



RURAL AND INFORMAL ECONOMY SKILLS FUND CALL FOR PROPOSALS

1. The Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development Programme is a 5 year partnership between the ILO and the Danish Africa Commission which is supporting the social partners in Zimbabwe (Benin and Burkina Faso) – government, trade unions, employers and civil society organizations – to address the challenges of youth employment and rural development. The development objective of the ILO Skills Programme is to strengthen skills development systems that improve employability, promote access to employment opportunities and increase incomes for inclusive and sustainable growth. The immediate objective of the Skills Programme for the period 2010 – 2014 aims to achieve quality improvements in traditional apprenticeships in the informal economy, and market driven community-based technical and vocational skills development in rural areas to close the skills gap and equip more young women and men in the informal and rural economy with skills that will improve their employability in more productive and decent work.
2. The skills training strategy focuses broadly on two main areas of action: 1) introducing the ILO's Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) methodology in rural communities, and 2) improving the Quality of delivery of training in Informal Apprenticeship (QIA) in the informal economy. The post-training strategy includes making microfinance and business development service markets work for youth and their self-help groups or cooperatives. And in order to ensure local ownership and sustainability, national and local stakeholders are trained and actively engaged in the design and implementation of the programme tools and methodology. In addition, the programme approach pays attention to value chains and assures clear roles for the private sector – for example farmers' organizations, input suppliers, warehouse operators, buyers, traders, and manufacturers are involved in skills training as trade or industry experts. Evidence suggests that once the subsistence requirements of the producers' families and local communities have been met, there are three main sources of demand: export markets (international and regional), domestic urban markets, and food processing. As such, the involvement of the private sector is vital to facilitate access to high value markets.
3. By the end of 2014, the number of beneficiaries who are in employment, either wage-employed or gainfully self-employed, or who have increased their income is expected to reach 4,480 (70% of the total beneficiaries) with 2,380 from the TREE project and some 1,400 apprentice graduates and 700 master craft persons from Informal Apprenticeship project.
4. The Skills Fund is a grant which enables youths and craftpersons who normally lack collateral security to access credit and related services from local commercial and non commercial providers of microfinance. The first objective of the Skills Fund is to make microfinance markets work for youth by facilitating post training access to group and individual business loans for graduates seeking self employment under the TREE and QIA projects. It is intended to help youth savings and credit cooperatives and self-help groups to regenerate. The second objective of the Fund is to assist Craftpersons to access markets, working capital, appropriate tools and improve their work practices for better business which in-turn creates demand driven informal apprenticeship and wage employment opportunities for youth.
5. In June 2011, the ILO Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development Programme is launching a single call for proposals for the Skills Fund from commercial [Banks and Microfinance Institutions] and non-commercial entities [qualified NGOs , appropriate public institutions, cooperatives and other non-profit entities] legally registered and operating in Zimbabwe. Three (3) projects will be selected on a competitive basis from applications received and to each will be awarded a grant not exceeding US\$150,000. The total grant for this first call is US\$450,000. A local as well as International Selection Committee will make recommendations for the award of grants to those project applications which best meet the aims of the Fund. The recommendations will be based on set selection criteria and appraisal from experts. The selection committee reserves the right to award more or less the stated amount depending on the quality of the proposal.
6. Eligible Applicants for the grant are local commercial [Banks, Microfinance and other private Institutions] and non-commercial entities [qualified NGOs, appropriate public institutions, youth cooperatives and other non-profit entities] legally registered and operating in Zimbabwe.
7. **To apply for the grant please send an expression of interest (signed letter on letterhead) to Harare@ilo.org. You will receive application guidelines and forms. All proposals should be emailed to Harare@ilo.org before the end of business day 30 June 2011. Proposals received after the deadline (including e-mails) will not be considered. Proposals not following the guidelines will be disqualified automatically.**



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