Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. **Are there specific requirements for applicants with expertise in digital skills, cybersecurity, or capacity-building initiatives to qualify for this grant?**

    There are no specific requirements for applicants with expertise in digital skills, cybersecurity, or capacity-building initiatives to qualify for this grant. However, proposals that demonstrate innovative approaches and align with the grant's overall objectives are encouraged.

2. **Would proposals that integrate technical training or workforce development alongside market entry activities be prioritized?**

    Please note that the main focus areas for this particular RFA are (a) Market Access and (c) Business Sophistication project proposals.

3. **For organizations with experience in training and upskilling, is there flexibility in allocating grant funds toward educational technology or curriculum development?**

    Yes, there is flexibility in allocating grant funds toward educational technology or curriculum development for organizations with experience in training and upskilling, provided these expenditures align with the grant's objectives and guidelines

4. **Can project costs include infrastructure upgrades, such as digital platforms, and hardware/workstations to support sustainability and long-term impact?**

    Yes, project costs can include infrastructure upgrades, such as digital platforms and hardware/workstations, with clear justification that it is necessary for achieving project objectives and support sustainability and long-term impact

5. **For technical proposals, is there a preference for showcasing experience with prior USAID-funded projects or international collaborations?**

    As specified in the call criteria, the applicant must make sure to include background on the applicant/organization (approx. 2-3 pages) that describes the previous experience of the applicant in implementing similar programs (demonstrated by documentary evidence) or provide a list of professional staff with demonstrable experience to implement the project.

6. **Would including case studies of successful workforce development or training programs enhance an application's competitiveness?**

    As specified in the evaluation criteria part, the Profile and Track Record of the Applicant is rated with 15 points in total by assessing the applicant's relevant experience and proven ability to execute the project. Points are given based on previous achievements and expertise that show a strong capacity for success.

7. **Given the focus on ICT, does the grant prioritize digital transformation solutions as exportable services?**

As specified in the Detailed Program Description, Export Product Adaptation part: Grant-funded activities will assist small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in adapting their products and services to meet international standards, regulations, and cultural preferences for specific target markets. This will ensure that Kosovo-made products are competitive and attractive to foreign buyers, thereby enhancing export opportunities. As a result, the grant prioritizes activities that focus on scaling up market-tested initiatives, which are proven programs or strategies that have demonstrated success in achieving desired outcomes.

8. **How does USAID evaluate the scalability of services like digital governance or cybersecurity training for international markets?**

USAID Kosovo Compete does not prescribe a specific approach or methodology for evaluating the scalability of services like digital governance or cybersecurity training for international markets. However, the evaluation criteria are thoroughly detailed in the *Evaluation Criteria* section of the call (page 11), which provides guidance on how proposals will be assessed

9. **Are pilot projects involving regional expansion or diaspora engagement viewed favorably under the scope of this grant?**

Pilot projects involving regional expansion or diaspora engagement are reviewed equally alongside other proposals. However, the call emphasizes *Encouraging Strategic Partnerships, Alliances, and Joint Ventures* as an expected outcome of the grant activity, which may align well with such initiatives.

10. **Would developing partnerships with international technology or educational service providers strengthen the application?**

Partnering with international technology or educational service providers may positively impact the successful implementation of the grant, thereby enhancing the overall quality and competitiveness of the application

11. **For organizations proposing technology-based solutions, are there specific tools or methods preferred for tracking and reporting project outcomes?**

Organizations are encouraged to use effective and appropriate tools that align with the project's objectives and ensure accurate reporting.

12. **Can monitoring and evaluation frameworks emphasize skill acquisition metrics or community impact alongside export growth?**

We encourage organizations to design MEL frameworks that reflect the multifaceted impact of interventions. The framework should outline how these metrics align with the overarching objectives of the grant and contribute to the sustainability of results.

13. **If a proposed project demonstrates significant progress, is there an opportunity to apply for continuation funding to expand its impact?**

Since the USAID Kosovo Compete Activity concludes in August 2025, there is no possibility for an extension or continuation funding under this grant.

14. **Are there specific compliance requirements for organizations proposing implementing grant-funded activities across multiple regions?**

There are no specific compliance requirements for organizations proposing to implement grant-funded activities across multiple regions. However, all activities must adhere to the general terms and conditions outlined in the RFA.

15. **Is there a preference for proposals that include virtual workshops or hybrid training models to maximize participant reach?**

This is an approach determined by the applicant, so there is no preferred proposal for virtual workshops or hybrid training models by USAID Compete Activity. The focus should be on how well the approach aligns with the project's objectives and the expected outcomes.

16. **Would activities focused on connecting local talent with international markets through ICT services align with the grant's objectives?**

Since the call highlights the outcome of creating opportunities for businesses to share their experiences and best practices related to export and market entry, activities focused on connecting local talent with international markets through ICT services do align with the call criteria. These activities, such as workshops, networking events, and peer learning initiatives, will enable companies to learn from each other and collectively enhance their capacity to succeed in international markets.

17. **Our company is registered both in the USA and Kosovo with the same name. The entity in Kosovo covers all administrative and services necessary and the entity in USA is responsible for sales and client management. In this case, should we apply through our entity in the USA or the one registered in Kosovo, or apply as a consortium of those two?**

All applications, whether from Kosovo or abroad, will be evaluated on an equal basis. In your case, it should be determined from your side with which entity you want to apply. Regarding consortia, they are formed between different companies (and not a single beneficiary) operating in different regions.

18. **In terms of the budget proposal, should we obtain offers/quotas and submit them with the application, or should we do an approximate budgeting (costs)?**

The budget must be realistic, and the prices must be in line with the market prices, however the offers must be submitted in case of acceptance of the application (pass), thus, obtaining them now would make the process of finalizing the grant files easier.

19. **How do you measure the reasonableness of co-investment by the applicant; is 5% to 10% of the total project value enough?**

Co-financing is assessed based on its adequacy to the overall objectives and sustainability of the grant activities, and not by having a fixed scale. Since there is no specific percentage, contributions of 5% or 10% of the total budget may be acceptable if it strongly impacts the grants activities and sustainability. Cost-sharing is highly encouraged as it reflects the investment of the interested parties and supports the sustainability of the grant results.

20. **It states that interested parties must submit references and documents describing the applicant's previous experience in similar programs (demonstrated with supporting evidence). Can you explain what kind of documents must be submitted as evidence?**

Reference documents of the applicant's previous experiences can be: previous business contracts in the similar field of the project, reference letters from donors or clients/suppliers, previous reports, etc.

21. **Can one applicant submit multiple applications for different markets targeted by not exceeding the limit of 80,000 EUR per grant?**

Yes, one applicant can submit multiple applications for different markets, adhering to the ceiling of 80,000 EUR per grant. If the applications are of high quality and competitive compared to those of other applicants, it is possible for all of them to be awarded.

22. **How to measure concrete results of a B2B, trade show, or showroom activity?**

The mechanism to measure concrete results of a B2B, trade show, or showroom activity needs to be chosen and proposed by the applicant. However, follow-up meetings after the B2Bs and potential contracts resulting from these activities are highly valued and will be carefully evaluated by the project.

23. **If a certain company offers a specific service to a certain country and wants to expand their product line in the current market it is already operating, where would this intervention fit in?**

This would fit to the following intervention area: Export Product Adaptation: Grant-funded activities will assist small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in adapting their products and services to meet international standards, regulations, and cultural preferences for specific target markets. This will ensure that Kosovo-made products are competitive and attractive to foreign buyers, thereby enhancing export opportunities.

24. **What is the mechanism for reaching beneficiaries for the potential market in Spain in the ICT sector, considering the 4-month implementation period, and is there any limit on the number of final beneficiaries?**

The mechanism for reaching beneficiaries must be clearly outlined and proposed by the applicant. There is no limit to the number of final beneficiaries. However, the applicant is responsible for ensuring that the beneficiaries benefit from the grant appropriately, and the number of beneficiaries reached should be realistic and achievable within the given timeframe.

25. **The document states that applicants need to provide documentation for grants previously earned. Could you clarify what specific documents are required?**

Applicants may submit prior contracts, reports, or references from donors or similar entities as documentation for grants previously earned. These documents should demonstrate the applicant's experience and successful implementation of past projects.

26. **If a company needs to invest in digital infrastructure for the purpose of expansion to current and new markets, is purchase of hardware equipment's for the purpose of optimizing company's operation eligible?**

Yes, the purchase of hardware equipment for the purpose of optimizing the company's operations is eligible, if it serves and contributes to facilitating market access and enhancing the sophistication of the company's current business services.

27. How does the market penetration work?

Grant-funded activities to assist firms to penetrate nontraditional export markets. These may include trade missions or other sales and marketing activities specifically targeting clients outside of Kosovo's primary trade partners (Western Balkans countries, Germany, Switzerland, etc.). New markets might include countries in the Middle East, North America, or European countries that are not yet major trading partners for Kosovo.

28. What is the minimum number of companies that must be part of the project?

There is no minimum requirement for the number of companies that must participate in the project. However, the applicant must ensure that all partners involved contribute meaningfully and strongly support the implementation of the grant activities.

29. Are partnership agreements necessary prior to applying for the grant?

Memorandum of Understandings can be submitted prior to applying for the grant that emphasizes the cooperation between partners of the grant proposal.

30. Can the beneficiary be a potential partner located in another country?

Yes, this is highly encouraged through this call and emphasized in the Encourage Strategic Partnerships, Alliances, and Joint Ventures section.

31. Can staff salaries be covered in the grant budget?

Salaries for staff already employed will not be covered under the grant budget. However, staff may be compensated for their expertise or if they are specifically dedicated to tasks related to the implementation of this project.