

Small Business Champions

2024: Empowering Indigenous Peoples' Economic Development through International Trade

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the International Trade Centre (ITC), and the World Trade Organization's Informal Working Group on Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (WTO MSME Group), with the support of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), are calling for innovative ideas that support international trade by Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous Peoples, or the earliest known people from a given geographical area, are present in more than 90 economies, represent 5,000 cultures and speak 40 per cent of the world's 7,000 languages.¹ Indigenous Peoples "own, occupy, or use a quarter of the world's surface area", conserving 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity according to the World Bank.² However, recognition of the rights and interests of indigenous peoples is often insecure, sometimes leading to conflict, environmental degradation, and weak economic and social development. Additionally, although indigenous peoples make up around 6 per cent of the global population, they represent about 19 per cent of the extreme poor.³

International trade can provide opportunities and lead to innovation for businesses of every size and there is growing national and international effort to support trade by Indigenous Peoples. For example, IPETCA 2021, the purpose of which is to strengthen indigenous economic empowerment in the Asia Pacific region, and more recently the 2023 United Kingdom – New Zealand trade agreement, which contains a world first comprehensive Māori Trade and Economic Cooperation chapter. International trade can help provide economic opportunity to some disproportionately marginalized indigenous peoples as well as bring awareness about these unique cultures to all people around the world.

Goals of the Initiative

- Raise awareness among businesses and policymakers of the particular difficulties indigenous peoples encounter when it comes to international trade.
- Highlight best practices that are helping indigenous peoples to internationalize.
- Support indigenous peoples' participation in international trade with a view towards business innovation and resilience.

¹ [10 things to know about Indigenous peoples by United Nations Development Programme - United Nations Development Programme | UNDP - Exposure](#)

² [Indigenous Peoples Overview \(worldbank.org\)](#)

³ [Indigenous Peoples Overview \(worldbank.org\)](#)

Call for proposals

The World Trade Organization (WTO) Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Informal Working Group (MSME Group), in partnership with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the International Trade Centre (ITC), are calling for proposals that help Indigenous Peoples to trade internationally. Small businesses, indigenous enterprises, industry associations, chambers of commerce and non-governmental organizations are invited to submit their innovative project ideas by **3 May 2024**.

What kind of proposals are we looking for?

- Proposals can focus on awareness-raising campaigns, competitions, capacity building, training and mentoring programmes.
- Proposals should have an obvious international trade angle. For information on past competitions and winning proposals, please see the [ICC-ITC-WTO MSME Group Small Business Champions website](#).
- Proposals should be designed to be delivered by the entity making the proposal and should not focus on WTO negotiations, or proposed changes to WTO rules.

How to submit proposals

Proposals are open to businesses, indigenous enterprises, industry associations, chambers of commerce and non-governmental organizations and should:

- detail the concept, aim, timeline and other information as appropriate
- be no longer than three (3) pages
- **Optional** - include a (maximum 3-minute) video shared via [Wetransfer](#)
- have the approval and informed consent of the Indigenous Peoples being referenced
- be sent to smallbusinesschampions@wto.org in Word or PDF format by **3 May 2024**.

Key information to be provided

When submitting a proposal, please ensure that the following points are covered:

- name of the organization
- short description of the organization
- name of the proposed project
- challenge faced/issue to be addressed
- short description of the project, including activities to be organized
- aim(s) of the project (including any specific outcomes)
- timeline for the project
- evidence that the Indigenous Peoples have been consulted and have given their approval to submit the proposal
- how promotion by the ICC, ITC and WTO MSME Informal Working Group can support your proposal.
- contact person (name, telephone, email)

- short bios of the persons implementing the project

Selection process

The selection of proposals will be carried out by representatives of the ICC, ITC, WTO MSME team and with the inputs of WIPO.

Winners will be announced at the WTO on MSME Day, 27 June 2024.

Award details

All awards are non-financial and **no money will be provided** to participants for the project. ITC will provide training on marketing/branding and pitching as well as offer tailored technical coaching and mentoring as needed, while the ICC will provide discounted access to an ICC Academy course. WIPO will provide access to relevant distant learning courses free of charge for representatives of Indigenous Peoples, as well as local communities. Winning submissions will also be promoted by the ICC, ITC and the WTO MSME Group through their communication channels and all winners will receive a certificate.

Frequently asked questions

1. How ambitious are proposals expected to be and how should I budget the project?
 - a. It is recommended to develop a proposal that is within the capacity of your organization, or partnership, to achieve. No additional funding will be provided by the organizers.
2. Can the same organization submit more than one proposal?
 - a. Yes. There is no limit to the number of proposals one organization may submit.
3. Can I submit a proposal if I am a private company?
 - a. Private companies are invited to submit proposals.
4. Can I submit a proposal if I am a government organization?
 - a. Government organizations are invited to submit proposals if they are in partnership with an industry association, chamber of commerce or non-governmental organization with a MSME focus.
5. What does "... be designed to be delivered by the entity making the proposal and should not focus on WTO negotiations, or proposed changes to WTO rules" mean?
 - a. The Small Business Champions organizers are asking that participants develop proposals that their own organizations are capable of achieving without significant external assistance and that focus specifically on MSME trade and not on the work of the WTO.

6. Can I expect financial support from the sponsors and organizers to implement my proposal?
 - a. Unfortunately, none of the sponsors or organizers of the Small Business Champions initiative are in a position to provide money or other financial support for a winning proposal. Awards are restricted to publicity, training, or other relevant "gifts-in-kind".
7. For any additional questions, please reach out to smallbusinesschampions@wto.org.