



RFP25-01

Request for Proposal – Local Market Research

Opening Date: August 19, 2025
Closing Date: September 19, 2025

Trade Facilitation Office (TFO) Canada

1. Introduction

1.1 About

TFO Canada (Trade Facilitation Office Canada) is a non-government non-profit organization that catalyzes economic growth through sustainable and inclusive trade partnerships for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in developing countries.

TFO Canada assists SMEs and Trade Support Institutions (TSIs) from developing countries to access international markets through information, advice, and contact services. Since 1980, TFO Canada's internationally experienced project staff and sectoral experts have been providing trade promotion and capacity-building services to tens of thousands of SMEs and Trade Support Institutions (TSIs)/Trade Promotion Organizations (TPOs) from Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Background:

To effectively align countries' export offer with the demand of the Canadian market and support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the countries where TFO Canada operates, it is essential to establish a strategic program focusing on addressing the needs of SMEs, the export potential of the target country and the specific requirements of Canadian and International buyers/demand.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (the "RFP") is to solicit proposals from highly qualified, experienced consultants' groups or consulting firms (the "Proponent") to develop comprehensive country chapters (local market research). These chapters will cover selected economic sectors, export offers, and incorporate cross-cutting themes including **gender equality, governance, environmental sustainability, climate resilience, access to finance, and digital technology**. The expected research topic includes: i) Exportable products and or services in the indicated sectors and disadvantaged regions, ii) Market Trends, iii) Challenges related to market access in Canada (and internationally, where applicable), as well as sector-specific barriers facing SMEs, iv) Social Considerations: Issues, regulations, gender equality and women empowerment, and work best practices (including health and safety, labour rights, wages etc.) in each identified sector, v) Environmental and Climate Change Issues, Regulations, and Best Practices in each identified sector and disadvantaged regions, vi) Governance, vii) Access to Finance for Export Growth and Climate Change Resilience for SMEs from the selected sectors, and viii) Digital Technology for Export Competitiveness and ESG Readiness (see detailed description in Schedule A - Expected Activities and Deliverables – Activity 2 on page 17).

Deliverables will support strategic planning and policy development by providing comprehensive, evidence-based insights tailored to each country's context.

This RFP is designed to provide the Proponent with the information necessary to prepare a competitive proposal. Similarly, the RFP is designed to provide TFO Canada with the information it requires to select a successful Proponent to provide the Services.

The successfully chosen strategic Service Provider could be a group of consultants or a firm that has professional background and experience working in the themes mentioned above, and experience developing similar research in Latin America and the Caribbean.

1.3 Definitions

In this RFP, the following definitions shall apply:

- (a) “Closing Location” means the TFO Canada offices in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.
- (b) “Closing Time” means the deadline (date and time) for Proponents to submit their Proposals to the Organization as identified in section 2.1 below;
- (c) “Contract” means a formal written contract between TFO Canada and a Preferred Proponent(s) to undertake the Services;
- (d) “Organization” means TFO Canada.
- (e) “Preferred Proponent(s)” means the Proponent(s) selected by the Procurement Evaluation Team to be short-listed for further evaluation;
- (f) “Procurement Evaluation Team” means the team appointed by TFO Canada to review and score proposals;
- (g) “Project Manager” means the procurement project leader and primary contact for the organization.
- (h) “Proponent” means an entity that submits a Proposal;
- (i) “Proposal” means a written proposal or bid submitted in response to this RFP;
- (j) “RFP” means this Request for Proposals;
- (k) “Services” has the meaning set out in Schedule A;
- (l) “Vendor” means the Preferred Proponent who has entered into a Contract with TFO Canada to provide the Services.

1.4 Collection and Use of Personal Information

Proponents are solely responsible for familiarizing themselves, and ensuring that they comply, with the laws applicable to the collection and dissemination of information, including resumes and other personal information concerning employees and employees of any subcontractors. If the RFP requires Proponents to provide TFO Canada with personal information of employees who have been included as resources in response to the RFP, Proponents will ensure that they have obtained written consent from each of those employees before forwarding such personal information.

2. Instructions to Proponents

2.1 Anticipated Solicitation Schedule

The following is the estimated timeline¹ for this RFP:

Description	Date (no later than)	Time (EST)
Issuance of RFP	August 19, 2025	2:00 pm
Clarification / Inquiries period	August 22, 2025 to September 4, 2025	3:00 pm
Closing date and proposal due	September 19, 2025	11:00 am
Completion of proposal evaluations	September 26, 2025	5:00 pm
Interviews with preferred proponents – clarification period	September 29 to October 3, 2025	5:00 pm
Vendor selection	October 8, 2025	1:00 pm
Contract award	October 14, 2025	4:00 pm
Expected commencement of work	October 20, 2025	9:00 am

2.2 Inquiries

TFO Canada is committed to providing reasonable assistance or additional information to support potential Proponents during the RFP process. All inquiries during the **RFP Clarification Period** must be submitted **in writing via electronic mail only**.

All questions or requests for clarification, additional information, or proposed modifications related to this RFP must be directed in writing to the designated contact person (the “Project Manager”) as follows:

Janin Mendoza

Project Manager, Latin America and the Caribbean

Email: tfocrc@tfocanada.ca

Subject Line: *RFP 25-01 Local Market Research*

Each inquiry must include the inquirer’s **full name, organization, and current contact information**. To facilitate timely responses, inquiries should clearly reference the **RFP page number and section** relevant to the question, organized under appropriate headings.

¹ TFO Canada reserves the right to modify this schedule at its own discretion.

Inquiries must be submitted **no later than 10 calendar days prior to the RFP Closing Time**. Responses may be distributed to all Proponents at the discretion of TFO Canada. TFO Canada reserves the right not to respond to questions received after this deadline.

Please note that:

- **Only written responses issued by TFO Canada will be considered official.**
- **No verbal communication** will alter or be considered part of the RFP terms or process.
- Information obtained from any source other than the designated Project Manager is **not valid** and **must not be relied upon**.
- **Proponents are strictly prohibited** from contacting any other TFO Canada employees, contractors, or agents regarding this RFP. Any such contact may result in the **disqualification or rejection** of the Proponent's submission.

2.3 Proponents' Expenses

Proponents are solely responsible for their own expenses to participate in the RFP process, including costs in preparing a proposal, participating in any interviews or demonstrations as a Preferred Proponent, and, if the successful Vendor, any costs for subsequent finalizations of a Contract, if any.

TFO Canada will not be liable to any Proponent for any claims, whether for costs, expenses, damages, or losses incurred by the Proponent in preparing its proposal, loss of anticipated profit in connection with any final Contract, or any other matter whatsoever.

2.4 Conflict of Interest and Conduct

Conflict of Interest: For the purposes of this RFP, the term "Conflict of Interest" includes, but is not limited to, any situation or circumstance where:

- (a) in relation to the RFP process, the proponent has an unfair advantage or engages in conduct, directly or indirectly, that may give it an unfair advantage, including but not limited to:
 - i. having, or having had access to, confidential information of TFO Canada in the preparation of its proposal that is not available to other proponents;
 - ii. communicating with any person with a view to influencing preferred treatment in the RFP process (including but not limited to the lobbying of decision-makers involved in the RFP process); or
 - iii. engaging in conduct that compromises, or could be seen to compromise, the integrity of the open and competitive RFP process or render that process non-competitive or unfair; or
- (b) in relation to the performance of its contractual obligations contemplated under a contract for the Services, the proponent's other commitments, relationships, or financial interests

- i. could, or could be seen to, exercise an improper influence over the objective, unbiased and impartial exercise of its independent judgement, or
 - ii. could, or could be seen to, compromise, impair or be incompatible with the effective performance of its contractual obligations.
- (c) Proponents must not engage in any communications that could constitute a Conflict of Interest and should take note of the Conflict-of-Interest declaration set out in Proposal Transmittal Letter (Schedule B-1).

Prohibited Conduct: For the purposes of this RFP, the term “Prohibited Conduct” includes, but is not limited to, the following situation or circumstance:

- (a) **Illegal or Unethical Conduct:** Proponents must not engage in any illegal business practices, including activities such as bid-rigging, price-fixing, bribery, fraud, coercion or collusion. Proponents must not engage in any unethical conduct such as offering gifts to any employees, officers, contractors, advisers or other representatives of TFO Canada; deceitfulness; submitting proposals containing misrepresentations or other misleading or inaccurate information; or any other conduct that compromises or may be seen to compromise the competitive process provided for in this RFP.
- (b) **Lobbying:** Proponents must not, in relation to this RFP or the evaluation and selection process, engage directly or indirectly in any form of political or other lobbying whatsoever to influence the selection of the successful proponent(s).
- (c) **Unprofessional Behaviour:** Proponents must not engage in any activities that, in TFO Canada’s sole opinion, would have the potential to bring the Proponent and/or TFO Canada into public disrepute, contempt, scandal or ridicule, or which may embarrass, offend, insult or denigrate individuals or groups, or that may shock, insult or offend TFO Canada’s directors, officers, employees, advisors, funders and partners.
- (d) **Communication with Media:** Proponents must not at any time directly or indirectly communicate with the media in relation to this RFP or any agreement entered into pursuant to this RFP without first obtaining the written permission of the Project Manager.

2.5 Disqualification and Prohibition

Disqualification: TFO Canada may disqualify a proponent, rescind a Notice of Award or terminate a Contract subsequently entered into as a result of this RFP, if TFO Canada determines that the Proponent, its employees, partners, subcontractors, or other agents, have engaged in any conduct, situation or circumstance, determined by TFO Canada, in its sole discretion, to constitute a Conflict of Interest or a Prohibited Conduct.

Prohibition because of Past Conduct or Performance: TFO Canada may prohibit a Proponent from participating in this RFP Process based on past inappropriate conduct in a prior procurement process or past inappropriate performance in a previous Contract, resulting in an earlier Disqualification or Termination, including but not limited to the following:

- (a) illegal or unethical conduct;
- (b) unprofessional behavior;
- (c) the refusal of the Proponent to honour its submitted pricing, timelines, or other commitments;
- (d) failure of the Proponent to have met the required Services; or
- (e) any conduct, situation, or circumstance determined by TFO Canada, in its sole and absolute discretion, to have constituted an undisclosed Conflict of Interest or Prohibited Conduct.

3. NATURE OF PROPOSALS

3.1 Form of Proposal

The Proposal must be submitted in English and provide comprehensive information to enable TFO Canada to assess the Proponent's ability to meet the requirements outlined in this RFP, as well as to determine the total cost associated with the proposed delivery of services.

3.2 Alternative Approach

If more than one approach to delivering the Services described in the RFP is offered, Proponents should submit the alternative approach in a separate proposal.

4. Submissions of Proposals

4.1 Method of Submission

a) Proposals must be submitted before Closing Time to the Closing Location by E-mail:

- i) Proponents should submit proposal submissions by email to: tfocrc@tfocanada.ca
- ii) Subject line: "**Country Profiles - LAC**".
- iii) The email should include
 - Cover letter outlining the experience in similar assignments,
 - Technical proposal including
 1. Approach and general methodology, including workplan and timeline.
 2. Proposed table of contents of the country chapter based on Schedule A.
 3. Team composition and resumes.
 - List of recent similar work done in the past 5 years.

- Financial proposal: anticipated budget for services is in the range of CAD\$100,000.00 to CAD\$130,000.00
- iv) The financial proposal should be broken down by country and targeted sector, and submitted as a separate password-protected file. The password will be requested at a later stage, only if the proposal successfully passes the technical evaluation. Currency: \$CAD
 - v) If the file size of an electronic submission exceeds the applicable maximum size, the Proponent may make multiple submissions to reduce attachment file size to be within the maximum applicable size. Proponents should identify the order and number of emails making up the email proposal submission by adding additional text in the subject line (e.g. “- Part 1 of 3, Part 2 of 3,...”).
- b) Proposals must not be sent by fax, mail, or courier, or delivered by hand.
 - c) The Proponent is solely responsible for ensuring that, regardless of the submission method selected, that TFO Canada receives a complete Proposal, including all attachments or enclosures, before the Closing Time.
 - d) Proponents should avoid making multiple submissions of the same Proposal by the same or different submission methods.
 - e) Any attachments must not be compressed. Proponents are solely responsible for ensuring that any emails or attachments are not corrupted, must not contain a virus or malware, , and must be able to be opened. TFO Canada may reject proposals that are compressed, cannot be opened, or that contain viruses or malware or corrupted attachments.
 - f) The Proponent bears all risks associated with delivering its Proposal. The Proponent is solely responsible for ensuring that its complete proposal submission and all attachments have been received before Closing Time.
 - g) If the TFO Canada E-Mail System rejects proposal submission for any reason, and the Proponent does not resubmit its proposal by the same or other permitted submission method before Closing Time, the Proponent will not be permitted to resubmit its proposal after Closing Time.
 - h) Proponents will receive an automatic notification confirming the submission of their proposal.

4.2 Completeness of Proposal

By submitting a proposal, the Proponent affirms that, if the RFP relates to the conduct of local market studies, all research components outlined in Schedule A, as well as any additional elements the Proponent considers necessary to effectively carry out the assignment, have been fully identified and incorporated into the proposal. Any clarifications requested by TFO Canada during the proposal review process must be provided by the Proponent at no additional cost.

4.3 Acceptance of Terms and Conditions

(a) Submitting a proposal indicates acceptance of all the terms and conditions set out in the RFP, including those that follow and that are included in all appendices and any Addenda.

(b) A proposal must include a cover letter signed by a person authorized to sign on behalf of the Proponent with the intent to bind the Proponent to the RFP and to the statements and representations in the Proponent's proposal.

(c) A scanned copy of a completed and signed template provided in Schedule B-1 of this RFP is acceptable as the required cover letter.

4.4 Changes to Proposals

- (a) At any time before Closing Time, the Proponent may amend or withdraw its proposal by submitting a clear and detailed written notice. Proponents should use a consistent submission method for submitting proposals, any amendments, or withdrawals.
- (b) Upon Closing Time, all proposals become irrevocable.
- (c) The Proponent will not change any part of its proposal after the Closing Time unless requested by TFO Canada for purposes of clarification.

4.5 Late Proposals

- (a) Proposals will be marked with their receipt time at the Closing Location. Only complete proposals received and marked before the Closing Time will be considered to have been received on time.
- (b) Proposals received late will be marked late and not considered or evaluated.
- (c) In case of a dispute, the proposal receipt time as recorded by TFO Canada at the Closing Location will prevail.

4.6 Ownership of Proposals

All proposals and other records submitted to TFO Canada in relation to the RFP become the property of TFO Canada and, subject to the provisions of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, will be held in confidence.

5. Evaluation of Proposals

5.1 Evaluation of Submitted Proposals

- (a) TFO Canada intends to conduct a comprehensive, fair, and impartial evaluation of proposals received.
- (b) Unless otherwise specified, this solicitation will be called, received, evaluated, accepted, and processed following the purchasing policies in Chapter 4 of the Government of Canada's Supply Manual.
- (c) All proposals that are properly received will be evaluated by a Procurement Evaluation Committee (the "PEC") using the sets criteria below.

5.2 Mandatory Criteria

- (a) The first evaluation stage will consist of a review to determine which proposals comply with all of the mandatory submission requirements.
- (b) Mandatory criteria are scored on a PASS or FAIL basis.

Mandatory Criteria	Minimum Score
The proposal must be received before the Closing Time at the Closing Location.	Pass
The proposal must be submitted using one of the submission methods set out in accordance with Section 4.1.	Pass
The proposal must be in English.	Pass
A cover letter is included following Schedule B-1 outlining the experience in similar assignments. It is completed correctly and signed by an authorized representative of the Proponent that confirms the Proponent's intent to be bound.	Pass
The Technical proposal is submitted per all instructions adhered to this RFP (approach and general methodology, workplan and timeline, proposed table of contents, team composition and resumes).	Pass
The proposal includes a list of recent similar work done in the past 5 years.	Pass
The financial proposal is submitted as a separate password-protected file.	Pass

- (c) Proposals that do not **Pass** all the mandatory submission requirements, i.e. FAILS any one of the requirements mentioned above, will be rejected and excluded from further consideration during the evaluation process.

5.3 Technical Criteria

- (a) The second evaluation stage will be assessed against the following Technical criteria.
 (b) Each technical criterion has a minimum score required.

Technical Criteria	Maximum Score	Minimum Score Required
Experience	30	
Minimum of 3 years of professional experience in trade and business development in Latin America and the Caribbean.	4	3
Demonstrated experience conducting at least two country-level market research studies.	5	4
Experience engaging stakeholders using participatory and consultative approaches.	4	2
Proven experience in survey design, data collection, data analysis, and reporting.	5	4
Experience in analyzing trade-related data from international databases (e.g., Trade Map).	5	4
Working Proficiency in both English and Spanish (oral and written).	5	5
Prior experience with TFO Canada on similar assignments (preferred but not mandatory).	2	1
Methodology and Approach	50	
Soundness, clarity, and relevance of the proposed methodology for meeting research objectives.	25	23
Demonstrated understanding of the thematic areas and scope outlined in the ToR.	15	12
Feasibility and realism of the proposed work plan and timelines.	5	3
Inclusion of strategies to ensure data reliability, stakeholder validation, and ethical research practices.	5	3
Team	20	
Multidisciplinary team with relevant expertise in market research, trade, business development, and data analysis.	3	2
Demonstrated qualifications and relevant experience of proposed team members.	4	2
Strong analytical, writing, and visualization skills.	3	2
Familiarity with Canadian market entry requirements and trade promotion strategies.	4	2
Designation of a qualified team lead with overall responsibility for project delivery.	2	1
Clear allocation of roles and responsibilities among team members.	2	1
Inclusion of local expertise or regional consultants familiar with the target country context.	2	1
Total	100	75

- (c) Proponents that meet the minimum technical criteria will be considered Preferred Proponents and short-listed for further evaluation.
- (d) The technical evaluation will account for 70% of the final score, in accordance with a best value approach.
- (e) Rating of Technical Proposal: the following standard formula is used to determine the proposal's technical score:

$$\text{Technical Score (F)} = \left(\frac{\text{Total score obtained by the offer}}{\text{Max. obtainable score (100)}} \right) \times 100$$

5.4 Clarifications

- (a) The Proposal Evaluation Committee (PEC) may, at its discretion, invite one or more Proponents to provide clarifications regarding the content of their proposals. These clarifications may be requested in writing (email) or through a live session (e.g., video conference). The PEC reserves the right to consider the responses received during such clarifications as part of the overall evaluation process.
- (b) If requested, Proponents must make their relevant management and technical personnel available for an online interview or presentation. This will be conducted at no cost to TFO Canada and within the timeframe specified by the PEC.
- (c) Any information or documentation provided by Proponents during the clarification process—including during interviews—may be taken into consideration by the PEC. Based on the additional information obtained, the PEC may revise the evaluation or ranking of the affected proposals accordingly.

5.5 Financial Evaluation Criteria

- (a) The financial proposal will be evaluated based on best value for money, which considers the overall cost in relation to the quality of services proposed, as outlined in the technical proposal.
- (b) Only proposals that meet or exceed the **minimum technical threshold** will be considered for financial evaluation. In such cases, proponents will be contacted to provide the password for their protected financial document.
- (c) Mandatory Criteria are scored on a PASS or FAIL basis.

Mandatory Criteria	Minimum Score
The financial proposal was submitted in a separate, password-protected file.	Pass
Budget is divided by country and targeted sectors.	Pass
Inclusive of all applicable taxes, professional fees, and any other anticipated expenses.	Pass
Aligned with TFO Canada's budget expectations	Pass
The Technical proposal is submitted per all instructions adhered to this RFP (approach and general methodology, workplan and timeline, proposed table of contents, team composition and resumes).	Pass
The financial proposal is broken down by country and targeted sector.	Pass

- (d) Rating of Financial Proposal: To ensure fairness and value for money, the following standard formula is used to determine the proposal's financial score:

$$\text{Financial Score (F)} = \left(\frac{\text{Lowest Priced Offer}}{\text{Price of the Offer being reviewed}} \right) \times 100$$

5.6 References

- (a) The PEC will contact three references provided by each Preferred Proponent
(b) References will use a standardized questionnaire to arrive at a weighted score.
(c) Points for each reference will be issued as follows:

Maximum Points Available	Points Awarded
5	5 Points - Excellent
	4 Points – Very Good
	3 Points – Acceptable
	0 Points – Unacceptable or Reference is Unreachable or Unwilling to Respond

- (d) If a Proponent Reference is unavailable or unwilling to provide a reference when contacted, then zero (0) points will be awarded.
(e) Proponent References must be reachable when contacted by PEC Members when reasonable prior notice has been provided. TFO Canada will not accept any responsibility if a Proponent Reference is unreachable within a timely manner or fails to attend an agreed-upon meeting or scheduled conversation.

5.7 Final Score

The following standard formula is used to determine the proposal's final score:

Combined Score = (Technical score * 70%) + (Financial score * 30%) + reference points

6. Contract Award

6.1 Contract Award

- (a) The contract will be awarded to the Proponent whose proposal achieves the highest final score based on the combined technical and financial evaluations, in accordance with the best value for money approach.
- (b) However, TFO Canada reserves the right to:
 - i) Reject any or all proposals received,
 - ii) Cancel or modify the procurement process at any stage,
 - iii) Not award a contract as a result of this Request for Proposals (RFP).
- (c) Submission of a proposal does not constitute a legal or binding commitment on the part of TFO Canada to enter into an agreement with any Proponent.

6.2 Irrevocable for 90 Days

Proposals shall be irrevocable for ninety (90) days after the official Closing Time, and TFO Canada may at any time within that period, without notice, accept a Proposal, whether any other proposal has been previously accepted or not. NO liability shall accrue to TFO Canada for its decision in this regard.

6.3 Notice of Award

- (a) By submitting a proposal, the Proponent agrees that should it receive a Notice of Award that the Proponent will enter into a Contract with TFO Canada to deliver the work identified in Schedule A and any such other terms and conditions to be finalized to the satisfaction of TFO Canada, if applicable.
- (b) Written notice, the Notice of Award, to a Proponent that it has been identified as the successful Vendor and the subsequent full execution of a written Contract will constitute a Contract for the goods or services, and no Proponent will acquire any legal or equitable rights or privileges relative to the services until the occurrence of both such events.
- (c) Notwithstanding and without restricting the generality of the statements above, TFO Canada shall not be required to award or accept a proposal, and may choose to either cancel the RFP or recall the proposals at a later date:
 - i) When only one Proposal has been received as a result of this RFP;
 - ii) Where the lowest responsive and responsible proponents exceed the available project budget for the work;

- iii) When all proposals received fail to comply with the specifications of the RFP's terms and conditions; or
- iv) When a change in the scope of work or specifications is required.

6.4 Negotiation and Execution of Agreement

- (a) If TFO Canada selects a Preferred Proponent or Preferred Proponents, then it may:
 - a. enter into a Contract with the Preferred Proponent(s); or
 - b. enter into discussions with the Preferred Proponent(s) to attempt to finalize the terms of the Contract(s) including financial terms, and such discussions may include:
 - i. clarification of any outstanding issues arising from the Preferred Proponent's Proposal;
 - ii. negotiation of amendments to the draft Contract, if any, proposed by the Preferred Proponent, as set in the Preferred Proponent's Proposal; and
 - iii. negotiation of amendments to the Preferred Proponent's price(s) to the Preferred Proponent's Proposal and/or scope of Services if:
 - 1. the Preferred Proponent's Estimated Pricing in their Proposal exceeds TFO Canada's approved budget;
 - 2. TFO Canada reasonably concludes the Preferred Proponent's Proposal includes a price(s) that is unbalanced; or
 - 3. a knowledgeable third party would judge that the Preferred Proponent's price(s) materially exceed a fair market price(s) for services similar to the Services offered by the Preferred Proponent as described in the Preferred Proponent's Proposal; or
 - 4. If at any time TFO Canada reasonably forms the opinion that a mutually acceptable agreement is not likely to be reached within a reasonable time, give the Preferred Proponent(s) written notice to terminate discussions, (a "Notice to Cease Negotiation"). For greater clarity, see Section 6.5.

6.5 Contract Finalization Delay

If a written Contract cannot be finalized with provisions satisfactory to TFO Canada within thirty (30) days of the issuance of the Notice of Award to the successful Proponent(s), the Organization may, at its sole discretion at any time thereafter, without incurring any liability, terminate discussions with that Proponent and either commence finalization of a Contract with the another Proponent, or choose to terminate the RFP process and not enter into a Contract with any of the Proponents, and to retain or obtain the Services in some other manner

6.6 Disclosure

- (a) Once a Contract is executed between TFO Canada and the Vendor, all Proponents will be notified of the outcome, (a "Notification of Outcome"), of the procurement process.
- (b) This will be done in the same manner in which the RFP was originally posted.
- (c) TFO Canada reserves the right to also inform Proponents via electronic mail to the addresses of the Point of Contact.

- (d) The names of Proponents and the total scores of each proposal will be made available. Details of the proposals or any financial information will not be publicly disclosed.

6.7 Debriefing

- (a) Upon receipt of a Notification of Outcome, Proponents may request a debriefing meeting with respect to their proposal from TFO Canada's Procurement Evaluation Committee.
- (b) All requests must be in writing to the Project Manager and must be made within 14 days of such notification.
- (c) Any debriefing will be offered at the sole discretion of TFO Canada but should not be reasonably withheld.

6.8 Protest

- (a) If a Proponent wishes to challenge the RFP process, (a "Protest"), it should provide written notice (a "Protest Notice") to the Project Manager subject to having attended and within seven (7) days of a Debriefing. Protests must be in writing. Any written protest not received in a timely manner will not be considered.
- (b) The Protest Notice must provide a detailed explanation of the proponent's concerns with the procurement process or its outcome and should include the following:
 - a. the RFP name and number;
 - b. the name and address of the Proponent;
 - c. the date of Debriefing and name of individual who conducted the Debriefing;
 - d. the specific identification of the provision and/or procurement procedure that is alleged to have been breached;
 - e. the specific description of each act alleged to have breached the procurement process;
 - f. a precise statement of the relevant facts;
 - g. an identification of the issues to be resolved;
 - h. the Proponent's arguments and supporting documentation; and
 - i. the Proponent's requested solutions.
- (c) The Project Manager will respond in writing to the Proponent within five (5) business days to acknowledge receipt of the Protest Notice.
- (d) The decision on the protest (the "Protest Decision") will be decided by the Executive Director in consultation with the Director, Finance and Administration. The decision will be communicated to the Proponent no later than ten (10) business days after the acknowledgement of the Protest Notice was issued.
- (e) The Protest Decision shall be considered final and conclusive.

6.9 No Obligation

- (a) This RFP does not obligate the Organization to award a contract nor to complete the project.
- (b) TFO Canada reserves the right to cancel the solicitation if it is considered to be in its best interest.

Schedule A

Service and Requirements

About TFO Canada

TFO Canada (Trade Facilitation Office Canada) is a non-government non-profit organization that catalyzes economic growth through sustainable and inclusive trade partnerships for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in developing countries.

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Background

To effectively align countries' export offer with the demand of the Canadian market and support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the countries where TFO Canada operates, it is essential to establish a strategic program focusing on addressing the needs of SMEs, the export potential of the target country and the specific requirements of Canadian and International buyers/demand.

To that end, TFO Canada seeks to engage a qualified service provider to develop comprehensive country chapters (local market research). These chapters will cover selected economic sectors, export offers and incorporate cross-cutting themes including **gender equality, governance, environmental sustainability, climate resilience, access to finance, and digital technology**.

Deliverables will support strategic planning and policy development by providing comprehensive, evidence-based insights tailored to each country's context.

Expected Activities and Deliverables

Activity 1: Methodology – Deadline: within 2 weeks of contract signing.

Develop a detailed methodology that outlines the research design, stakeholder engagement strategy, data sources, analytical framework, timeline, and a list of content for the Country Chapter.

Deliverables

- First draft of the methodology for review and approval of TFO Canada.
- Final methodology.

Activity 2: Countries Chapter – Deadline: see table in Annex B.

Based on desk review, and work closely with TFO Canada partners Lead Trade Support Institutions (TSIs) in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras and Peru, and in consultation with local producers' associations, chambers of commerce, and related organizations identified by the TSI or TFO Canada, to collect, and analyze data and information concerning in the table below, to develop a draft versions of each country chapter for review and feedback.

Research Topic	Scope	Proposed maximum # of pages/ country
Exportable products and or services in the indicated sectors and disadvantaged regions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Validate the identified export products per region in each country, and identification of additional potential exportable products or services in each prioritized sector with higher export potential for the targeted market (see Annex A). Validate that the identified products comply with Canadian import regulations (AIRS), providing a checklist of compliance requirements for each product category. ii) Production volume and export capacity for the export products, and international markets where the products are exported, including Canada. iii) High-potential niche in Canada for SMEs to have a competitive advantage (e.g. organic, specialty products, low-scale production, etc) iv) Sectoral challenges and current adaptation capacity (e.g. standards compliance, packaging, labelling, tourism infrastructure, language capacity, etc.) (where applicable) v) Women's representation and participation in the sector, and disadvantaged regions if available vi) Impact of Climate Change in each sector and region. 	2-4 pages/sector
Market Trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vii) Identify relevant consumer trends across Canadian provinces for the selected product/service categories and analyze such trends to identify the suitability of the selected products/services. viii) Provide detailed insight into variations in demand per province (for example, Quebec vs Alberta), and recommend relevant venues for market exposure. ix) Forecast market demand evolution for identified product/service categories over the next 5 years, disaggregated by province where possible. x) Map the seasonal demand for relevant 	2-4 pages/sector

	products/services categories in Canada and identify time windows where there is alignment between Canada's market demand cycles and the production or availability season in the country of origin.	
Challenges related to market access in Canada (and internationally, where applicable), as well as sector-specific barriers facing SMEs.	<p>Identify and analyze the key challenges faced by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in selected sectors about market access and sector-specific constraints, covering the following areas:</p> <p>Market Access Challenges - Regulatory Compliance Barriers: Identify obstacles SMEs face in accessing Canadian and international markets, particularly regarding regulatory and compliance requirements, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traceability and preventive control plan, Standards and Certifications required for export, including tourism services where applicable (local and international). • Free Trade Agreements and Preferential Tariffs Treatments, and compliance requirements • Quality and safety standards/ industry standards in the target markets • packaging & labelling requirements • Digital presence and infrastructure where applicable (e.g: data protection laws, e-marketing compliance, platform regulations for online booking systems, Insurance and liability requirements for tourism operators serving international clients). • others <p>Sectoral challenges: Assess structural and operational constraints affecting SMEs' competitiveness and export readiness, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seasonal supply trends (Identify periods of production/supply for key products and services (e.g., supply calendar or chart showing peak/off-peak periods) • Production and service delivery capacity for identified products/services • Price Competitiveness, including comparative analysis of retail and wholesale price points in target markets. • Logistics, transportation challenges to bring products to the Canadian market 	2-4 pages/sector

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supply chain constraints, such as, warehouse access and storage infrastructure, tourism infrastructure, availability and cost of freight forwarders, shipping, insurance options, and INCOTERMS application Access to finance for export 	
<p>Social Considerations: Issues, regulations, gender equality and women empowerment, and work best practices (including health and safety, labour rights, wages etc.) in each identified sector.</p>	<p>Examine key social and labour-related issues across selected sectors with a focus on gender equality, human rights, and ethical business practices, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Identify human rights issues at the business level: Analyze social and labour risks affecting vulnerable groups, including women, children, Indigenous communities, and informal workers, within the selected sectors and services. Key issues may include: a) access to decent work for women in the selected value chains (access to employment opportunities, wage equity, work-life balance, and safe working conditions); b) child labor prevalence; c) access to credit, skill training, and entrepreneurship opportunities; d) discrimination and harassment in trade settings. ii) Identify gender-sensitive approaches in the trade environment. iii) Identification of relevant laws, standards, and industry best practices related to human rights and decent work. iv) Assessment of SME compliance and adoption of these best practices v) identify key social issues and gaps highlighting challenges in ensuring decent work and socially responsible business conduct across sectors, especially among SMEs, such as, weak enforcement of labour laws, barriers to fair recruitment, social protection, and formal employment, informality, especially in tourism and seasonal sectors, limited consumer awareness or market incentives for ethical products and services, etc. vi) Identify successful community engagement and the impact of SMEs' trade operations in the selected sectors. 	1-2 pages/sector
<p>Environmental and Climate Change Issues, Regulations, and Best Practices in each identified sector and disadvantaged regions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Environmental and Climate Change impacts from the sector in the disadvantaged region (this might include greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, degradation of ecosystems and biodiversity). ii) Climate Change Impacts on the sector (this might include changes of weather patterns affecting agriculture, or tourism seasons, increased 	1-2 pages/sector

	<p>frequency of extreme weather events, water scarcity, soil degradation, and loss of biodiversity)</p> <p>iii) mitigating measures such as clean energy, waste management, sustainable practices, and climate change adaptation measures.</p> <p>iv) Climate-Related Opportunities for the identified sectors, such as expansion of climate-resilient crops or sustainable inputs, growth in eco-tourism and nature-based tourism experiences, opportunities in green jobs, renewable energy, and circular economy practices, and access to climate finance and global sustainability markets.</p> <p>i) Examine local environmental laws and regulations (general and sector specific)</p> <p>ii) Identify relevant environment local agencies (in general and per sector) that can support trade facilitation or promotion.</p> <p>iii) Identify available government support mechanisms and insurance schemes.</p> <p>iv) Identify potential public concerns related to the selected sectors</p>	
Governance	<p>Assess institutional, managerial, and regulatory environment that shapes ethical, transparent, inclusive, and accountable business practices, including a) level of participation of SMEs in decision-making related to trade, b) map governance trends across regions and sectors, c) identify common weaknesses in governance systems (e.g. lack of transparency, informal practices, limited accountability), d) examine how cultural, economic, and institutional factors shape trade governance practices, e) identify barriers to inclusive leadership in the trade sector, f) highlight examples of inclusive governance models led by women, Indigenous groups, or marginalized communities, g) Analyze legal and societal norms impacting the representation of women and vulnerable groups in trade, h) map relevant national policies, business laws, and regulations that support or constrain responsible business conduct, i) use/awareness of traceability, data transparency and ESG reporting tools.</p>	1-2 pages/sector
Access to Finance for Export Growth and Climate Change Resilience for SMEs from the selected sectors	<p>Assess the financial landscape for SMEs in selected sectors, focusing on their access to export finance and their ability to invest in climate change adaptation and resilience, including: a) financing gaps faced by SMEs, especially women-led SMEs, b) how financing needs differ between products– based exports and service exports, c) assess the feasibility</p>	1-2 pages/sector

	to apply to green financing instruments (such as climate adaptation grants, green loans, carbon credit schemes, disaster insurance products), d) map the existing ecosystem of financial institutions, e) barriers to accessing finance.	
Digital Technology for Export Competitiveness and ESG Readiness	At a country level, i) determine digital gaps and barriers such as connectivity challenges in the disadvantaged regions, lack of access to digital technologies, limited digital literacy and skills, and high cost of software and platform per region, sector, and group, ii) identify what digital tools SMEs, especially WLSMEs, are currently using for business operations, marketing, logistics, and communication (how SMEs use digital platforms to reach customers, e-commerce, digital payments), and iii) highlight programs or solutions that promote digital inclusion for women exporters.	1-2 pages/sector

Notes:

Findings and draft of each country chapter must be discussed and validated with the lead Trade Support Institution (TSI) in each country.

All data, overviews, and analyses must be presented in narrative form, with key findings also summarized in tables to allow for comparison across products and sectors, where applicable. Reports must be written in English, and all data sources must be clearly referenced.

Deliverables

- Draft versions of each country chapter, per sector, for review and feedback based on the following schedule:
- Final versions of the chapters incorporating feedback.

Activity 3: High-level synthesis of findings across countries– Deadline: see schedule table below.

Based on the country chapters, develop a high-level synthesis that brings together key findings from all country chapters and sectoral analyses. The synthesis will identify cross-cutting themes, regional trends, sector-specific insights, and shared challenges and opportunities for SMEs, especially WLSMEs, across the targeted countries. The aim is to provide a consolidated overview that supports strategic decision-making, strategies, and programming, and highlights actionable recommendations aligned with ESG priorities and export competitiveness, particularly to Canadian market requirements.

Deliverables

- Synthesis report summarizing key findings, trends, and insights across countries and sectors for review and feedback.

ANNEX A

Country/Sector/Target Market Table

	Country	Sectors	Target Market
1	Bolivia	Agrofood Camelid wool textiles	Canada
2	Colombia	Agrifood	Canada USA
		Home Décor and Handicraft Tourism	Canada
3	Ecuador	Agrifood Home Décor and Handicraft	Canada
4	Guatemala	Fresh Produce Coffee	Canada
5	Honduras	Coffee Exotic Fruits	Canada
		Cacao	Europe
6	Peru	Agrifood Textiles for Home Decor Tourism	Canada

ANNEX B

Deadline Schedule

Deliverable	Deadline
Activity 1: Final Methodology	Within 2 weeks of contract signing
Activity 2: Countries Chapter	
Draft version - Bolivia	Within 2 months of contract signing
Draft version - Ecuador	Within 2.5 months of contract signing
Draft version – Honduras	Within 3 months of contract signing
Draft version - Guatemala	Within 3.5 months of contract signing
Draft version – Colombia	Within 4 months of contract signing
Draft version - Peru	Within 4.5 months of contract signing
Final versions – all countries	Within 2 weeks after receiving feedback.
Activity 3: High-level synthesis	
Draft synthesis report	Within 5 months of contract signing
Draft PowerPoint presentation	Within 5 months of contract signing
Final synthesis report	Within 2 weeks after receiving feedback.
Final PowerPoint presentation	Within 2 weeks after receiving feedback.

Schedule B-1

Proponent Proposal Cover Letter

RFP 25-01- Local Market Research

Proponent Information	
Please fill out the following form, naming one person to be the proponent's contact for the RFP process and for any clarifications or communication that might be necessary.	
Full Legal Name of Proponent:	
Street Address City, Province/State: Postal Code	
Name and Job Title of Proponent Primary Point of Contact	
Phone Number:	
Email Address	

Confirmation of Proponent's intent to be Bound

1. Offer

- (a) The Proponent:
- i) has carefully read and examined the entire RFP documents;
 - ii) is deemed to have read and accepted all addenda issued by the Organization;
 - iii) has conducted such other investigations as it felt were prudent and reasonable;
 - iv) and has a clear and comprehensive knowledge of the Services required under the RFP.
- (b) By submitting a proposal, the Proponent agrees and consents to the terms, conditions, and provisions of the RFP, and offers to provide the Services in accordance therewith at the rates set out in its proposal.

2. Conflict of Interest

The Proponent has declared (a) there was no Conflict of Interest in preparing its proposal; and (b) there is no foreseeable Conflict of Interest in performing the contractual obligations contemplated in the RFP. OR Has declared all potential Conflicts of Interest, as defined in Section 2.4 of the RFP. This includes disclosing the names and all pertinent details of all individuals (employees, advisers, or individuals acting in any other capacity) who (a) participated in the preparation of the proposal; **AND** (b) were employees or contractors of TFO Canada within twelve (12) months prior to the Submission Deadline.

3. No Prohibited Conduct

The Proponent declares that it has not engaged in any conduct prohibited by this RFP.

4. Rates

The Proponent:

- i) has submitted its rates in accordance with the instructions in the RFP in particular;
- ii) confirms that it has factored all of the provisions of Schedule A, including insurance and indemnity requirements, into its pricing assumptions and calculations; and
- iii) has verified that there are no mathematical errors in its Services budget Breakdown.

5. Proposal Irrevocable

The proponent agrees that its proposal shall be irrevocable for a period of ninety (90) days following the Closing Time.

6. Disclosure of Information

- (a) The Proponent hereby consents to the disclosure, on a confidential basis, of this proposal by TFO Canada to the members of the Procurement Evaluation Committee and any advisers retained by the organization to advise or assist with the RFP process, including with respect to the evaluation this proposal.
- (b) The Proponent further hereby agrees that any information provided in this proposal, even if it is identified as being supplied in confidence, may be disclosed where required by law or by order of a court or tribunal.

9. Execution of Agreement

The Proponent agrees that in the event its proposal is selected by TFO Canada, in whole or in part, it will finalize and execute the Agreement in accordance with the terms of this RFP.

Proponent Representative:

I have the authority to bind the Proponent.

Signature

Name

Title

Date

Schedule B-2

Estimated Costs Template

In order to help with evaluation, TFO Canada desires standardization and consistency in the Proposal structure. This will ensure that each Proposal receives full consideration.

Proponents should submit a Services Activity Breakdown (SAB) and budget, that clearly shows sub-activities required to deliver upon the Services requirements described in Schedule A and the estimated cost and level of effort of each.

1. Please ensure the SAB includes at a minimum the following elements within a broad monthly timeline of activity:
 - The Service to be conducted in accordance with Schedule A;
 - The activities to be conducted by the Vendor to achieve the deliverable;
 - A description of the activity;
 - The associated time to conduct the activity;
 - The associated cost to conduct the activity.
2. Provide estimated costs for all activities by country and sector. Indicate if costs are fixed/firm price. Include any discounts and taxes .
3. The financial proposal must be submitted as a **password-protected file**, named:
“RFP25-01_Proposal_[Proponent Name]_FinancialProposal”