

# USAID, Western Union, EcoBank sponsor grant for African entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs living in the United States with businesses back in sub-Saharan Africa have been given the opportunity to vie for a portion of a US\$1.5 million grant offered by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Western Union, and the African-based EcoBank.

Titled the African Diaspora Marketplace (ADM) program, applicants who apply by 30 July 2009 are competing for US\$50,000 and US\$100,000 grants in order to help boost their economies back home. They can be US citizens or permanent residents of Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.

Borany Penh, senior political economist for the USAID Economic Growth and Trade Office of Poverty Reduction, told MediaGlobal, "The 19 countries of operation were chosen largely based on the presence of USAID technical programs in these countries so that ADM grant recipients might potentially benefit from the programs."

The program is a way for African residents abroad to invest in their country's and continent's future. Reverie Zurba, media contact for USAID in Southern Africa, relayed to MediaGlobal that ADM "hopes to demonstrate the impact that entrepreneurs from the world's diaspora or migrant communities can have on development in their home countries."

Additionally, monitoring of support given to participants "will help to identify best practices around the support needed to help small businesses thrive in developing markets," Penh added. "USAID and its partners hope the ADM will lead to the creation or expansion of viable enterprises that will help eradicate poverty in sub-Saharan Africa through the creation of jobs and economic opportunity."

The 400 proposals that have been submitted thus far range from agribusiness and food production to engineering and communications technologies. Anywhere from 10 - 20 winning recipients will be announced in October 2009.

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