



MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Call for Proposals

Notice

This is an open call for proposals. All eligible firms and entrepreneurs in the Information Technology-enabled Services (ITeS) industry, as well as business associations, are invited to partner with training providers, and to submit a proposal. Proposals will be evaluated by an independent committee of local and international experts, and successful applicants from the *services sector* will be awarded funding to implement their skills development solutions.

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Abbreviations

ACTT	Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago
GoRTT	Government of the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago
GSPP	Global Services Promotion Programme
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IT	Information Technology
ITeS	Information Technology-enabled Services
MPD	Ministry of Planning and Development
PEU	Programme Execution Unit
PS	Permanent Secretary
SME	Small or Medium Enterprise
T&T	Trinidad and Tobago

Definitions

Coalition	A temporary alliance of firms, entrepreneurs, and/or business associations for the collaborative design and implementation of a proposed skills development solution
Contract	The legal agreement signed by the parties and all the attached documents listed in any appendices
Contracting Authority	The individual or entity that has the legal authority to enter into contractual agreements on behalf of the Ministry of Planning and Development
Entrepreneur	An individual who runs a small business
Non-technical Training	Training to develop skills that are broadly applicable across job titles and industries. These skills encompass a person's ability to relate with others, as well as his/her ability to optimize job performance
Signing Authority	The individual or entity that has the legal authority to enter into contractual agreements on behalf of the participating firm, association, coalition, or training provider
Skills Development Solution	A comprehensive training plan that addresses identified skills gaps within a given workforce, and which targets specific business needs
Technical Training	Training to develop skills in specific Information Technology (IT) areas such as programming and design, operating systems, mobile application development tools, information security, Web development design, operating systems and databases etc.
Training Provider	Training providers may include training centers, education institutions, universities, community colleges etc. They may be public or private entities

Background

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT) has defined an economic transformation agenda that aims to move the country away from its heavy dependence on the oil and gas sector. Toward this end, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is supporting the Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD) with two (2) important initiatives, which seek to promote economic diversification. They are; (i) the Manpower Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago Technical Cooperation (TT-T1058), and (ii) the Global Services Promotion Programme (GSPP) (TT-L1038). The former is geared towards identifying “skills demand” in a maximum of three growth sectors; assess the capacity of the education system to graduate individuals with the required skills; as well as review key social policies, to better address current and future skills gaps; while the GSPP is primed to advance the country’s position as a preferred source for Information Technology-enabled services (ITeS)¹. The GSPP will achieve this through sector specific training and support services, investment promotion and branding, and capacity building to improve the business climate and regulatory framework.

Notably, these initiatives share the common objective of supporting efforts to increase the quantity and quality of skilled human capital in Trinidad and Tobago. In the case of the ITeS sector, while Trinidad and Tobago is well positioned to grow due to factors such as; (i) a native English speaking population with high levels of educational attainment, (ii) a similar time zone to the United States of America and Canada, as well as (iii) robust IT infrastructure; the country still lacks the qualified labour pool needed to fully capitalize on its ITeS potential.

Within this context, the Ministry of Planning and Development is launching the *Skills for Global Services Call for Proposals*. The “call for proposals” will initiate a competitive award process that promotes employer ownership for the design and implementation of appropriate skills development solutions in the ITeS sector. Traditionally, skills gap analysis was a top-down exercise carried out by consultants, who subsequently recommended corrective measures for implementation by industry players. However too often, this approach resulted in a weak alignment between industry needs and the proposed solutions. To address this shortcoming, the current process presents a novel approach with respect to closing existing skills gaps. This approach allows firms/entrepreneurs in the ITeS sector, as well as business associations, to drive the end-to-end process of needs identification, solution design, as well as implementation.

¹ ITeS cover a gamut of cross-border services delivered over electronic networks. These services provide employment options in areas such as application and content development; contact/call centers; transcription, billing, processing, and other back office services; data warehousing; logistics management and geographical information systems (GIS), among many others.

Objectives of the Skills for Global Services Call for Proposals

The objectives of the call for proposals are:

- Increase the availability of human capital to support the growth and competitiveness of businesses in the ITeS industry
- Provide the skills required to prepare the ITeS industry to promote exports and foreign investment
- Equip individuals with world-class certified skills thereby improving the caliber of the workforce
- Promote the development of curricula aligned to local ITeS industry needs
- Secure a participatory and transparent process of resource allocation for skills development

During the process, firms/entrepreneurs/business associations, working in partnership with training providers, will submit proposals outlining critical skills gaps, the actions needed, the methodology to be used, and the funds required to address deficits. It is anticipated that a range of skills development solutions will be funded, including both technical and non-technical skills, and that these solutions will utilize a variety of training modalities.

Anticipated Benefits of the Skills for Global Services Call for Proposals

- Greater access to IT skills
- Strengthened relationships between the public sector, private sector, and academia for skills development
- Better alignment of the supply of training with market demand – by encouraging private and public sector participation in skills needs assessment and solution design
- Greater sustainability and effectiveness of the “development model” through the implementation of a skills development strategy in tandem with a wider industry promotion strategy
- Greater public/private co-investment and co-responsibility
- Capacity building in both the public and private sectors, in support of more effective and relevant skills development strategies

Eligibility Criteria for Applicants

Firms or entrepreneurs in the Information Technology-enabled Services industry, as well as business associations, in partnership with training providers may submit proposals in accordance with the guidelines provided below.

Note that:

- Firm or entrepreneurs should be in the Service sector, be currently exporting and wish to expand, OR wish to export in the near-term.
- Training providers may include training centers, education institutions, universities, community colleges etc. and can be public or private.
- Regional and international training providers can also participate provided that they are partnered with an eligible firm/entrepreneur.

Applications are welcomed from the following firms, entrepreneurs, and associations:

1. A local or international firm with ten (10) or more employees that is registered in Trinidad and Tobago, and can provide evidence that it has been in operation for at least ten (10) months prior to its participation in this call for proposals. The firm must not be state-owned.
2. A coalition of local and/or international firms that are registered in Trinidad and Tobago, and can provide evidence that they have been in operation for at least ten (10) months prior to their participation in this call for proposals. The firms must not be state-owned.
3. A business association representing firms/entrepreneurs that are registered in Trinidad and Tobago, and can provide evidence that each firm/entrepreneur has been in operation for at least ten (10) months prior to their participation in this call for proposals.
4. A coalition of entrepreneurs that are registered in Trinidad and Tobago, and can provide evidence that they have been in operation for at least ten (10) months prior to their participation in this call for proposals.
5. Any combination of the above.

Training providers must fall into one of the following categories:

6. Local training providers that are registered with the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT).
7. Local training providers that offer programmes/certifications, which are quality assured by either the ACTT, National Training Agency (NTA), or other legitimate external quality assurance agency.
8. International training providers that meet the IDB's eligibility criteria, and offer programmes/certifications, which are quality assured by either the ACTT, NTA, or other legitimate external quality assurance agency.

Partnerships between a firm, coalition, or association AND a training provider(s) are the ONLY conduit to receive the awards.

Additional Information on Eligible Partnerships

- Partnerships may only submit one proposal. However, this does not limit a given training provider from partnering with more than one firm, coalition, or association.
- Partnerships must ensure that the design and implementation of their proposal comply with the laws and regulations of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and the policies of the Inter-American Development Bank. Refer to Annex I for relevant IDB policies.
- Partnerships must designate a “lead entity” for contracting purposes.

Eligibility Criteria for Proposal Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated and ranked only if they meet the following:

- Training and/or curriculum development and/or certification in technical skills must be specific to the ITeS industry. Proposals must include some training in technical skills.
- Proposed skills development solutions that include technical training must lead to certification by a recognized local, regional, or international awarding body. Refer to Annex II for recognized

Caribbean and national awarding bodies.

- Training in non-technical skills and skills for export readiness are also eligible, but optional. Certification will not be required for training in non-technical skills; however, in this case, “pre and post” competency-based training assessments must be built into the project design.
- Training that is provided by employers at the workplace should use industry recognized standards, and in the case of technical training, should lead to certification.
- The total completion time of the implementation of the skills solution (i.e. training and certification processes) should be no longer than 18 months.
- Proposals must be submitted in the format of the template provided in Annex III. Submissions received in any other format will be disqualified.
- Projected expenditures/budgets will be eligible according to the criteria given in the section “Funding Eligibility” below.

Categories of Eligible Proposals

Proposals will be accepted for the following, inter alia:

- Technical training related to the ITeS industry. Refer to Annex IV for indicative technical training.
- Non-technical training related to the ITeS industry. This may include; project management, business analysis communication, interpersonal interactions, teamwork, business English proficiency, and problem solving, etc.
- Training related to ITeS internationalization and export readiness. Refer to Annex IV for indicative internationalization and export readiness training.
- Design of finishing school programmes, inclusive of the development of supporting curricula. Refer to Annex V for background information on finishing school objectives and desired outcomes.
- Training that comprises any combination of the abovementioned categories.

Proposal Options

Two types of proposals will be invited and, for simplicity, will be referred to as OPTION A and OPTION B.

1. OPTION A: Proposals from **firms** that have 10 or more employees and have been operating for at least 10 months, in partnership with a training provider(s)
2. OPTION B: Proposals from **coalitions** of businesses that have less than 10 employees. These coalitions will jointly partner with a training provider(s). To participate, all members of these coalitions should have been operating for at least 10 months

Business associations can also submit a proposal, as long as they partner with a training provider. If a business association is participating, it should apply under OPTION A, if at least one of the participating firms has 10 or more employees, and all members have been operating for at least 10 months.

Requirements for Submitted Proposals

All proposals must include the following:

- General information about the partnership (inclusive of the value proposition and the project organization accompanied by the qualifications of designated personnel, where appropriate)
- Rationale for participation (inclusive of the reason why the proposed skill development activities cannot be executed without the support of the programme, and how the proposal fits into a larger business context. Partnerships will be asked to present a logic chain between the challenges faced by the firm/coalition/association and the skills development solution that is being proposed)
- The need to be addressed (a brief description of the training issues affecting the firm/coalition; inclusive of the short and medium term skills gaps that have been identified via the preliminary gap assessment)
- Description of the proposed skills development solution's objective, training framework, and design etc. (e.g. types of training required to fill the gaps identified; the learning goals associated with the training identified; the teaching and administrative components; infrastructure and/or institutional strengthening requirements; and the modalities of delivery (e.g. conventional and

technology-enhanced, including distance modalities; exchange etc.)

- Intermediate and final outputs and outcomes (some examples are: i) number of workers trained; ii) number of workers who are assessed and certified; iii) number of curriculum packages developed; iv) number of apprentices hired; v) number of individuals transitioning from unemployment to employment after receiving the training)
- An implementation schedule (inclusive of an operational description of the key activities and milestones)
- Estimated expenditure/budget (inclusive of cost per trainee and anticipated investments made by the firm – which may not necessarily be monetary, but may be in-kind, such as the foregone time for training provided during working hours)
- Procurement plan
- Risk assessment and sustainability of the skills development solution
- Performance indicators that are appropriately allocated over the course of the project lifecycle

Proposals must remain valid for at least ninety (90) days after the deadline date specified in the submission of proposals. The MPD will make its best effort to complete negotiations within this period. However, should the need arise, the MPD may request that the applicants extend the validity period of their proposals. The MPD does not bind itself to accept any of the submitted proposals.

Funding under the Skills for Global Services Call for Proposals

It is in the applicant's interest to provide realistic and cost-effective budgets/projections of expenditure. The contracting authority will assess the estimated budget submitted with a proposal to determine if the projected costs are "reasonable". If these costs are deemed inaccurate due to issues such as; arithmetical errors, unrealistic costs, and/or ineligible costs, the contracting authority reserves the right to request clarification and/or recommend modifications to the budget during the negotiation stage of the process. An amount not exceeding the sum agreed upon between the contracting authority and the successful applicant will be disbursed based on the achievement of project milestones and agreed outputs. The timeframe for funding the implementation of proposals is up to eighteen (18) months.

The proposal must list all applicable costs in Trinidad and Tobago dollars (TTD), solely. The proposal

shall be inclusive of Value Added Tax (VAT) and any other taxes payable as part of the total contract sum.

Funding Eligibility

Only “eligible costs” will be covered by the awards under the Skills for Global Services Call for Proposals. The categories of eligible and non-eligible costs are:

Eligible costs

- Development of curricula
- Development and validation of new standards and assessment instruments
- Development of new certifications or upgrading of existing ones
- Development of classroom or on-the-job training in technical, non-technical and managerial skills, required for the implementation of the proposals. This includes the remuneration of trainers as well as the acquisition of supporting training material, including licenses for curriculum, software and textbooks
- Recurrent operating costs that are required for the implementation of the proposal including, rental of classroom space, cleaning services, utilities, transportation and travel allowance for students
- Acquisition of goods including capital equipment that are wholly purposed for the objective of training – equipment should exceed no more than thirty (30) per cent of the total cost of the proposal
- Minor civil works of an amount not exceeding fifteen (15) per cent of the total cost of the proposal; where such works are required for the installation of goods and equipment related to the project. These works will be limited to minor rehabilitation and refurbishment of the site(s) where the eligible goods and equipment for the project will be installed. All minor civil works undertaken by successful applicants will have to comply with IDB’s environmental safeguards

Non-eligible costs

- Applicants will bear all costs associated with the preparation and submission of their proposal and

the MPD will in no case be responsible or liable for these costs regardless of the conduct or outcome of the evaluation of proposals

- Civil works that include any of the following activities: structural repairs; new construction; excavation; activities that would generate significant quantities of construction debris; and/or any activities that would exceed the restrictions of Category C of the IDB environmental safeguard classification are not eligible under this call for proposals
- This call for proposals will **not** finance the construction of new spaces

How to Apply

Proposals must be in business English. Supporting proposal preparation guidelines and information are available at: www.globalskills.gov.tt

Applicants are expected to examine this call for proposals in detail, as deficiencies in providing the requested information may result in the rejection of applications. To assist with this, a “checklist for completeness” has been provided. Refer to Annex VI for this checklist.

Proposals must include the following statutory documents, as relevant:

1. Copy of VAT Registration Certificate
2. Copy of Board of Inland Revenue Compliance Certificate
3. Copy of National Insurance Board Compliance Certificate

The applicants must prepare one (1) original and six (6) copies of its proposal, each marked original or copy of the documents comprising the proposal. One (1) electronic copy on a USB Flash Drive must also be submitted.

Proposals must be delivered to the Global Services Internationalization Hub, 25 Ramsaran St Chaguanas, Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies. The deadline for proposal submission is **Friday, 23 June 2017, at 4:00 pm**. Any proposals submitted after this deadline will automatically be rejected.

Requests for Clarification

Requests for clarification may be sent to info@globalskills.gov.tt no later than ten (10) days before the deadline for the submission of proposals. The MPD has no obligation to provide clarification to questions

received after this date. All responses to requests for clarification will be given no later than five (5) days before the submission deadline.

The MPD will respond to requests for clarification by standard electronic means and will send the response (including an explanation of the query but without identifying the source of inquiry) to all applicants, as needed.

Should the MPD deem it necessary to amend this call for proposals as a result of a clarification, it will be done by addendum which will be emailed to applicants, as well as posted on the website: www.globalskills.gov.tt

Technical Support Available for the Preparation of Proposals

Supplemental guidance on the development and validation of assessment instruments and/or curricula, the selection of suitable training partners, the development of monitoring and evaluation indicators, as well as further clarification on proposal preparation will be provided to firms, entrepreneurs, and associations who submit the required preliminary documentation by **Wednesday, 10 May 2017, at 4:00 pm**. This guidance will be offered via “clinics” which will be scheduled during the proposal preparation period and facilitated by skills development experts. Once finalized, the dates and times of these clinics will be disseminated, in a timely manner. Applicants are strongly encouraged to fully participate in the clinics.

The clinics will cover:

- Assisting with the selection of suitable training providers and/or certifications, as required
- Identifying managerial and IT technological strategies to promote exports and increase productivity
- Identifying the skill gaps that may limit these strategies
- Assisting with the design of skills development plans
- Providing technical guidance to support the development of high-quality proposals

In addition, the team of consultants who work as part of the GSPP and the Manpower Strategy Technical Corporation will provide neutral and independent guidance in relation to clarification vis-à-vis the information and format needed to submit the proposals.

Evaluation and Selection

Proposals will be evaluated by a knowledgeable and reputable panel of local and international experts, through a formal and transparent process. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by this evaluation committee, which will be set up by the Ministry of Planning and Development. The recommendations of the evaluation committee will be submitted to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Planning and Development for approval.

Notification of Decisions and Contracting

All applicants will be informed via written correspondence from the Ministry of Planning and Development concerning the status of their submission. Letters of award will be sent to successful applicants, and upon acceptance, the partnership will be invited for negotiations.

All successful partnerships will be required to attend mandatory training on relevant financial management, procurement procedures, ethical practices, and reporting requirements. This training will be offered upon acceptance of award by the partnership, and before the first payment is disbursed.

Contingent on the acceptance of the award by the successful applicants, a contract will be entered into between the partnership and the Ministry of Planning and Development ninety (90) working days after receipt of the acceptance. The contract will stipulate the implementation plan of the project and the conditions for payments. Disbursement will be made in tranches, based on completion of project milestones and agreed outputs. Refer to Annex VII for a specimen of the draft contract.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive a notification no later than twenty (20) days following the dissemination of the letters of award. Unsuccessful applications may receive further information on the reasons for their non-selection.

Indicative Timetable

Activity	Date	Time
Publication of the Call for Proposals	Monday, 27 March, 2017	n/a
Deadline for the Letter of Interest for Applicants wishing to Attend the Clinics	Wednesday, 10 May, 2017	4:00 pm
Deadline for the Letter of Interest	Friday, 16 June, 2017	4:00 pm
Facilitation of “Clinics”	Monday, 15 May – Tuesday, 16 May, 2017 (<i>first round</i>)	n/a
Deadline for Submission of Proposals and Proof of Registration	Friday, 23 June, 2017	4:00 pm

This indicative timetable may be updated by the Ministry of Planning and Development at any time during the execution of this call for proposals.

Implementation Oversight

Successful partnerships will be required to submit periodic reports on their implementation progress, as well as to allow for on-site monitoring, where applicable. The reporting and monitoring frequency and format will be agreed upon during the contracting stage. The grounds for partial or total cancellation of funding will be defined in the contract between the successful partnership and the Ministry of Planning and Development.

Conclusion

We welcome your participation in this call for proposals, and for any additional input that you believe may be beneficial.