

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

TO: Potential Bidders

FROM: Taunya Atwood, Activity Director
Vietnam Workforce for an Innovation and Start-up Ecosystem (WISE) Activity

ISSUANCE DATE: June 23, 2023

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF QUESTIONS: June 30, 2023 11:59pm (U.S. Eastern)

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF PROPOSALS: July 7, 2023 11:59pm (U.S. Eastern)

AWARD CEILING USD 20,000

RE: Request for Proposals to conduct a tracer study of WISE-supported graduates.

Nathan Associates Inc. (Nathan Associates), a Cadmus Company, is implementing the USAID-funded Vietnam Workforce for an Innovation and Start-up Ecosystem (WISE) activity project under the US-Support for Economic Growth in Asia (US-SEGA) project. Nathan Associates is seeking technical and cost proposals from eligible and qualified firms and individuals (“Offerors”) who are able to conduct a tracer study for WISE-supported graduates in Vietnam.

Nathan Associates intends to award **firm fixed price**, deliverables-based contract(s) for this activity and would like this work to begin work as quickly as possible. The award ceiling for this activity is USD 20,000 for the tracer study. Nathan is price conscious and will award this contract to the lowest price, technically acceptable proposal.

This RFP is open to qualified companies and individuals as defined in the technical instructions.

All potential Offerors are also informed that the awardee(s) pursuant to this RFP will not be eligible to participate in subsequent RFPs that involve evaluation of work completed under this RFP, or any other activity that may result in a conflict of interest because of the work performed under this RFP.

Technical and cost proposal requirements, as well as proposal evaluation criteria, are outlined in Annex A. Nathan Associates intends to award a contract to the responsible Offeror(s) whose proposal(s) represents the best value to the U.S. government.

Proposals are due in electronic copy only, in MS Word, MS Excel, and/or PDF formats, by 11:59pm (U.S. Eastern Time) on July 7, 2023. Tables or charts in MS Excel format should be labeled appropriately. The email must not exceed 5MB in size. Proposals must be emailed to Taunya Atwood at Taunya.Atwood@Cadmugroup.com with a copy to Allyson Cross Allyson.Cross@Cadmugroup.com and Daniel Guerrini DGuerrini@Nathaninc.com.

Questions regarding this RFP are due in electronic copy by 11:59pm (U.S. Eastern Time) on June 30, 2023. They must be emailed (no phone questions will be accepted) to Taunya Atwood at Taunya.Atwood@Cadmugroup.com with a copy to Allyson Cross Allyson.Cross@Cadmugroup.com. Potential bidders who do not submit questions should send an email notifying their intent to bid with their contact information if they wish to receive copies of answers. All questions and responses will be circulated to all offerors who ask questions and to those who have expressed their intention to bid.

This RFP, including this cover letter, in no way obligates Nathan Associates to award a contract nor does it commit Nathan Associates to pay for any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a proposal in response hereto. Furthermore, Nathan Associates reserves the right to reject any and all offers, if such action is considered to be in the best interest of USAID.

Sincerely,

Taunya Atwood

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TECHNICAL INSTRUCTIONS

Conduct a Tracer Study for Graduates supported under USAID Workforce for an Innovation and Start-up Ecosystem.

Approx. Start Date: 01 August 2023

Approx. End Date: 31 October 2023

ACTIVITY BACKGROUND

Implemented by Nathan Associates, a Cadmus Company, the US-SEGA Program's goal is to improve the policy environment for sustainable economic growth and prosperity, regional economic cooperation, sound management of institutions and good governance throughout Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Indo-Pacific region, while also expanding markets for U.S. goods and services. US-SEGA is comprised of three components.

- Component 1 helps the APEC forum and its member economies advance regional economic cooperation through addressing barriers to trade and investment.
- Component 2 works with USAID/Asia Bureau and regional and bilateral missions to provide technical assistance and capacity building to implement the Indo-Pacific Strategy, including digital connectivity, regional trade integration (including trade in energy), infrastructure development, private sector partnerships and investment promotion. Component 2 also identifies and disseminates best practices and lessons learned in economic growth programming.
- Component 3 is the buy-in component for US-SEGA, supporting targeted economic growth technical assistance activities for USAID/Asia Bureau field missions, such as the

US-SEGA is managed by the USAID's Asia Bureau Economic Growth team, with funding and strategic direction from the U.S. Department of State on Component 1. Implementation is managed by Chief of Party, Ann Katsiak, and Deputy Chief of Party, Amanda Saville.

USAID Vietnam WISE Activity

The USAID Workforce for an Innovation and Start-up Ecosystem (WISE) Activity provides USAID Vietnam support to identify innovative ways to develop workforce readiness for the country's Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the burgeoning market for 4IR-related skills. WISE collaborates with the private sector and not-for-profit training institutions, employers, and other relevant stakeholders, innovating, testing, and expanding market-driven, sustainable models for a more competitive workforce. WISE activities are carried out in cooperation with Vietnam's Ministry of Planning and Investment's National Innovation Center (NIC). WISE is implemented by Nathan Associates, a Cadmus company, in partnership with its Vietnamese partner, MBI.

WISE has to date supported eight partnerships with training institutions.

In order to gain qualitative and quantitative insights into the workforce experiences of men and women who have completed certification courses at one of the WISE partner training institutions, a tracer study will be conducted, described below.

SCOPE OF WORK

US-SEGA seeks a monitoring and evaluation expert or team or experts (Offeror) for the Vietnam WISE Activity. The M&E Expert(s) will work with US-SEGA, MBI and training partners to identify a sample of 1) at least 10-20 graduates per training partner and 2) a smaller sample (5-10) of those who have successfully completed their training but have not yet found full-time employment in order to explore the following illustrative questions. The following questions are examples only and the final questions for the survey will be approved in coordination with the client:

- Which program is s/he affiliated with?
- Why did s/he decide to pursue reskilling and upskilling in a digital/4IR-related field?
- How did the learner hear about the training institution?
- How did the learner finance her/his training? Was that challenging, and if so, how? What financial arrangement would have made it easier to afford the cost of the programming?
- Was s/he satisfied with the technical training received?
- Was s/he offered soft skills training? (presentation, problem-solving, group work, resume building, interviews).
 - If yes, did they take up this training?
 - If yes, was s/he satisfied with this soft skills training?
- Did s/he receive any mentoring or advice from already-employed role models? If so, what was most useful; if not, what do you wish you would have known or been able to ask of mentors 1) while still in training and 2) after being employed?
- What was the job search process like, did the training institution connect you with employers, how long did it take to find employment?
- What were the initial terms of employment, i.e., was a trial period stipulated, did pay increase after an initial trial period?
- How does s/he find the work culture at her/his place of employment? Are work hours fixed or flexible, is any remote work allowed or encouraged? Are men and women able to work easily together on work teams? Do managers encourage staff to participate in group meetings and present on areas of interest? Does the employer offer any care benefits to employees, and if so, what is the scope; if not, what kinds of care benefits would be desirable?
- Does s/he see an attractive career path to pursue with this employer? If not, how long does s/he intend to work for this employer, and what might be a good next step?
- Looking at the NIC website on digital/4IR career paths, what information found there is useful? What additional information would s/he like to find?

The M&E Expert should prepare a workplan for review with WISE that adapts/amends the above set of questions to make them more appropriate to this set of training partners. Information may be gathered through in-person or telephone/online conversations, as feasible, or may be conducted in the form of focus group discussions if a training partner can provide a small group of graduates to meet.

In undertaking the interviews, notes must be provided. In the case of recorded interviews, interviewees *must* be asked to indicate their consent to have their comments recorded. In the case of all meetings, with or without recording, interviewees should be assured that their identities will be masked in our reporting, so that their comments will not be identifiable to employers or to their training institutions.

Tasks and Deliverables

The successful Offeror will be responsible for the following:

- Workplan and revised questionnaire
- Notes from consultations with learners, including final contact lists

- Draft report summarizing key insights by theme from across the sample
- Final report, responding to comments from WISE and identifying potential success story profiles

Anticipated Phases

1. Workplan and questionnaire development

Upon signing of the contract, the selected Offeror(s) will draft a workplan that will encompass the entire activity as well as any proposed methodology. The offeror will then develop a questionnaire to be reviewed by the WISE team. This questionnaire will explore the benefits of the program as well as any learnings which can be applied to future workforce development programming in the 4IR field. Following submission of the proposed questionnaire, the WISE team, will provide feedback, prior to the start of the study.

2. Data collection

The offeror will conduct a tracer study. Holding key informant interviews with graduates from various training partners which have been supported by WISE. This study will be dynamic, and be structured around the focus questions approved under phase 1. In undertaking the interviews, notes must be taken, which will be utilized in the report writing.

3. Drafting of Study Report

Following the data collection, a brief data analysis is expected to be conducted. Following identification of key findings and learnings, the offeror shall draft a brief report summarizing insights from the sample. This draft will be reviewed by the WISE team and have a revision addressing any comments and recommendations. Finally, this report will identify potential success story profiles which can be highlighted by the WISE project.

QUALIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE OF CONTRACTOR

The Offeror(s) must have extensive experience preparing and delivering trainings, with a track record for being an expert in monitoring and evaluation. selected Offeror(s) may be an individual or a team with this relevant experience.

DELIVERABLES

The selected Offeror(s) shall submit the following deliverables:

| No. | Deliverables | Approximate Date of Delivery |
|-----|--|------------------------------|
| D1 | <u>Workplan and revised Questionnaire</u> | July 30, 2023 |
| D2 | <u>Notes from Consultations with learners, including final contact lists timed agenda for trainings</u> | September 15, 2023 |
| D3 | <u>Draft report summarizing key insights by theme from across the sample</u> | September 30, 2023 |
| D4 | <u>Final report, responding to comments from WISE and identifying potential success story profiles</u> | October 31, 2023 |

DURATION

The period of performance for the envisioned fixed-price purchase order shall run from approximately 01 July 2023 through 31 October 2023.

PROJECT MONITORING AND REPORTING

Throughout the duration of the project, the selected Offeror(s) shall prepare and submit brief progress reports on the status of outstanding deliverables to Taunya Atwood, Quang Pham, and Allyson Cross.

COPYRIGHTS AND OWNERSHIP

The Contractor warrants that it is not aware of any copyright, patent, trademark, trade secret or other proprietary right that it might infringe upon in providing the work required under the Technical Instructions. The Contractor shall indemnify and save Nathan Associates and Nathan Associates' Client harmless from any and all claims, suits, liability, expense or damages for any alleged or actual infringement of any copyright, patent, trademark, trade secret or other proprietary right arising in connection with the work that the Contractor will provide.

Deliverables that will be first produced and submitted to USAID shall be the property of USAID. Additionally, any pre-existing item(s) either from the Contractor or Nathan Associates shall remain the property of that party who created the item(s) throughout the life of the Contract, and said party shall retain all rights and privileges to ownership. Any item that is jointly developed during the course of the Contract shall be either owned by USAID or jointly owned by both parties.

ANNEX A –Proposal Requirements and Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Proposals shall consist of no more than five (5) pages and include details of the approach, timelines for completion of the project, a summary of qualifications of the individual or firm, contact information, and a summary budget. Margins should be 1 inch on each side, text should be single spaced, and font should be no less than 12 point. Detailed specifications of the technical and financial proposals are shown below.

A. Technical Approach

Offerors shall prepare a technical proposal describing how they propose to prepare for and conduct the tracer study, as well as complete the deliverables outlined in this RFP, and generally achieve the objectives of this RFP. An Offeror's technical approach should, at a minimum:

- i. Demonstrate an understanding of monitoring and evaluation,
- ii. Describe the approach in developing a questionnaire, and approach to working with training partners to identify graduates to be utilized as a key informant.
- iii. Describe the approach to collecting qualitative data from graduates,
- iv. Describe how the deliverables in each of the three anticipated phases will be prioritized and accomplished, and

B. Work Schedule

The offeror shall prepare a work schedule for tasks laid out in the technical instructions. The work schedule shall include a short description of the major activities and realistic timeframes for accomplishing each major activity. This work schedule shall be provided in table format as part of the technical proposal.

C. Qualifications and Past Performance

The offeror may be a firm or consultant and must demonstrate a good track record in conducting successful activities and projects of similar nature.

1. The offeror must have expertise in:
 1. Monitoring and Evaluation
 2. Survey design and methodology
 3. Report writing
2. The offeror shall provide information on its capability to carry out the work and relevant experience in conducting similar work. Background to be provided by the offeror shall include:
 - a. Summary of previous work completed that is of similar or related nature to the one described in the technical instructions.
 - b. Two sample(s) of similar work completed. At least one sample should be a PowerPoint from a training the offeror developed and delivered.
 - c. CV(s) of offeror (if individual) or key team members and their roles (if firm).

The offeror shall also attach three (3) specific references with name and telephone numbers of clients that have contracted offeror's services for work that is similar or related to the one requested in this solicitation in the last two years.

An annex should include two examples of relevant work and a detailed budget that will not count towards the 10-page limit.

F. Cost Proposal

Offerors are required to submit a summary budget with the proposal showing a breakdown of cost per deliverable. A detailed budget should be attached as an annex in excel breaking down the cost per deliverable to include the level of effort (individual person days) and cost for each person day.

The award ceiling for this activity is USD 20,000 for the technical work. Nathan is price conscious and will award this contract to the best value for price proposal.

G. Evaluation Criteria

The following table includes the components for both technical and cost evaluations. The total points for a perfect scoring have been included. The evaluation panel will use these weights for evaluating the proposals. The offeror proposing the best overall value for money will be selected. Offerors' proposals need to cover all items listed in the Table below, preferably in the same order presented. No additional information other than what is requested in this Annex A and the Table below will be evaluated.

| Criterion | Maximum Points | Score |
|---|----------------|-------|
| Technical approach (stated ability to meet deadlines proposed above; ability to prepare quality training materials; ability to deliver an engaging and dynamic training for participants) | 30 | |
| Firm Qualifications and Past Performance | 30 | |
| Cost | 40 | |
| Total points | 100 | |

H. Estimated Award Timeline

| Activity | Estimated Dates |
|--|-----------------|
| - Request for proposals issued | 23 June 2023 |
| - Deadline to submit questions | 30 June 2023 |
| - Deadline to submit offers | 7 June 2023 |
| - Award made (after evaluations, reference checks, and USAID approval) | 15 July 2023 |
| - Expected start date | 1 August 2023 |
| - Expected completion date | 31 October 2023 |

I. Language of Submissions

The offers and all deliverables shall be submitted in the English language. All input and material provided by the WISE activity in the course of conducting the work shall be sent to the offeror in English.

J. Submission Information

The technical and cost proposals must be submitted electronically in separate files. Offerors may send their technical offers in MS Word or PDF files. Each email must not exceed 5MB in size. Cost offers should be in MS Word or PDF files with MS Excel files for all tables. Table attachments to the technical proposal in MS Excel may be used where necessary. Electronic versions must be sent to the addressees listed in the cover letter. The offerors are responsible for ensuring that the proposal is received in due form by the deadline provided in the cover letter.

(a) Nathan Associates may award a contract without discussions with Offerors in accordance with FAR 52.215-1.

(b) Nathan Associates intends to evaluate Offerors in accordance with **Annex A** of this RFP and make contract award to the responsible Offeror whose proposal represents the best value to the U.S. Government. "Best value" is defined as the offer that results in the most advantageous solution for the

Government, in consideration of technical, cost, and other factors. For evaluation purposes, technical factors are considered more important than cost factors. Although technical evaluation criteria are more important than cost, the closer the technical evaluation scores of the various proposals are to one another, the more important cost considerations will become. Therefore, the evaluation of costs proposed may become a determining factor in making the award as technical scores converge. The Offeror proposing the best overall value will be selected. Any lack of cost realism, reasonableness, incompleteness, or imbalance in price may be considered in the determination of best value.

(c) Nathan Associates may request additional certifications, clarification and explanations in order to determine the best value proposal.