhance the delivery of products and services for WASH and food security, to benefit the Ethiopian people. MS4G achieves this by investing in improving micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), cooperatives, and smallholders' access to finance, facilitating their capacity to upgrade and grow; increasing sales by MSMEs and smallholder farmers in target sectors; improving smallholders' access to fertilizer to enhance productivity and income; and strengthening the private sector ecosystem. The project supports activities in Addis Ababa and the regional cities of Ethiopia.

Purpose

The purpose of the RFP is to engage an external auditor or certifying body. The certifying body or external auditor will conduct an assessment, inspection, and certification of Apinec Agro Industry PLC for organic certification in line with the applicable (EU, USDA-NOP) regulations.

A complete scope of work is attached as Annex A.

Table 1. List and location of enterprise to be certified:

S/N	Company Name	Description and Function	Location	Required Certification
1	Apinec Agro-Industry PLC	Agricultural processing company that produces non-timber forest products, such as organic honey, beeswax, and coffee. The company's operation includes farmer selection, training, organizing, and assisting in 100% organic honey and wax production from the Kaffa (Bonga) zone in the Southwest region of Ethiopia. Its operation also includes receiving, processing, packaging, labelling, and marketing of honey and wax compliant with EU and USDA-NOP regulations. The head office is in Addis Ababa (Mag International building, office No. 110) and the honey processing unit is in Bonga, Ethiopia (110 km from Addis Ababa). The production areas within 33 km radius of Jimma airport. Apinec is aiming to become an Organic Certified company to export to the international market, specifically to the US and EU countries. Nearly 500 farmers have been trained in the Gimbo woreda. Apinec has been certified by Ecocert and the certification validity was through March 31, 2023.	Keffa Zone, SNNPR, Ethiopia	Organic certification

Selection Criteria

To be eligible, a consultant or firm must demonstrate a track record of successfully certifying enterprises as highlighted in the Technical Evaluation Criteria.

Type of Contract

Palladium intends to issue a Firm Fixed Price subcontract to the selected offeror.

Anticipated Contract Period of Performance

A subcontract will be offered to the winning bidder for a period of 60-90 working days.

Place of Performance

The activities to be performed under this contract will take place in Ethiopia. See the Instructions for Submission of Cost Proposal for travel assumptions.

Instructions to Offerors

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

1. Technical Proposal

For the technical proposal, the offeror must submit:

- (a) **Cover Letter** with the following information:
 1. Firm contact info and address.
 2. Type of company or organization (if applicable)
 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) **Firm Profile**: background on the offeror and relevant expertise providing a description of specific past projects performed, and results achieved by the offeror (max. 2 pages)
- (c) **Technical Proposal, Management Approach, and Workplan with Timeline**: outline approach, workplan, and timeline in response to Annex A of the RFP and in the evaluation criteria below (max 2.5 pages)
- (d) **Past Performance/Capability Statement**: description of relevant projects previously performed by the offeror demonstrating expertise (max 1 page)
- (e) **Staffing Plan**: The offeror will provide a team of experts with relevant qualifications and experience to adequately support the required activities. CVs of inspectors/auditors demonstrating expertise in organic honey production and handling techniques (max 2 pages per CV).
- (f) **One Reference**: contact details for at least one reference who oversaw or was familiar with the work of the offeror (max 1 page)

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)

- Offerors who already have the **Unique Entity Identified (UEI)** number should submit the UEI number with proposal submission.
- Offerors who have no **Unique Entity Identified (UEI)** are required to apply following the UEI guideline and submit with the proposal if they secure the number.
- Offerors who applied and waiting to receive the **Unique Entity Identified (UEI)** number should attach proof of application (application screenshot) with proposal submission.
- **All offerors are required to complete, sign, and submit the Due Diligence Questionnaire (attachment 1) with their technical proposal.**

2. Cost Proposal

Offerors must submit a cost proposal. CATALYZE will provide a budget template upon request through ethiopiams4g.procurement@thepalladiumgroup.com. The cost proposal consists of:

- (a) Budget in Microsoft Excel with all formulas visible (unlocked) using the budget template provided as “Attachment 3”
- (b) Accompanying Word Document with all cost assumptions and explanations

Key assumptions

- Budget in USD/ETB
- All prices are to be inclusive of relevant taxes
- Separate unit cost and number of units
- Breakdown 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.

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. 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:

Table 2. Eligibility Requirement

	Requirement	Supporting Documentation
(a)	Must be duly accredited or certified by relevant authorities to provide Organic Certification services.	Copy of certificate or articles or memorandum of association
(b)	Must have a minimum of three (3) years of experience conducting Organic Audit/Certification.	Copy of certificate or articles or memorandum of association
(b)	Must not have any active exclusions from 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 offeror’s technical proposal will be evaluated as follows:

Table 3. Technical Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria		Documents Evaluated	Points
1.	Firm Profile		25
a.	The expertise of the offeror providing certification services. Bidders should specify the organic certification awarded per EU, USDA-NOP and JAS (optional) regulations	Firm profile	

2.	Technical Proposal, Management Approach, and Workplan with Timeline		35
a.	Technical approach – a clear technical approach that depicts the offeror’s ability to implement certification services and implementation plan.	Technical and management approach	15
b.	Workplan – demonstrating a timeline of activities over the period of performance. Offeror should present a weekly or monthly timeline.	Workplan	20
3.	Past Performance/Capability Statement		15
a.	Practical experience providing assessment, audit, and certification services. Demonstrated track record of certifying companies.	Past Performance/ Capability Statement	
4.	Staffing Plan		25
a.	Technical capacity of inspectors/auditors including CVs demonstrating expertise in organic honey production and handling techniques (CVs should explicitly describe knowledge, skills, experience, and trainings)	Staffing plan - CV(s)	
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

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

Attachment 3- Budget Template

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 ethiopiams4g.procurement@thepalladiumgroup.com

Annex A: Scope of Work

BACKGROUND

USAID CATALYZE MS4G Ethiopia is an activity designed to benefit the Ethiopian people, build community resilience, and strengthen rural-urban linkages in the areas of food security, and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH). MS4G invests in developing relationships with private sector players, co-investing in inclusive business models, advisory services, digital solutions, and market-based initiatives that increase the resilience and sustainability of Ethiopian enterprises and employment for women and youth.

As part of its intervention with private sector companies, MS4G is supporting high-growth potential MSMEs in the Food Security and WASH sectors to obtain certifications. MS4G believes that organic certification will help the target company become more competitive in the global market and provide quality goods and services

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Scope of Work (SoW) is to engage the service of a certifying body or external auditor that will conduct an assessment, inspection, and (organic) certification of Apinec Agro-industry PLC in line with the applicable (EU, USDA-NOP, JAS) regulations.

SCOPE OF WORK

The external auditor's engagement shall include, but is not limited to the following:

- A. Review the Organic System Plan (OSP) and ensure compliance in accordance with EU, USDA-NOP, JAS regulations
- B. Conduct on-site inspection, including but not limited to apiculture practice, processing, storage and transportation
- C. Assess the risk of contamination, analyze potential hazards and critical control points (CCP), and review the inspection report for decision
- D. Issue organic certification upon satisfactory compliance of the standard set by EU, USDA-NOP, JAS regulations
- E. Conduct at least one surveillance audit every year for two consecutive years after the issuance of certification

EXPECTED DELIVERABLES OF CERTIFYING BODY/EXTERNAL AUDITOR

1. Prepare and submit certification inspection and certification plan
2. Conduct inspection and certification audit
3. Prepare and submit audit report detailing results (including certificates awarded), observations, opportunities for improvement and any non-conformity to organic certification (EU, USDA-NOP, and JAS (JAS optional)) regulations/requirements

RESPONSIBILITIES

The external auditor shall have the following responsibilities:

1. Provide its company profile highlighting related projects, scope of work, and implementation methodology. The curriculum vitae of the proposed inspectors and reviewers, explicitly describing their knowledge, skills, experience, and trainings shall also be submitted.
2. Abide with the regulatory requirements of EU, USDA-NOP, and JAS (optional) organic certification assessment/s, inspection of auditing principles, and terminologies.
3. Adhere to the agreed scope of work/deliverables which were approved by MS4G.

4. Provide a full report on the operations audited consistent with the content of the approved scope of work/deliverables to the agency within five (5) working days of each initial, surveillance and re-surveillance audit unless otherwise agreed by MS4G.
5. All information reviewed and recorded by the certifying body audit team shall be treated as confidential at all times.

REQUIREMENTS/QUALIFICATIONS OF CERTIFYING BODY /EXTERNAL AUDITOR

The certifying body must meet the following qualifications:

1. The certifying body must be duly accredited or certified by the relevant authority to provide the organic certification service.
2. The certifying body must have a minimum of three (3) years of experience in conducting organic certification and a certification of awarded projects in the area.
3. The certifying body must have a good track record of certifying private companies.
4. The certifying body must have a certification staff, including inspectors, with sufficient expertise in organic honey production and handling techniques.

MILESTONE AND ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA

S/N	Activities	Deliverable	Acceptance Criteria	Deadline/Due Dates
1	Review Organic System Plan (OSP) of the auditee	Prepare and submit certification inspection and certification plan	Accepted OSP in accordance with regulations	20 days after signing of the contract
2	Onsite inspection of farming practice, processing, storage etc	Conduct inspection and certification audit	Execution of the activities according to the plan (such as record keeping system, labels, and verified packaging)	30 days after accepted OSP
3	Prepare a detailed audit report	Prepare and submit audit report detailing results (including certificates awarded), observations, opportunities for improvement and any non-conformity to organic certification (EU, USDA-NOP, and JAS (JAS optional)) regulations/requirements	The report should provide detailed information on what has been observed, opportunities for improvement.	10 days after acceptance of the execution plan

Annex B: Company Details

Apinec Agro Industries PLC is located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The company's operation includes farmer selection, training, organizing, assisting in 100% organic honey and wax production from Kaffa (Bonga) zone in south west region of Ethiopia. Its operation also include receiving, processing, packaging, labelling, and marketing of honey and wax. The head office of the company is in Addis Ababa (Mag International building, office No. 110) and the honey processing plant is located in Bonga, Ethiopia. Apinec aims to become an Organic Certified company of honey and beeswax products and become eligible to the international market, specifically to US and EU countries.

Note:

Bidders should specify the organic certification they can award: EU, USDA-NOP and JAS (the latter is optional).