



WE Act

Business Network Strengthening Opportunities

RFA No.: P4845-2019-001

Date of issuance: March 18th, 2019

Information sharing session: March 25th, 2019 at Pact office (Phnom Penh Center, Building F, 5th floor) from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm.

Due date for questions: March 29th, 2019

Question response: April 1st, 2019

Final submission of concept notes: April 10th, 2019

Applications (5-page concept notes using the specified template) are due by **11:00 pm**

Cambodia time on April 10th, 2019, by email submission to procurementcam@pactworld.org. Submissions must contain the subject "***BNSO–name of organization submitting application***".

Estimated award date: From June 1st, 2019 onwards

1. Background

1.1 Pact

Pact is an international NGO with offices throughout the world with a mission to enable systematic solutions that allow those who are poor and marginalized to earn a dignified living, be healthy and take part in the benefits that nature provides. Pact accomplishes this by strengthening local capacity, forging effective governance systems and transforming markets into a force for development.

1.2 WE Act

On August 15, 2018 Pact began implementation of the five year, USAID-funded, WE Act project. The project aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Women and youth access the knowledge, tools, and resources necessary to succeed in the marketplace and labor force.
2. Young Cambodians increase their constructive civic engagement around socio-economic issues.

WE Act will primarily target young women between the ages of 15 and 35, with the aim of providing them with information, skills, and resources they require to be successful entrepreneurs and leaders, and to help break down the barriers that often prevent them from succeeding in the current context. The project focuses on urban and municipal geographies, starting in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, and then expanding its geographic scope based on demand and opportunity. Importantly, WE Act does not aim to recreate or establish new systems for supporting young entrepreneurs and leaders in Cambodia, but rather to provide holistic assistance (i.e. legal, financial, technical, networking, etc.) to the diverse organizations, institutions, companies, and other actors that constitute the women's empowerment system in Cambodia.

WE Act is looking for short and long-term partners with a vision that includes supporting urban Young Women Entrepreneurs (YWEs) between the ages of 15-35.

This Request for Applications (RFA) is issued as a public notice to ensure that all interested, qualified, and eligible organizations have a fair opportunity to submit applications for funding. For the purposes of this RFA, "organizations" are defined broadly as entities composed of an organized group of individuals which may include non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, community-based organizations, or for-profit entities, but does not include individuals.

Pursuant to the authority granted under USAID award AID-OAA-A-16-00044, Pact is pleased to announce the release of a request for applications (RFA) for funding provided to support Pact's implementation of WE Act Project.

2. Details of Business Network Strengthening Opportunities – Call for Concept Notes

2.1 Why this call?

Business network strengthening

Based on WE Act’s recent analysis to better understand the entrepreneur ecosystem for Young Women Entrepreneurs (YWE) in Cambodia, we recognize that networks play an essential role in supporting YWE, and when effective, promote success for micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) development.

We also know that not all YWE are the same, nor have the same needs. Depending at what stage they are in their business venture, their background, the kind of business they run and their aspirations, they may seek differing types and levels of support. Some YWE may be located in Phnom Penh, others in different urban centers. To address these needs in a relevant and effective way, actors that provide services to entrepreneurs, including business networks, need to be aware of the different needs and dreams of YWEs.

There are multiple potential benefits for a YWE to belong to and to take advantage of a strong business network, including having access to learning opportunities, sharing experiences and practical lessons, receiving peer support around running businesses, having informed access to finance institutions and markets, increasing ability to influence policy and regulations, and accessing mentors and coaches, among others.

In a culture where not all women entrepreneurs benefit from strong family support when running a business, it is important for them to have peers and role-models to inspire and support them to continue with their business endeavors and they are often found within various forms of networks.

There are numerous business networks already established and growing, some larger, some smaller, formal and informal, for women only, or catering to both genders; each with their own vision and mission for how they want to meet the needs of their entrepreneur members.

Women deeply value the role that mentors and coaches play to support their business endeavors. Often networks are a good starting ground to provide coaching and mentoring opportunities within their networks and by reaching out to experts outside. Currently many services exist offering coaching and mentoring to women, which can be about generic and/or specific business skills and follow up or can exist through long-term supportive relationships. Mentorships can be specifically useful to support entrepreneurs to apply the knowledge they learn from trainings and information sharing.

Problem statement:

Amidst the opportunities that strong networks represent, we have also learned that not all women feel that they belong in the current networks as they operate. YWE cite that some networks are more accessible to men and hard for women to ‘break into’, membership fees may not be affordable to all, or they feel a network caters more for the already accomplished and well-connected business woman and less for young women with smaller businesses or startups. As a result, many YWE do not feel comfortable joining a business network, even if they believe it would benefit their businesses.

While coaching and mentoring opportunities are currently available, they don’t always address the specific needs of YWEs. Sometimes mentorship pairing is ‘not the right fit’; such as having

language barriers, trust issues, sector mismatch, a generational gap, or not the right length of support or other issues; resulting in a need to provide more tailored, needs-based mentorship relationships for YWE. Often women express that long term, mentorships would be most beneficial if the relationship is based on trust and addresses the expressed need from the YWEs; which calls for more curated mentorship opportunities.

The opportunity:

Through this RFA, WE Act is opening a call for concept notes that focus on strengthening existing business networks which are responsive to the needs of young women entrepreneurs in enabling them to benefit from a meaningful engagement and participation in the network, providing them with access to the opportunities and options that an active membership can offer as a support for their businesses.

The call is for concepts that demonstrate vision and initiatives to strengthen business networks in one or more of the following areas:

- Ensuring **inclusive representation** of YWEs; providing opportunities for a diverse group of YWE to become meaningful members of relevant business networks
- Increasing opportunities for YWEs to be **active participants and influencers** within the business networks and in their decision-making processes;
- Increasing **effective mentorship and coaching** opportunities for YWEs through the networks.

2.2 Intended results

The intended results for this call **are that more young women entrepreneurs, regardless of their business size or registration, choose to join a business networks or association and experience increased influence on network decisions and service offerings.** With the strengthening of business networks, more young women entrepreneur members meaningfully and actively engage with their peers across the networks. WE Act believes that if young women entrepreneurs find services addressing their needs and a network environment that is conducive for them, they will enjoy and benefit from a wide range of opportunities that networks offer.

As networks can become more inclusive, give all members an equal chance to take part in decision making processes within the networks and create effective and tailor made coaching and mentoring opportunities, YWE's will feel attracted to join the networks that best suit her needs and personality and receive benefit that may result in more prosperous businesses.

In future calls for concept notes and applications, WE Act will focus on improving the access to the multitude of services a network can offer such as access to information, access to appropriate forms of capital, capacity development opportunities both in business skills as well as in leadership skills, and other relevant services.

2.3 Intended target networks

WE Act is interested in partnering with networks that have a passion, objective and mission to meet the needs of YWE between the ages of 15 and 35 in line with the intended impact summarized above. The call is interested in potential partnerships with different types of business networks, including associations, savings groups, youth groups, entrepreneurship support organizations and other networks which are already active in the entrepreneur ecosystem and are currently working with YWE.

2.4 Expected role of selected networks in the program

The following table outlines the focus areas and expected results to be considered in applications. Applicants must be willing and capable to contribute to **one or more of the focus areas** described in the table below:

Focus Areas	Expected Results
Member inclusion	Women entrepreneurs are part of networks that they prefer and choose. Note: WE Act understands that different types of networks have different roles, mission and vision within the broader ecosystem; and that they are best suited to be inclusive within their individual network's context.
Increased agency of YWE in a network	YWEs actively participate, express their ideas and concerns, participate in activities, are listened to and have the opportunity to influence decisions in the networks that impact their business and life opportunities.
Mentorship and coaching	YWEs receive effective and needs-based business mentoring and coaching, in a relevant and impactful way, which will support them to be more successful in their businesses. Note: WE Act understands that Mentor and Coaching is best delivered in association with other capacity building opportunities. Additional capacity building initiatives may be considered under this or subsequent calls.

Illustrative examples of types of activities that might be considered:

- Identify and implement engagement strategies for a wider and more varied group of YWE based on their needs;
- Identify and implement communication strategies to support outreach activities;
- Identify and implement strategies to include a more varied group of YWE as members to the network; and consider what changes are needed to cater to the diverse set of needs, backgrounds and aspirations of the YWE;
- Identify strategies and implement ways of engaging more members in decision making, giving them the opportunity to share their needs, fears and dreams and take those into account when designing future services;
- Identify new and innovative ways of providing YWE with relevant and demand-driven mentorship and coaching opportunities.

2.5 Geographic area

This call will focus on urban areas in Phnom Penh and/or Siem Reap province.

2.6 Grantee eligibility

This call is open to **registered and non-registered entities**, including non-profit, or for-profit entities, that have established activities in Cambodia. To be minimally eligible for funding, applicants must provide full, accurate, and complete information and comply with the following conditions:

- Submit concept note using the template indicated in section 3.3, which can be ***no longer than 5 pages***. Pact will ***not review concept notes that exceed the 5-page limit***;
- Have previous experience of not less than one year working on relevant initiatives in connection to business networking;
- Have current geographic coverage where program activities will take place or prior experience in that area with the ability to quickly begin implementation;
- Must follow all instructions provided in this RFA;
- Be submitted by the deadline as stated in the RFA.

In addition, we seek partners who are ready to adhere to our partnership principles:

- Have expertise and experience in WE Act focus areas;
- Have a vision and objectives in line with WE Act mission (supporting YWEs);
- Be willing to demonstrate impact of the activities undertaken during the partnership;
- Ensure sustainability of the network;
- Embrace learning and adaptation;
- Implement demand-driven approaches to ensure services are catered to YWEs;
- Willingness to engage into a strong cooperative working relationship with Pact.

2.7 Funding

Pact anticipates these awards will be cost-reimbursable, fixed amount award, or in-kind grants. Grant type will be based on the program description and the results of the partner's pre-award risk assessment, which Pact will conduct prior to issuance of the award.

Subject to the availability of funds, Pact **expects to award individual grants to networks that may range between \$50,000 and maximum \$ 200,000 USD. The award amount is flexible and will be finalized based on the final and agreed to scope of work.**

All award activities must have a period of performance of **no less than 12 months and up to a maximum of 36 months, starting not earlier than June 1st, 2019 and must conclude no later than May 31st, 2022.**

Pact is open to grant to multiple networks that submit concept papers in line with the RFA, dependent on the award size of each individual grant.

3. Application and Award Process

3.1. Points of Contact:

General inquiries about this APS and any questions during the APS process should be sent to the following email address:

- procurementcam@pactworld.org

3.2 Submission method for pre-award questions

Interested applicants may submit questions electronically to procurementcam@pactworld.org. The deadline for questions is **March 29th, 2019 at 11:00 p.m. Cambodia time.**

The email subject line should read “**Questions –name of organization submitting application.**”

All questions and answers will be shared with all interested applicants.

3.3 Application Process

Step 1 –Submission of Concept Note

Pact is seeking **concept notes first**. After a detailed internal review and evaluation, Pact may request for select applicants to deliver **an in-person presentation** if it is determined that additional information about the concept is required. Presentations will be held no later than four weeks after the deadline of the final concept note submission in this RFA.

All applications must be submitted using a **Concept Note template** provided on <http://www.pactcambodia.org/>. In all cases, applicants shall clearly explain the rationale for the proposed approaches chosen. To facilitate the competitive review of the applications, Pact only will consider applications conforming to the following.

- The concept note narrative should be clear, concise, and properly organized.
- The document should be in 11-point Times New Roman font, single spaced.
- The concept note should **not exceed 5 pages.**
- Applications should be written in English.
- Concept notes will be submitted electronically to procurementcam@pactworld.org.

All concept notes received by the deadline will be reviewed for responsiveness to the specifications outlined in these guidelines and the application format. Concept notes should consider the evaluation criteria.

Step 2 – (potential) In person presentation

If initial review indicates the concept note merits further consideration, selected organizations may be invited to conduct in-person presentation. The session is no longer than 50 minutes. Pact reserves the right to ask clarifying questions and conduct discussions with any applicant. Asking clarifying questions and conducting discussions with one applicant does not obligate Pact to do so with all applicants.

Step 3– Review by a Decision Panel – Find detail review process in section 4.1.

Step 4 - Participatory Planning or Co-Creation

For the concept note(s) that Pact deems to have sufficient merit, the candidate will move to the Co-creation Stage or participatory planning. It does not mean final selection, but sufficient merit means that the activities fit a strategic need and have a high likelihood of success. Hence, Pact will conduct workshops and hold meetings with the applicant to design and develop a final scope of work (SOW) in line with the expertise and strategic objectives of the candidates in as far as it supports the overall WE Act project objectives. The goal of this stage is for Pact to work with applicants to clearly define activities, outputs, targets, work plan, staffing, and budget for the final award. As a deliverable of this (series of) workshop(s), the applicant will be asked to develop a full SOW and budget.

Step 5 – Pre-Award and Negotiations and Award

If the grant review committee selects a proposal for funding, it will move forward for final approval and award negotiation. During this stage, Pact staff will perform a risk assessment of the organization, and based on that assessment, determine any special conditions or capacity building measures that the organization may be required to adhere to in order to reduce risk. Pact would also finalize any outstanding negotiations on the program description, budget, targets, and work plan to finalize the award instrument and obtain funder approval. Finally, Pact will award grant that receive the necessary approvals successfully complete the pre-award and negotiation stage.

3.4 Concept note submission deadline

Concept notes must be submitted no later than **11:00 pm Cambodia Time on April 10th, 2019.**

3.5 Late submissions, modifications, and withdrawals of application

At Pact’s discretion, any application received after the exact date and time specified for receipt may be considered ineligible for consideration. Applications may be withdrawn by written notice via email or in person by an organization or the authorized representative.

3.6 Conflict of interest clause

Applicants must provide disclosure of any past, present, or future relationships with any parties associated with the issuance, review or management of this solicitation and anticipated award. Failure to provide full and open disclosure may result in Pact having to re-evaluate selection of a potential applicant.

3.7. Submission method for concept notes

Submit Concept notes electronically to procurementcam@pactworld.org. WE Act is not receiving paper Concept notes for this RFA.

The email subject line should read **“BNSO– name of organization submitting application.”** Technical applications and attachments must be submitted in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF.

3.8 Grant solicitation Info-session

Date(s): A grant information session will be held on **March 25th, 2019 from 2:00 pm to 4.00 pm**. All applicants are encouraged to attend, but no more than two people from one organization.

Location: Pact Cambodia office, Phnom Penh Center, Building F, 5th floor, room 561, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Confirmation: An email confirming attendance must be sent to procurementcam@pactworld.org

Language: The workshop will be held in both Khmer and English.

4. Evaluation of Applications

4.1 Review process

WE Act will establish a technical review committee that includes representatives from various departments. All technical reviewers will be subjected to a screening process to eliminate any conflict of interest. Evaluation will be based on the criteria set forth in sections 4.2. The process will be completed within approximately 5–10 business days. The review panel, using the criteria detailed below, will rate applications and make funding recommendations to the program’s grants management unit.

Pact reserves the right to make any number of awards or none at all. Pact is not responsible for any costs associated with the development of concept notes.

4.2 Evaluation criteria

In evaluating the applications, Pact will examine overall merit and feasibility, as well as the specific criteria relevant to each component, as elaborated in the table below. Applicants should note that these criteria both serve as the standard against which all applicants will be evaluated and serve to identify the significant matters that applicants should address in their applications.

Evaluation Criteria	Points
I. Past experience <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applicant demonstrates experience in relevant work, subjects, or activities that align with the proposed concept	15
II. Technical design <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applicant demonstrates a clear and effective design for activities that will lead to the intended results• Design demonstrates knowledge of the current context and responds to needs of YWEs• Design demonstrates innovation and application/intent to learn from past experiences	60
III. Internal capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applicant demonstrates adequate internal capacity to implement the planned activities, as relevant	15

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant demonstrates the necessary institutional infrastructure to implement the planned activities, as relevant 	
<p>IV. Alignment with partnership principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant demonstrates clear alignment with WE Act partnership principles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Have expertise and experience in WE Act focus areas; <input type="checkbox"/> Have a vision and objectives in line with WE Act mission (supporting YWEs); <input type="checkbox"/> Be willing to demonstrate impact of the activities undertaken during the partnership; <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure sustainability of the network; <input type="checkbox"/> Embrace learning and adaptation; <input type="checkbox"/> Implement demand-driven approaches to ensure services are catered to YWEs; <input type="checkbox"/> Willingness to engage into a strong cooperative working relationship with Pact. 	10
Budget (reasonable scale)	No points
Total points	100

Concept Notes with **top scores** will be invited to an in-person presentation at Pact office in Phnom Penh.

5. Terms and Conditions

5.1 Standard provisions

The Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations as applicable will apply to these grants. Applicants can find the provisions at <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mab.pdf>. Printed versions of these provisions are available upon request.

5.2 Permission for use and disclosure

By submitting an application under this RFA, the applicant consents to the disclosure of the documents submitted by the applicant to the reviewers involved in the selection process. Please note that all reviewers are bound by non-disclosure agreements.

5.3 Disclaimers

- Pact may cancel the solicitation and not award any funds.
- Pact may reject any or all applications received.
- Issuance of solicitation does not constitute award commitment by Pact.
- Pact reserves the right to disqualify any application based on applicant’s failure to follow solicitation instructions.
- Pact will not compensate applicants for their response to the solicitation.
- Pact reserves the right to issue an award based on initial evaluation of applications without further discussion.

- Pact may choose to award only part of the activities in the solicitation or to issue multiple awards based on the solicitation activities.
- Pact reserves the right to waive minor application deficiencies that can be corrected prior to award determination to promote competition.
- Pact may contact applicants to confirm contact person, address, and that the application was submitted for this solicitation.
- Pact may contact listed past performance references without notice to the applicant. Pact also reserves the right to contact other past performance information sources that the applicant did not list in the application.
- By submitting an application, the applicants confirm they understand the terms and conditions.