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the European Union

The European Union, Innovation and Media Partnerships for Action, Collaboration and Transformation in the Western Balkans - (EU-IMPACT-WB)

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (BUSINESS GRANTS)

Issuance Date: 15.03.2021

Submission Closing Date & Time: 02.04.2021 at 16:00 hours

Dear Applicants,

Foundation for Development of Education and Culture Albiz, the implementing partner of EU IMPACT WB in accordance with Grant Agreement 2017/394-404, is seeking applications for Business Grants (tools, equipment, etc – not cash) from qualified Republic of North Macedonia Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) who have focused their business operations in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) or lead innovative enterprises in the country that ensure job retention or creation of new jobs for youth.

The selected Grantees will implement their projects which will contribute towards the achievement of the EU – IMPACT – WB specific objectives:

1. Strengthen regional and local networks of young entrepreneurs and social innovators.
2. Increase knowledge and build skills of young entrepreneurs and social innovators and
3. Increase employment by supporting and linking the existing young entrepreneurs and social innovators to local, regional and international markets, and
4. Increase youth knowledge on labour market demands in accordance with industry development trends driving economic development

Subject to the availability of funds, we anticipate awarding up to eight business grants on or around February 2021. The size of any single grant awarded under this RFA will not exceed EUR 3,200

EU IMPACT WB reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. The EU IMPACT WB requests that the applicants demonstrate their commitment to project success by co-financing the overall amount of the business grant (EUR 3,200) by 15% either with their own funds or through another non EU donor.

For the purposes of this project this RFA is being issued and consists of this cover letter and the following:

- Section I – Funding Opportunity Description;
- Section II – Award Information;
- Section III – Eligibility Information;
- Section IV – Application Submission Information & Contacts;
- Section V – Application Review Information;
- Section VI – Award Administration Information;
- Section VII – Other Information; and
- Section VIII – Attachments.

Thank you for your interest.

Section I: Funding Opportunity Description

IA. Background – Introduction

The EU IMPACT WB is a 38 months' project and is implemented in five locations across the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia).

The project supports the recommendations set forth in the European Commission's "Multi-Country Indicative Strategy 2014-2020" with focus on regional structures and networks – under the education and employment platform. In addition, it supports national employment and country strategies in all five proposed project locations. Furthermore, this action has a significant positive impact in addressing the recommendations presented in the EU Progress Reports for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia, which invites governments, in particular to enhance youth support and employment.

The overall Theory of Change guiding the action proposes that by supporting non-traditional income generating opportunities in the region, namely (social) entrepreneurship and business process outsourcing (BPO), the economic conditions for youth will improve. The project has direct relevance to the following: a) Youth employment: the action tackles youth unemployment through entrepreneurship and social innovation and b) Regional & international networking: the heart of the action is to transfer the expertise in entrepreneurship, social innovations and networking to the youth from the region to promote inclusive and sustainable economic development among youth.

The joint action ultimately contributes to strengthen Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), young entrepreneurs and social innovators in the WB in partnership with public authorities and the private sector. The proposed action's theme is focused on supporting the socio-economic conditions, as it supports the creation of new long term jobs. Moreover, the project will touch on contributing to the improvement of the business environment through encouraging knowledge and experience transfer from other countries.

IB. General Criteria for Selection

The EU IMPACT WB aims improving economic prosperity and outlook of the youth in the Western Balkans. Improving the efficiency of the private sector to boost development and generate employment are the two core variables that the proposed action seeks to change. Investment support in core equipment and tools, will be put to the service of private sector as part of the proposed project to eliminate some of the growth barriers that MSMEs face.

A valid proposal under the EU IMPACT WB Business Grants scheme must meet the following criteria:

- Be innovative and unique;
- Be independently originated and developed by the applicant;
- Be consistent with and supportive of EU IMPACT WB objectives;
- Be able to improve economic opportunities in target areas of the EU IMPACT WB project.

Section II: Award Information

1. The EU IMPACT WB project intends to fund a single grant in response to this RFA. Allowable costs must be consistent with EU policies and procedures and be reasonable, allowable, allocable, and well documented and justified for the proposed grant and budget.

2. Under this RFA a grant will be made to the following types of organizations:

- **Micro, Small and Medium¹ Enterprises.**

3. Grants are expected to be less than one year in duration.

4. All Grant applications received by the deadline will be reviewed by the EU IMPACT WB Review and Evaluation Committee (REC) within two weeks of the submission deadline according to the evaluation criteria outlined in this RFA.

5. Submissions received after the Closing Date and Time will not be considered in the review process. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic only electronic applications will be received before the closing date and time.

6. Following submission of your *complete* Application, within **fifteen** calendar days from the deadline for acceptance of applications, the EU IMPACT WB will schedule a date for our REC to review and evaluate your Application. Those applicants receiving the highest scores, up to the point that available funds are expended will move to the pre-award phase of the grant award process. Note: The inclusion of a detailed budget and detailed budget notes (if applicable) will help to expedite the pre-award phase. Once an application has been successfully reviewed and approved by REC, it will be funded upon availability of resources.

7. Simplified, Fixed Obligation or In-Kind Grant Agreement will be awarded.

8. Pre-Award Certifications, Assurances and other Statements of the Recipient –Prior to signing of any grant agreement the EU IMPACT WB will obtain a certificate for the grant recipients Background Check from the Sanctions List Search – Terrorism & Financial Intelligence, Office of Foreign Assets Control: <https://sanctionssearch.ofac.treas.gov/>

Section III: Eligibility Information

This RFA is open to MSME's registered in Republic of North Macedonia (more specific types of organization is referenced in Section II. 2 above).

In addition, Grantees must:

- Be legally registered and recognized under the laws of Republic of North Macedonia [**please provide a copy of your business registration certificate**];
- Have sufficient staff and capacity to undertake business activities;
- Possess the sound managerial, technical, and institutional capacities to achieve operate as a sustainable business.
- Be in good standing with all civil and fiscal authorities;
- Possess financial accountability and maintain detailed records of all expenses;
- Be willing to sign applicable certifications; and
- Not be found on the list of Sanctions List Search – Terrorism & Financial Intelligence, Office of Foreign Assets Control

The following organizations are *not* eligible for EU IMPACT WB grant funding:

- Political parties, their subsidiaries, or affiliates;
- Organizations that appear on the OFAC list;
- Organizations that promote or engage in illegal activities or anti-democratic activities;
- Organizations whose objectives are for discriminatory and/or religious purposes, and whose main objective of the grant is of a religious nature;

¹ According to Law No.03/L-031, a Micro Enterprise is considered any enterprises having 1 to 9 employees, a Small Enterprise is considered any enterprises having 10 to 49 employees Medium Enterprise is considered any enterprises having 50 to 249 employees.

- Any entity affiliated with EU IMPACT WB project its officers, directors, or employees; and
- Non-Governmental Organization (Local or International).

Section IV: Application Submission Information & Contacts

1. The RFA includes all information required to apply for a grant, however, questions on this RFA should be submitted by email (ONLY) to:

E-mail: info@albiz.org.mk

The deadline for questions is 24.03.2021 at 16:00 hours. Both the questions and answers will be distributed to all applicants by 29.03.2021 at 16:00 hours.

The EU IMPACT WB project will not cover any costs related to preparation and submission of the Applications.

Applicants must submit the application using the forms/templates as follows:

- MSME Application Form;
- A copy of the Applicant's valid legal business registration certificate and type of activity;
- A copy of the Republic of North Macedonia ID card.
- Pictures of the business premises where you do your business activity
- Detailed technical specification of the equipment/tools requested to be purchased through grant support

3. Applications can be submitted in English [ONLY] on the following email:

- info@albiz.org.mk

Please insert [**EU IMPACT WB – Business Grant**] in the subject line of the email and include the **WeTransfer Link** on the body of the email to enable us to successfully access the required documents, due to the heavy size. We will only review the applications that possess a WeTransfer Link on the body of the email.

4. The EU IMPACT WB will incorporate its EU Communications and Brand plan to all awards under this RFA.

Section V: Application Review Information

1. A Review and Evaluation Committee (REC) will formally evaluate and rank all proposals independently and uniformly in writing, using an Application Evaluation Form. Rankings will be based on the criteria and points, based on 100 as the maximum points allowed and as follows:

Strategic fit: 20 points

- a) Contribution toward EU-IMPACT-WB programme goals and objectives;
- b) Sustainability of business activities proposed

Technical approach: 30 points

- a) Clearly defined business statement;
- b) Clearly outlined business goals;
- c) Innovative technical approach;
- d) Technical capacity to engage in business process outsourcing (BPO) activities.
- e) Potential obstacles identified and solutions provided.

Organization/business capabilities: 20 points

- a) Past performance on similar projects;
- b) Relevance of staff skills to the proposed business activities

Jobs creation: 10 points

- a) Number of jobs created.

Gender and Disadvantaged consideration: 10 points

- b) Focus on women/youth/minorities issues;
- c) Impact on women/youth/minorities participation.

Cost effectiveness, including co-financing: 10 points

Costs will be evaluated in terms of their feasibility, cost realism, reasonableness, completeness, and cost effectiveness for undertaking activities outlined. As technical scores converge, proposals that maximize direct activity costs including co-financing will be more favourably considered.

2. A Review and Evaluation Committee (REC) consisting of a minimum of three individuals (outside the EU IMPACT WB project) will review and evaluate all applications.

Section VI: Award and Administration Information

- Once the REC has convened and evaluated applications, successful recipients will receive an e-mail from the EU IMPACT WB project team.
- Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing within one week following REC meeting.

Section VII: Other Information

1. The EU IMPACT WB reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. Additionally, all awards pursuant to this funding opportunity are contingent upon the availability of funds and the receipt of a sufficient number of meritorious applications.

2. Applicants are reminded of:

PROHIBITION AGAINST SUPPORT FOR TERRORISM

- (a) The Contractor/Recipient is reminded that the EU IMPACT WB project prohibits transactions with, and the provision of resources and support to, individuals and

organizations associated with terrorism. It is the legal responsibility of the Contractor/Recipient to ensure compliance with the Executive Orders and laws.

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (JUNE 2012)

a. EU IMPACT WB is authorized to terminate this award, without penalty, if the recipient or its employees, or any sub recipient or its employees, engage in any of the following conduct:

(1) Trafficking in persons (as defined in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime) during the period of this award;

(2) Procurement of a commercial sex act during the period of this award; or

(3) Use of forced labor in the performance of this award.

b. For purposes of this provision, "employee" means an individual who is engaged in the performance of this award as a direct employee, consultant, or volunteer of the recipient or any sub recipient.

Section VIII: Attachments

Attachment 1:	MSME Application Form
Attachment 2:	A copy of the Applicant's valid legal business registration certificate and type of activity;
Attachment 3:	A copy of the ID card (owner/director).
Attachment 4:	Pictures of the business premises where you do your business activity
Attachment 5:	A copy of your business portfolio such as brochure, social media pages, website.
Attachment 6:	Detailed technical specification of the equipment/tools requested to be purchased through grant support