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OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

Amendment to Federal Register/Vol. 68, No. 88/May 7, 2003/Notices

Trade Policy Staff Committee; Invitation for Non-Governmental Organizations, Corporate Sponsors and Private Foundations to Volunteer Trade Capacity Building Assistance in Support of the U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement

AGENCY: Office of the United States Trade Representative
United States Agency for International Development

ACTION: Request for Submissions to Volunteer Trade Capacity Building Assistance

SUMMARY: The United States aims to attract additional resource partners that can legitimately contribute to the trade capacity building efforts in support of the US-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). The TPSC gives notice that, on behalf of the U.S. Government, the Office of the United States Trade Representative and the United States Agency for International Development seek to expand the circle of resource partners to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), corporate sponsors and private foundations that are prepared to provide self-funded assistance to conduct trade capacity building efforts in support of the CAFTA subject to (1) the priorities set by Central American countries in their national trade capacity building strategies; (2) the coordination efforts of the U.S. interagency trade capacity working group to, among other reasons, promote transparency; and (3) consistency with U.S. government policy. Interested parties should present a brief description of their potential contribution. This Request for Submission does not constitute a request for proposals/applications for funding from the United States Trade Representative, the United States Agency for International Development, or any other agency of the United States Government (USG).

Any future requests for proposals/applications will be advertised on FedBizOpps or FedGrants, as appropriate. If any assistance opportunities or procurement needs are identified as part of the CAFTA process, such needs will be met by the appropriate USG agency in accordance with its internal procedures.

DATES: Expressions of interest are welcome throughout the CAFTA negotiations.

ADDRESSES:

Submissions by electronic mail: FR0074@ustr.gov (written comments).

Submissions by facsimile: Gloria Blue, Executive Secretary, Trade Policy Staff
Committee, at 202/395-6143.

The public is strongly encouraged to submit documents electronically rather than by facsimile. (See requirements for submissions below).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For procedural questions, contact Gloria Blue, Executive Secretary, TPSC, Office of the USTR, 1724 F Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20508, telephone (202) 395-3475. Substantive questions should be addressed to Tracy Quilter, Director for Trade Capacity Building, Office of the USTR, telephone (202) 395-2839.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The United States has entered into free trade negotiations with five Central American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. The agreement seeks to eliminate tariffs and other barriers to

trade in goods, agriculture, services, and investment between the United States and the five Central American countries. The participants will seek to complete the negotiations by December 2003.

Nine rounds of negotiations are planned in 2003. To date, six have occurred.

Negotiating groups cover the following topics: market access; investment and services; government procurement and intellectual property; labor and environment; and institutional issues such as dispute settlement. A non-negotiating cooperative group on trade capacity building (“TCB Working Group”) has been meeting in parallel with the negotiating groups. The TCB Working Group aims to address, to the extent possible, the needs of the Central American countries for preparing for negotiations, implementation of the agreement and transition to free trade. The USG, in concert with regional institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the Organization of American States, the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, has assisted countries in completing national trade capacity building strategies to guide the work of the TCB Working Group. These strategies are intended to identify, define and prioritize each country’s needs. The strategies can be found on USTR’s Internet server (www.ustr.gov).

The United States and the Central American countries aim to attract additional resource partners that can legitimately contribute to the trade capacity building efforts in support of the CAFTA. The TPSC gives notice that USTR and USAID, on behalf of the USG, seek to expand the circle of resource partners to NGOs, corporate sponsors and private

foundations that can volunteer to conduct self-funded trade capacity building efforts in support of the CAFTA subject to (1) the priorities set by Central American countries in their national trade capacity building strategies; (2) the coordination efforts of the U.S. interagency trade capacity working group; and (3) consistency with USG policy. The countries seek resource partners that are prepared to provide self-funded (cash or in-kind) assistance for the trade capacity building support that they propose to deliver in the context of these trade initiatives. Interested parties should present a brief description of their potential contribution.

There are two parts to TCB Working Group meetings. The first involves a meeting of exclusively government officials from the United States and CAFTA countries. The second part involves government officials and representatives from resource partners outside the governments such as international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, foundations and the private sector. Resource partners that volunteer to participate based on their ability to self-fund technical assistance or other trade capacity building services in response to the needs identified by the Central Americans in the CAFTA process may be invited to join the TCB Working Group. Resource partners that are selected to join the TCB Working Group will be welcome to attend the TCB Working Group meetings that are not restricted to government officials and are open to other resource partners. . Requests for contract or grant funding from the USG will not be permitted during TCB Working Group meetings.

SUBMITTING COMMENTS: To ensure prompt and full consideration of responses, the TPSC strongly recommends that interested persons make submissions by electronic mail to the following e-mail address: FR0074@ustr.gov. Persons making submissions by e-mail should use the following subject line: "CAFTA TCB Assistance." Documents should be submitted as either WordPerfect, MSWord, or text (.TXT) files. Supporting documentation submitted as spreadsheets is acceptable as Quattro Pro or Excel. For any document containing business confidential information submitted electronically, the file name of the business confidential version should begin with the characters ``BC-", and the file name of the public version should begin with the character ``P-". The ``P-" or ``BC-" should be followed by the name of the submitter. Persons who make submissions by e-mail should not provide separate cover letters; information that might appear in a cover letter should be included in the submission itself. Similarly, to the extent possible, any attachments to the submission should be included in the same file as the submission itself, and not as separate files.

Written comments will be placed in a file open to public inspection pursuant to 15 CFR 2003.5, except confidential business information exempt from public inspection in accordance with 15 CFR 2003.6. Confidential business information submitted in accordance with 15 CFR 2003.6 must be clearly marked "BUSINESS CONFIDENTIAL" at the top of each page, including any cover letter or cover page, and must be accompanied by a non-confidential summary of the confidential information. All public documents and non-confidential summaries shall be available for public inspection in the USTR Reading Room in Room 3 of the annex of the Office of the USTR, 1724 F Street,

NW, Washington, D.C. 20508. An appointment to review the file may be made by calling (202) 395-6186. The USTR Reading Room is generally open to the public from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Appointments must be scheduled at least 48 hours in advance.

Additional information may be reported in websites or other public announcements related to CAFTA trade capacity building activities.

General information concerning USTR may be obtained by accessing its Internet server (www.ustr.gov). General information concerning USAID may be obtained by accessing its Internet server (www.usaid.gov).

Carmen Suro-Bredie
Chairman, Trade Policy Staff Committee