



## USAID Kosovo Compete Activity Request for Applications (RFA)

Issuance Date	Monday, November 25, 2024
Deadline for Receipt of Questions	Friday, December 6, 2024, by 17:00 local time
Information Session	Monday, December 9, 2024, from 11:00 – 12:30 <u>Location:</u> USAID Kosovo Compete Office at <i>Str. Ukshin Hoti, No. 120, Building C3/3/b, 1st floor</i> <u>Online:</u> via <a href="#">Microsoft teams</a>
Closing Date/Time for Submission of Applications	Wednesday, January 8, 2025, by 17:00 local time
Subject	Request for Applications (RFA) for “ <b>Fostering Growth through Market Diversification</b> ”

### **Summary overview**

USAID Kosovo Compete Activity (hereinafter referred to as “USAID Compete”, “Compete” “Activity”, or “Project”) is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It is implemented by DT Global. The Project is designed to facilitate sector-wide improvement in private-sector export competitiveness in its key focus sectors of wood processing, food processing, and information and communications technology (ICT) sectors.

This Request for Applications (RFA) aims to advance the international market presence of Kosovo's key sectors, including Wood Processing, Food Processing, ICT, and Prefabricated Housing Construction. Through targeted grant activities, this RFA seeks to empower companies in these sectors with the tools and strategies necessary to access and succeed in international markets – particularly non-traditional markets for Kosovo exporters – ensuring long-term and sustainable market integration.

The primary objectives of this RFA are to enhance export readiness, refine pricing and positioning strategies, and use market insights to drive strategic growth across all four sectors. By utilizing Market Access to connect businesses with new opportunities in new markets, and Business Sophistication to enhance operational capabilities and market positioning, this initiative aims to foster strategic partnerships, promote knowledge-sharing, and establish Kosovo's products and services in new markets through cohesive, sector-wide collaboration.

Specifically, the program will assist SME's in adapting their offerings to meet international standards, enhance operational efficiency, and foster the creation of industry alliances to expand market reach.

The grants will be awarded and implemented in accordance with U.S. government regulations governing grants under contracts and the Project's internal grant management policies. The successful applicant(s) will be responsible for ensuring the achievement of specified grant objectives. Please refer to Section 1 - Funding Opportunity Description - for a complete statement of goals and expected results.

This RFA consists of the following sections:

- Section 1 – Funding Opportunity Description
- Section 2 – Award Information
- Section 3 – Eligibility Information
- Section 4 – Information Session
- Section 5 – Application and Submission Information
- Section 6 – Application Review Information
- Section 7 – Award and Administration Information
- Section 8 – Annexes (Application Form and Budget Template)

Pursuant to 2 CFR 200 Subpart E and 2 CFR 700.13, it is USAID policy not to award profit under assistance instruments. However, all reasonable, allocable, and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect which are related to the grant activity and are in accordance with applicable cost standards (2 CFR 200 Subpart E for non-profit organizations and educational institutions, and the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 31 for for-profit organizations), may be paid under the Award.

**USAID Kosovo Compete Activity intends to provide grants of up to EUR 80,000. Targeted Implementing Partners of these grant activities are local companies, organizations, business associations, consulting firms, diaspora-based organizations/companies, or consortia of companies capable of implementing activities effectively within the four-month timeframe.**

The Project reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of USAID Kosovo Compete, nor does it commit the Project to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. Further, USAID Kosovo Compete Activity reserves the right to reject any or all applications received if such action is considered to be in the best interest of the U.S. Government. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant; should circumstances prevent making an award, all preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Applicants should submit any questions concerning this RFA in writing via email at [kosovogrants@dt-global.com](mailto:kosovogrants@dt-global.com). The deadline for receipt of requests for clarifications/explanations is Friday, December 6, 2024, by 17:00 local time. No questions will be accepted after this date. An information session for interested applicants will be held on Monday, December 9, 2024, from 11:00 – 12:30, at USAID Kosovo Compete's office in Prishtina, Kosovo (noted below). The information session can also be attended virtually through this [Microsoft Teams Link](#).

Applicants should submit applications via email at [kosovogrants@dt-global.com](mailto:kosovogrants@dt-global.com) with the

subject line RFA#03-2024. The closing date for submission of applications is **Wednesday, January 8, 2025**, and the closing time for submission of applications is 17:00 hours local time. Late applications will not be considered.

### **Section 1 – Funding Opportunity Description**

#### ***Overall Objective***

The objective of the USAID Kosovo Compete Activity through this RFA is to increase the international market presence and export competitiveness of Kosovo's key sectors; Wood Processing, Food Processing, ICT, and Prefabricated Housing Construction. The grant activities aim to: (i) Assist Kosovo companies in entering new international markets; (ii) Enhance business capabilities by establishing partnerships with experienced service providers; and (iii) Promote sustainable growth for Kosovo businesses and other key stakeholders in the selected sectors. Whenever possible, grantees should include beneficiaries led by disadvantaged groups, such as women and minorities. Additionally, the grants might focus on scaling up market-tested initiatives, which are proven programs or strategies that have demonstrated success in achieving desired outcomes. By providing targeted support to expand successful initiatives, the program aims to build resilient market systems, drive economic growth, and position Kosovo as a competitive player in international markets.

#### ***Background***

USAID Compete is a five-year activity that began on August 11, 2020. The purpose of USAID Compete is to promote resilient, self-sustaining market systems, and to facilitate the private sector's improved competitiveness in local, regional, and global markets. The Activity utilizes a market system approach aligned with USAID's Private Sector Engagement Policy.

USAID Compete focuses on four export-oriented sectors to sustainably increase competitiveness:

- Food Processing
- Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)
- Wood Processing
- Prefabricated Buildings / Modular Homes

By working to address constraints across the system, USAID Compete seeks to enable scalable and systemic change, stimulating job creation and increasing the private sector's ability to engage in local, regional, and international markets. The main areas of intervention include: (a) Market Access (b) Diversified Finance (c) Business Sophistication (d) Skills Development (e) Supporting Business Environment

**The main focus areas for this particular RFA are (a) Market Access and (c) Business Sophistication**

The overall expected results of USAID Compete across all sectors are:

- 1) Strengthened market systems to increase sector competitiveness.
- 2) Improved productivity and competitiveness of market actors within those market systems.

USAID Compete supports activities in its focus sectors by encouraging stakeholders in the private sector to design and implement initiatives through an adaptive project management approach. This method allows activities and resources to be adjusted based on changing market conditions and new information. Many activities start as pilot projects, allowing room for learning, adaptation, and testing for scale-up once successful. This process aims to create broader impacts, drive systemic changes, and enhance the ability of firms, organizations, and the Government of Kosovo (GoK) to solve problems effectively.

### ***Detailed Program Description***

This section provides an overview of the key grant-funded activities aimed at supporting Kosovo's primary sectors, including Wood Processing, Food Processing, ICT, and Prefabricated Housing Construction. These activities focus on enhancing the export competitiveness of these sectors by addressing critical areas such as export readiness, pricing strategies, market insights, product adaptation, operational efficiency, strategic partnerships, and knowledge sharing of export best practices. Applicants have the flexibility to choose one or more of these interventions for their proposed projects, allowing them to customize their activities based on their specific business needs and objectives. This approach is designed to help advance Kosovo's position in international markets by providing targeted support where it is most needed.

**New Market Penetration:** Grant-funded activities to assist firms to penetrate non-traditional 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.

**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.

**Enhance Pricing and Positioning Strategies:** Grant-funded activities will provide support to help businesses develop competitive pricing models and market positioning strategies that are tailored to the specific needs and dynamics of target markets. By refining these strategies, companies will be better positioned to attract and retain international customers.

**Encourage Strategic Partnerships, Alliances, and Joint Ventures:** Grant-funded activities will promote the development of strategic partnerships, joint ventures, and/or

industry alliances to enhance the capabilities of Kosovo businesses to penetrate specific targeted export markets. By fostering collaboration between companies, service providers, and industry stakeholders, grant-funded activities aim to create opportunities for joint ventures and other forms of partnership to enable shared market access.

**Utilize Market Insights for Strategic Planning:** Grant-funded activities will integrate market insights and research to support the strategic decision-making process of businesses. This will involve adapting products and services to meet customer needs and staying ahead of evolving market trends. Businesses will receive guidance on leveraging data to drive their strategic growth.

**Enhance Operational Efficiency:** Grant-funded activities will promote streamlined processes and effective resource management to help businesses increase productivity and reduce operational costs. This will involve optimizing internal workflows, adopting best practices, and leveraging technologies that can drive efficiency gains.

**Promote Knowledge Sharing on Export Best Practices:** Grant-funded activities will create opportunities for businesses to share their experiences and best practices related to export and market entry. Through workshops, networking events, and peer learning initiatives, companies will be able to learn from each other and collectively enhance their capacity to succeed in international markets.

### ***Intended target group***

The intended target group of beneficiaries for the grant-funded activities includes local organizations, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), industry associations, diaspora-based organizations, and consortia of companies operating within the key sectors of Wood Processing, Food Processing, ICT, and Prefabricated Housing Construction. Specifically, the end beneficiaries should be businesses that are export-oriented or have the potential to enter international markets and are willing to improve their competitiveness and operational efficiency. The grants are particularly aimed at businesses that demonstrate a commitment to innovation, collaboration, and sustainable growth, including those led by disadvantaged groups such as women and minorities. Additionally, business associations and consulting firms that can provide targeted support and expertise to help these industries thrive are also encouraged to participate. The goal is to ensure that the grant activities benefit a broad range of stakeholders who are committed to contributing to Kosovo's economic development and global market integration.

### ***Intended activities***

The intended activities by selected grant activity implementers, in collaboration with beneficiary companies, should include one or more of the following (the list is tentative):

- **Tailored Support and Mentorship:** Customized support and mentorship will be provided to help companies enhance their operational processes. This will focus on improving documentation practices, ensuring regulatory compliance, and meeting export prerequisites.

- **Development of Resource Guides and Tools:** Basic resource guides and tools will be developed to assist businesses in preparing for entry into new markets or expanding within existing ones. These guides will provide practical information and step-by-step instructions.
- **Trade Missions and Networking Events:** Trade missions and networking events will be organized to give businesses the opportunity to showcase their offerings and establish valuable connections in new regions. These events will serve as a platform for initiating contacts and exploring market opportunities.
- **Peer Learning Opportunities:** Opportunities for peer learning will be created, enabling businesses to share their practices related to operational improvements. These activities will facilitate the exchange of experiences and knowledge among participants.
- **Develop Differentiated Value Propositions:** Businesses will receive support in developing differentiated value propositions to align with the specific needs of target markets. This will enhance their brand positioning and relevance in these markets.
- **Market Research:** Conducting comprehensive market research to help companies identify potential markets for their products and services. This research will include analyzing market size, target customers, and competitors to make informed decisions.
- **Networking Activities:** Facilitating networking opportunities by helping businesses build relationships with potential customers, suppliers, and distributors in target markets. This will be done through attendance at trade shows, conferences, industry events, and events in shops and showrooms.
- **Brand Development:** Assisting companies in developing a strong brand to differentiate their products and services in the market. This will include creating a compelling brand identity, messaging, and marketing materials.
- **Online Presence:** Supporting businesses in building a strong online presence, which is crucial for success in today's digital age. Activities will include developing a website, using social media effectively, and establishing an e-commerce platform.
- **Physical Market Presence:** Providing support for renting space in showrooms or shops to establish a direct presence in certain target markets. This presence will help businesses showcase their products directly to buyers, enhancing the chances of selection.
- **Facilitating Market Access:** Supporting activities that facilitate market access to establish a long-term presence for Kosovo products in specific regional markets such as the Middle East, Africa, or North America. These activities aim to develop



sustainable market entry strategies that will position Kosovo's products effectively in these regions.

### ***Expected illustrative results***

Applicants should propose realistic and attainable results throughout the grant period, as well as the expected long-term impact of the activities. Illustrative list of expected results is listed below:

- At least 5 businesses report new sales in target export markets, collectively generating \$500,000 in additional revenue from new leads resulting from USAID Compete's supported initiatives.
- At least 2 new partnerships are formed, leading to expanded distribution/sales networks, collaborative marketing efforts, or joint projects that create new business opportunities.
- At least 1 company shows improved export readiness, initiating market entry activities, securing initial contracts, or generating preliminary sales in new regions.
- At least 5 businesses within USAID Compete's sectors of interest actively engage in knowledge-sharing and networking activities.
- At least 1 company implements operational improvements that reduce costs or boost productivity, collectively saving an estimated \$20,000 among participants.

### ***Section 2 – Award Information***

Subject to the availability of funds, the Activity intends to provide grant funds to be allocated over an estimated period of 4 months. The anticipated award date is 30 January 2025, and the anticipated period of performance of the grant is expected to be February 2025 – May 2025. The Project anticipates the awarding of up to four (4) Fixed Amount Awards under this RFA. Under a Fixed Amount Award, all payments will be a fixed sum payable upon completion of activity milestones, which will be defined in detail during grant agreement negotiations. The size of the award per successful application shall be up to 80,000 EUR with the total available fund for grants being 210,000 EUR.

***Successful applicants are encouraged to have a cost share of the overall cost of the activity.***

### ***Section 3 – Eligibility Information***

All awards issued under this RFA will be subject to the eligibility requirements set forth below. Eligible organizations include:

- Legally registered Kosovo or US-based entities, institutions, or organizations. Third-country organizations may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Non-profit/NGOs, business associations and chambers, regional development

agencies, public educational institutions (institutes, extension services, etc.), or commercial and/or for-profit organizations that understand that no profit or fee will be allowed under the grant agreement.

**The intended applicants are** local organizations, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), industry associations, diaspora-based organizations, and consortia of companies operating within the key sectors of Wood Processing, Food Processing, ICT, and Prefabricated Housing Construction.

Eligible organizations shall be able to comply with and achieve the proposed Program Description, including Goals and Objectives, display sound financial, administrative, and technical management in the form of a system of controls that safeguards assets and protects against fraud and waste, and have a satisfactory performance record and record of business integrity and ethicality.

Ineligible organizations include:

- Individuals.
- Political parties or institutions.
- Organizations that advocate, promote, or espouse anti-democratic policies or illegal activities.
- Organizations that intend to use funding for religious objectives.
- Entities that have misused USAID funds in the past.
- Entities that are on the list of parties excluded from federal procurement and non-procurement programs or the United Nations Security Sanctions Committee or have owners or managers that are so excluded.

Prior to the award of a grant under this RFA, successful applicants will be required to sign a Certification Regarding Terrorist Financing certifying that the applicant’s organization does not provide and has never provided assistance to terrorists for terrorist activities. Successful applicants may also be required to sign other Certifications applicable to the award. The certifications are attached as Annex C.

Prior to the award of a grant under this RFA, successful applicants will also be subject to a pre-award responsibility determination, which will be conducted by USAID Compete. In making this determination, the Activity will determine whether the applicant possesses the organizational capacity, financial capacity, internal controls, procurement systems (if required), and past performance record in order to successfully implement the grant activities. Only organizations that are determined to be responsible will be eligible for an award.

No activities will be considered that have a negative environmental impact that is not mitigated.

**Minimum requirements for applicants**

Requirements	Documentary evidence
<b>Administrative compliance</b>	



Legally registered entity	Registration certificate
<b>Professional and technical capacity</b>	
Applicant must have carried out similar initiatives in the past or participated in projects that involve exports (e.g., trade fairs, B2B events).	Any relevant supporting information that provides evidence of capacity for the application to implement proposed activities
Applicant proposes at least 2 (two) professional staff in the field relevant to proposed objectives, ad activities.	CVs of 2 professional staff members

#### **Section 4: Information Session**

The Project intends to hold an information session allowing anyone interested in applying to the RFA to ask questions about the application process. The information session will be held on Monday, December 9, 2024, from 11:00 – 12:30 at the Project’s premises at Str. Ukshin Hoti, No. 120, Building C3/3/b, 1st floor. All interested applicants are welcome to attend and should RSVP to [kosovogrants@dt-global.com](mailto:kosovogrants@dt-global.com) by Friday, December 6, 2024, to ensure space availability. Participants can also attend the presentation via [Microsoft Teams](#).

#### **Section 5 – Application and Submission Information**

Applicants should submit written applications to Grants Manager **via email delivery** at the following project email address: [kosovogrants@dt-global.com](mailto:kosovogrants@dt-global.com).

The application should be clearly marked in the subject of email with the appropriate RFA number i.e., RFA#03-2024. The closing date for submission of applications is Wednesday, January 8, 2025, and the closing time for submission of applications is 17:00 hours local time. Late applications will not be considered.

All applications in response to this RFA shall consist of a **technical proposal** and a **budget proposal**. The technical and financial proposals should each be submitted as separate files.

#### **Technical proposal**

The technical proposal must be no longer than 10 pages in length. Applications submitted in excess of more than 10 pages will not be reviewed. All supporting documents and CVs of the proposed key staff members, which the applicants are required to submit (please see Annex A - Application Form – Technical Proposal), will not be counted toward the 10-page limit. The technical proposal must be submitted in English, while the supporting documents can be provided in original language or English. The technical proposal shall consist of the following:

- 1. Description of the planned activities and proposed methodology for**

**implementation of the activities (approx. 6-7 pages)**

- State the objectives and define the activities under each objective, including anticipated outcomes and impact
- Produce a timeline elaborating on the timing, sequence and duration of the proposed activities, taking into account mobilization time. Propose an elaborate and detailed implementation action plan
- Describe how the “expected deliverables” outlined in Section 1 will be realized.

**2. Background on the applicant/organization (approx. 2-3 pages)**

- Describe the previous experience of the applicant in implementing similar programs (demonstrated by documentary evidence)
- Provide a list of professional staff with demonstrable experience to implement the project

**3. Proposed list of professional staff with demonstrable experience to implement the project**

The technical proposal should be submitted using **Annex A – Application Form – Technical Proposal**.

***Cost proposal***

The cost proposal shall be submitted as a separate file from the technical proposal. Applicants are advised to fill in the budget form as detailed as possible. Lump sums will not be accepted. Applicants are allowed to add new lines and modify the budget lines (not Budget Headings) according to the needs of the proposal’s activities. Applicants should also provide a detailed budget description.

The required format for the budget is included as **Annex B - Budget Form**.

According to the Mandatory Standard Provisions for Non-U.S., Nongovernmental Recipients, uniform administrative requirements on cost principles for federal awards 2 CFR 200, Subpart E, Cost Principles, and Cost Principles for Commercial/For-Profit Organizations (48 CFR 31.2 Federal Acquisition Regulations), taxes, including value added taxes, are not allowable costs where an exemption or refund of such taxes’ mechanism exists. Please do not budget VAT cost in the project budget breakdown for the costs incurred within Kosovo.

***Section 6 – Application Review Information***

Applications will be evaluated in accordance with the criteria set forth below. The criteria have been tailored to the requirements of this RFA. Applications should note that these criteria serve to: (a) identify the significant matters which Applicants should address in their applications, and (b) set the standard against which all applications will be evaluated.

To the extent necessary, the Project may request clarification and supplemental materials from Applicants whose applications have a reasonable chance of being selected for the Award. The entry into the discussion is to be viewed as part of the evaluation process and shall not be deemed as indicative of a decision or commitment upon the part of the Project to make an award to the Applicants with whom discussions are being held.

Applications will be evaluated by the Grants Selection Committee (GSC) on the basis of 100 possible points. The weighting of various sections will be as follows:

**Evaluation Criteria:**

- **Description of Proposed Activities (30 points):** Evaluates the clarity, feasibility, and alignment of proposed activities with the project's goals. High points are awarded for well-structured plans that demonstrate practical steps toward achieving objectives.
- **Profile and Track Record of the Applicant (15 points):** Assesses 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.
- **Impact and Value of Projected Results (exports) (25 points):** Focuses on the expected outcomes, with an emphasis on realistic, measurable growth and other impactful results subject to the scope of the activity. Higher scores are awarded for clear, achievable goals that contribute to market expansion, particularly in non-traditional export markets.
- **Cost Effectiveness and Budget Justification (20 points):** Looks at the budget's justification and efficient use of resources. Points are awarded for a well-thought-out budget that maximizes impact within the scope of the program.
- **Sustainability and Long-Term Impact (10 points):** Considers how well the project's impact can be maintained over time. Points are awarded for strong plans that demonstrate lasting benefits beyond the activity's duration.

Selection of the Applicant for the award will be made by the Project's GSC. Prior to the award of any resultant grant agreement, the Project must obtain prior approval from USAID.

***Section 7 – Award and Administration Information***

**Unique Entity Identifier (UEI):**

Beginning April 4, 2022, the Unique Entity ID (UEI) from SAM.gov is the authoritative identifier for those doing business with the federal government. The DUNS Number is no longer valid for federal award identification. The Unique Entity ID is generated in SAM.gov ([www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov)). If you are registered in SAM.gov (active or not), you already have a Unique Entity ID. It is viewable at SAM.gov.

Whereas applicants can submit their applications without the UEI number, however, grant recipients must provide the UEI before they can receive any funding.

Due to delays in processing of UEIs, applicants are encouraged to apply for the number early.

**Notifications:**

The successful applicant(s) will receive written notice from the Grants Manager informing the applicant(s) that the Project either intends to award a grant to the applicant without negotiation or that the Project intends to engage the applicant(s) in further negotiations

with respect to a potential grant award. Negotiations conducted after the receipt of an application do not constitute an obligation on the part of the Project to award a grant. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing by the Grants Manager. Any resultant award will be subject to the terms and conditions of the Prime Contract for the USAID Kosovo Compete Activity, Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-governmental Recipients.

**Pre-Award Assessments**

The Project must be fully satisfied that the applicant has the capacity to adequately perform in accordance with the principles established by USAID. An award can be made only after the Project makes a positive determination that the applicant possesses, or has the ability to obtain, the necessary management competence to carry out the grant activity and will practice mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets funded by USAID. At a minimum, the Project will conduct a pre-award assessment on shortlisted applicants in order to make determination of responsibility.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Project or the U.S. Government, nor does it commit the Project or the U.S. Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application.

***Section 8: Annexes***

Annex A: Application Form – Technical Proposal

Annex B: Budget Form

Annex C: Certifications