



**USAID**  
DEL PUEBLO DE LOS ESTADOS  
UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA

# USAID'S EXPORT PROMOTION PROGRAM E-COMMERCE INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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# Executive Summary

The main objective of the USAID's Export Promotion Program is to assist Salvadoran Small and Medium Enterprises (**SME**) in promoting their products abroad and reach the global marketplace as directly as possible. In this context, the Program is launching a new **E-Commerce Initiative** with the objective of giving Salvadoran companies a greater web presence, direct access to end consumers and assistance with product transportation and delivery under a unified web portal and online storefronts.

To implement this initiative, the Program is creating an E-Commerce Unit that will be responsible for managing the initiative through three major phases: (a) **Rollout**, which involves the design and development of the portal and the outsourcing of specialized services; (b) **Growth**, during which the initiative is expected to grow and reach stability and maturity; and (c) **Turnover**, when the successful e-commerce organization is transferred to an established Salvadoran institution.

This report presents (a) the high-level strategy and approach to implement the E-Commerce initiative; (b) identifies the in-house and outsourced functions of the ECU; (c) provides profiles for ECU staff and consultants; and (d) lists minimum requirements for services to be outsourced.

The report organizes the various services to be outsourced in three major packages: (a) Development and promotion of the portal's public web pages; (b) Order fulfillment capability in the US and (c) Delivery of goods from SMEs to the US Warehouse.

Finally, a detailed work plan is developed for the ECU to follow during the Rollout phase which includes the formation of specialized teams: a portal development team to oversee the services of the firm that will develop the portal and the logistics team that will oversee the firms responsible for logistics services in El Salvador and the US.

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# The Program's E-Commerce Initiative Strategy

## **Background**

The main objective of the USAID Export Promotion Program is to assist Salvadoran Small and Medium Enterprises (**SME**) to strengthen their export base through technical assistance and further assist them in promoting their products abroad through participation in trade shows and direct marketing with adequate distributors and retailers.

The Program's intent has been to expand the SMEs profit margins, on the one hand by prompting them to specialize in high end niches, and on the other helping them access the end consumer as directly as possible.

Widespread use of computer and internet technology are facilitating previously time consuming activities for the population worldwide. Global purchase trends point to a marked increase of internet based purchases.

In this context, the Program is launching a new **E-Commerce Initiative** with the objective of developing a venue through which local export companies can come together under a unified electronic portal, and in doing so widen their potential market, facilitate direct access to the end consumer, lower shipment costs through a shared US-based warehousing system, and lower general transaction cost.

Once implemented, the E-Commerce Initiative will complement other Program marketing and promotional assistance to local SMEs, widening their reach, facilitating sales, timely delivery and lowering transaction costs.

## **Approach**

After having reviewed various implementation options, the Program has settled on an approach that will:

- Maximize the utilization of current Program resources during startup
- Maintain overall quality control over the interim phases and components
- Once fully operational, allow it to turn over a mature and successful operation to its eventual institutional owner

A small management unit will be created within the Program, to be named the E-Commerce Unit (ECU), that will be responsible for managing all activities directly related to the E-Commerce

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Initiative such as overseeing the design of the public portals and support information systems, deciding on in-house vs. outsourced functions, selecting and contracting service providers, etc.

Initially, the ECU will be seeded with Program funds and will be composed of one fulltime staff member supported by a pool of specialized consultants, local and international, that will be fielded, when needed, to carry out specific tasks called for in the E-Commerce Initiative implementation plan.

It is expected that the fulltime staffing requirements will increase over the next two years as various activities are carried out. It will be the responsibility of the ECU to establish the appropriate balance between fulltime staff and external consultants and obtain the Program's approval and budget for any proposed staffing changes.

The final objective of the ECU is to convert a stable and successful e-commerce operation into a self-sustaining organization to be incorporated in an appropriate Salvadoran institution.

### ***E-Commerce Initiative Development Phases***

It is envisioned that the ECU's will manage the E-Commerce Initiative in three distinct development phases:

#### **Phase 1: Rollout**

During this first phase, the ECU will administer the initial contracting process for the services to be outsourced related to the online storefront development and logistics management. This involves, at a minimum:

- Refinement of specifications and requirements for services to be outsourced
- Drafting of Terms-Of-Reference (TOR)
- Preparation of bidding documents such as Request-For-Proposals (RFP) and Requests-For-Quotations (RFQ) as per USAID rules and regulations
- Drafting contracts
- Evaluations of bids
- Awards of contracts and final negotiations of terms

During this phase the ECU will be augmented with short term consultants with skills in bid document preparation, contracting, procurement, and information technology consultants with experience in the various aspects of e-commerce, inventory and warehouse management, and logistics outsourcing.

#### **Phase 2: Growth and Stability**

Once the major service providers have been selected and contracted, the ECU will concentrate on monitoring and measuring their performance as well as managing the operation. During this

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phase, the ECU will very likely require the technical assistance in IT project management in order to:

- Address any technical or management issues that might arise with the outsourced services
- Develop performance criteria and measurements
- Ensure that the services delivered meet specified quality standards

It is expected that during this phase the e-commerce operation, while continuing to grow in transaction volume, will reach a level of stability where all systems, services and components work as expected.

### **Phase 3: Turnover to Institutional Owner**

The final phase consists in ensuring that a stable and successful e-commerce operation is converted into a self-sustaining organization serving the SME community.

Activities in this phase will likely consist in repackaging and fine tuning some of the E-Commerce Initiative components and activities so as to permit the Program to transfer the operation to an established Salvadoran institution.

Under Program management guidance the ECU will hire, if necessary, the appropriate business consultants that will assist the ECU in executing the transfer.

As summarized below in Table 1, the implementation of the E-Commerce Initiative calls for a number of tasks.

This report presents the results of tasks 2 through 5, namely:

- E-commerce implementation strategy and approach
- Identification of in-house and outsourced functions of the ECU
- Profiles for ECU staff and consultants
- Minimum requirements for outsourced services

**TABLE 1: E-COMMERCE INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Task	Responsibility	Milestone/Deliverable
<b>1. Establish E-Commerce Unit (ECU)</b> Based on ITC recommendations refine the unit's: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall objective</li> <li>• Medium/long term goals</li> <li>• Legal/organizational structure</li> <li>• Funding/seeding mechanism</li> <li>• Staffing and budget</li> </ul>	The Program	E-Commerce Initiative Definition
<b>2. Develop Overall Strategy</b> Develop high level e-commerce portal concept; recommend overall approach and methodology best suited to implement it.	ITC	Strategy
<b>3. Define E-Commerce Unit's functions</b> Identify functions and responsibilities specifying which are to be in-house and which are to be outsourced.		Functions
<b>4. Identify Skill Sets for in-house functions</b> Prepare profiles and responsibilities of staff and consultants to be contracted by the unit.		In house skill sets
<b>5. Specify minimum requirements for outsourced services</b> Specify services to be outsourced and organize into separate procurement packages to be procured and managed by the unit.		Minimum requirements for outsourced services
<b>6. Hire ECU in-house staff</b> Hire local fulltime staff, local and international consultants that will form the ECU which will be responsible for implementing and managing the E-Commerce Initiative.	The Program	ECU created, staffed and operational
<b>7. Manage E-Commerce Initiative Implementation</b> Manage all activities related to the implementation of the E-Commerce Initiative from initial rollout to final turnover, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rollout</b> - Contracting outsourced services. Incorporate minimum requirements identified by ITC into procurement documents (Request-for-Proposals, Request-for-Quotes, etc.). Evaluate bids and award outsourcing contracts.</li> <li>• <b>Growth</b> - Management and quality control. Ensure all outsourced services and products consistently meet the quality standards specified.</li> <li>• <b>Turnover</b> – Adjust/adapt the e-commerce operation as necessary so as to be taken over from EXPRO by the final institutional owner</li> </ul>	ECU	Successful E-Commerce Initiative

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# The E-Commerce Portal

An e-commerce portal consists of different components, some of them are visible and accessible on the portal's public or private web pages and some are background support functions necessary to carry out online transactions through completion.

The major components of the proposed e-commerce portal are illustrated in Figure 1.

## **Public Web Pages**

A number of web pages are accessible to the public in general as follows:

### **Main Portal**

This is the main website that presents the E-Commerce Initiative to the public, explains its purpose and objectives and invites the visitor to browse and purchase the Salvadoran products and services online.

### **Product Category Sub-Portals**

For each product category, such as musical instruments or specialty foods, there will be a sub-portal, i.e. a set of web pages that present the product category as a whole. At this level there will be links (reciprocal and otherwise) with other appropriate websites that are directly related to the product category such as relevant trade sites, local and international professional organizations, etc. and presentations of each of the Salvadoran SMEs offering products/services in the category.

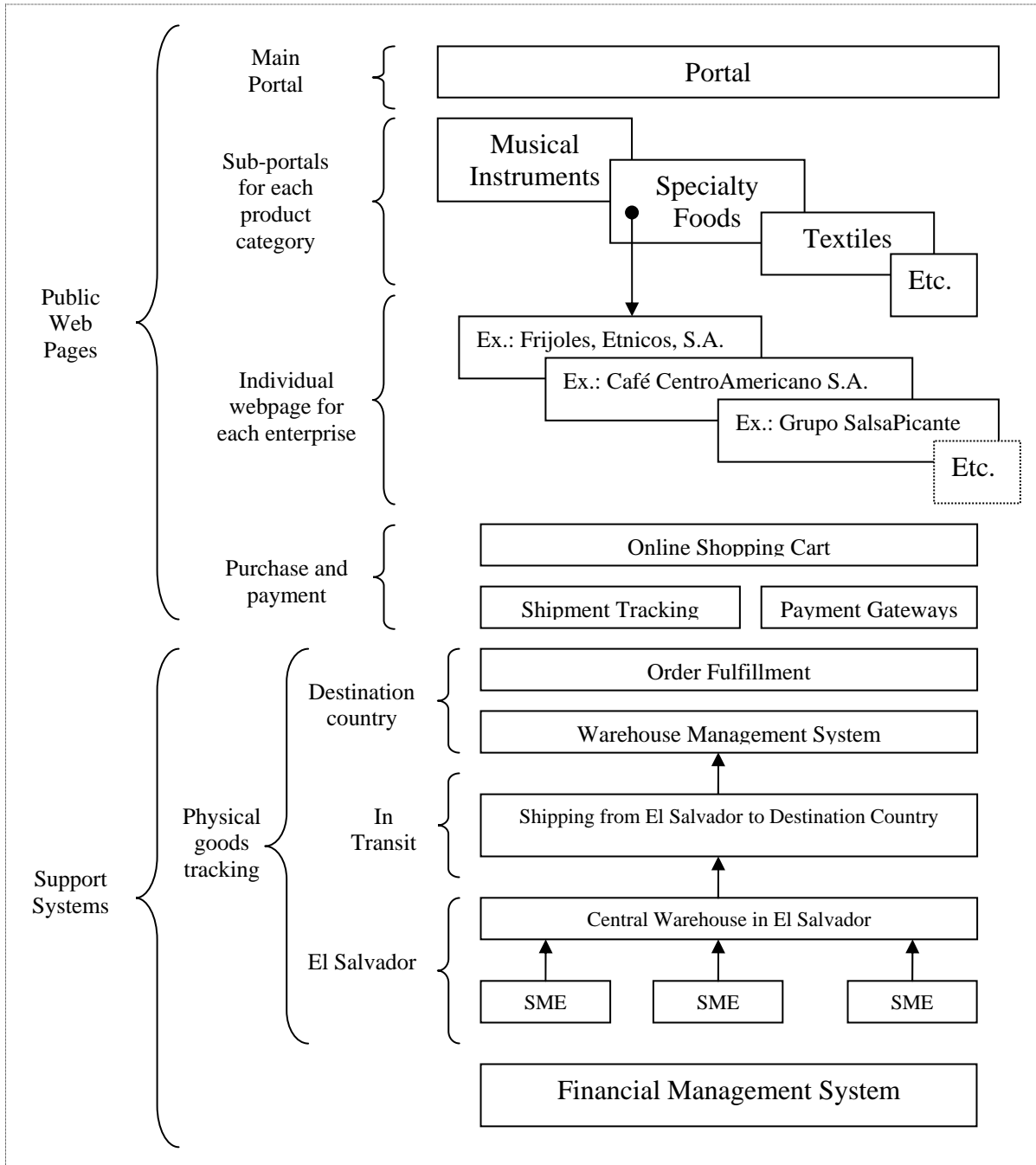
### **Individual SME Web Pages**

Each SME will have a page where the enterprise is presented to the public and its products are listed and described. In this page there can be reciprocal links to the SME's own website, if any. All content (style, images, graphics and text) in the above pages will follow a common theme and be designed and produced by the ECU through the use of specialists in webpage design. All content will be approved by the Program.

### **Common Shopping Cart**

The visitor can select items to purchase in any page in the portal. The items selected will be temporarily stored in an online shopping cart until checkout and payment.

**FIGURE 1: E-COMMERCE PORTAL**  
Major Components



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## **Payment Gateways**

During checkout the visitor will be given a choice of common payment gateways, including Paypal as well as the ability to use most major credit cards.

## **Shipment Tracking**

All shipping to the retail consumer in the destination country is done through the major shippers that offer online tracking (UPS, Fedex, etc.). Initially only items on hand at distribution warehouses will be allowed to be sold online through the portal. Eventually, if backordering capability is put in place, items can be backordered through the supply chain back to the SME in El Salvador.

## **Logistics Support Systems**

For an item to be finally delivered at the doorstep of the buyer in an online transaction, a great number of activities must take place behind the scenes in order for goods to be physically moved through the supply chain from the original manufacturer through various storage and transfer locations and shipping methods.

In the case of the E-Commerce Initiative, the physical goods will move through three distinct stages:

- Delivery from the original SME to a central warehouse in El Salvador where different shipments are consolidated into containers.
- Shipping of containers from El Salvador to a distribution warehouse in the US.
- Unpacking containers, warehousing individual items, managing stock on hand, picking and packing to fulfill online orders and shipping to the buyer.

The execution of each of the above stages will be outsourced. It is expected that one Salvadoran contractor will be responsible for stages (a) and (b) and one US based operator will be responsible for stage (c).

These two operators are expected to have adequate information systems that will provide up-to-date product tracking information to be accessible through the portal by authorized Program staff in each stage.

Finally, a high level financial management system that provides statistics over the various components of the e-commerce operation will be integrated to the portal.

# The E-Commerce Unit

In order to execute the strategy described in Section 1, the Program is creating the E-commerce Unit (**ECU**) that will be responsible for managing all the activities related to the E-Commerce Initiative.

Initially, the ECU will consist of one fulltime manager supported by a pool of specialized consultants that will be called upon to execute specific tasks as per the ECU work plan.

As described in section 1.3, the ECU will oversee the implementation of the E-Commerce Initiative through its three distinct phases: (a) rollout; (b) ongoing operations; and (c) turnover to its institutional owner. The following is the ECU work plan for the first phase: Rollout.

## ***Work Plan – Rollout Phase***

The first phase involves the preparation of three interrelated procurement packages:

- Portal’s public web pages – development and promotion
- Order fulfillment capability in the US
- Goods delivery from SMEs to US warehouse

Each package of services will be outsourced to specialized service providers who will be responsible for providing goods and services as specified. The ECU will prepare the bidding documents for each package by incorporating the specifications prepared in this report, advertise the procurements through appropriate channels, evaluate bids, award contracts and oversee their execution.

Detailed work plans for the subsequent phases of growth and turnover will be developed by the ECU and Program management upon completion of the Rollout phase and should be based on the overall strategy proposed in section 1, adapted and adjusted as necessary taking into account experiences and lessons learned in the first phase.

**TABLE 2: PORTAL DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION - WORK PLAN**

	Task	Responsibility	Milestone
1.	Form Portal Design Team ( <b>PDT</b> ) composed of web design consultant and procurement specialist <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire web design consultant</li> <li>• Hire procurement specialist</li> <li>• Hire web promotion consultant</li> </ul>	ECU	PDT formed
2.	Prepare and Issue Bidding documents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review/refine/adapt Portal Design and Development ToR from this report</li> <li>• Draft Requests-for-Proposal</li> <li>• Draft model contract</li> <li>• Create short list of qualified bidders</li> <li>• Issue RFP</li> </ul>	PDT	RFP Issued
3.	Evaluate bids and award contracts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate proposals</li> <li>• Negotiate contract terms with winner</li> <li>• Award contract</li> </ul>	PDT	Contract Awarded
4.	Manage Portal design and development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish quality control procedures to include independent testing and design review teams.</li> <li>• Develop product delivery schedule</li> </ul>	PDT	Delivery Schedule and QC Procedure
5.	Test / Approve interim/final products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form design team with SME representatives and EXPRO staff.</li> <li>• Review/approve interim work products</li> <li>• Approve final product</li> </ul>	PDT	Portal
6.	Specify Promotion Plan to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify related organizations and websites to share reciprocal links.</li> <li>• Arrange for listings in major online marketplaces (eBay, Amazon, Ubid, etc.)</li> <li>• Arrange for inclusion in Product Comparison Engines (NexTag, Google Product Search, Yahoo Shopping, etc.)</li> <li>• Arrange for relevant revenue generating pop-up and banner ads on Portal's web pages.</li> <li>• Arrange for search engine visibility in major search engines</li> </ul>	PDT	Promotion plan
7.	Approve Portal Promotion Plan and oversee its execution.	PDT	Ongoing Promotion

<b>TABLE 3: LOGISTICS – WORK PLAN</b>			
	Task	Responsibility	Milestone
1.	Form Logistics Team ( <b>LT</b> ) composed of logistics, E-commerce and procurement experts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hire logistics consultant</li> <li>Hire E-commerce consultant</li> <li>Hire procurement specialist</li> </ul>	ECU	LT formed
2.	Prepare and Issue Bidding documents for <b>Order Fulfillment Services in the US</b> Review/refine/adapt specifications form this report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft Requests-for-Bids (RFB)</li> <li>Draft model contract</li> <li>Create short list of qualified bidders</li> <li>Issue RFB</li> </ul>	LT	RFB Issued
3.	Evaluate bids and award contracts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate proposals</li> <li>Negotiate contract terms with winner</li> <li>Award contract</li> </ul>	LT	Contract Awarded
4.	Prepare and Issue Bidding documents for <b>Delivery of Goods from SME to US Warehouse</b> Review/refine/adapt specifications form this report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft Requests-for-Bids (RFB)</li> <li>Draft model contract</li> <li>Create short list of qualified bidders</li> <li>Issue RFB</li> </ul>	LT	RFB Issued
5.	Evaluate bids and award contracts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate proposals</li> <li>Negotiate contract terms with winner</li> <li>Award contract</li> </ul>	LT	Contract Awarded

### ***ECU Staff and Consultants Profiles***

It is expected that in order to execute its assignments, the E-commerce Unit (ECU) will be composed of one fulltime manager and a pool of specialists and consultants that will be called upon at specific times to perform specific tasks, as detailed in the above work plans.

The staff and consultant profiles below reflect the skill sets required to perform the tasks listed in the work plans above. It is naturally at the discretion of Program management, based on experience and knowledge of the local resources, to determine if a fulltime position is more appropriate than short term consultancies on a case by case basis. In addition, Program management may also determine if more than one skill set can be offered by the same individual consultant or staff member and/or by current Program staff.

## **ECU Manager**

### ***Responsibilities***

- Work closely with Program management and follow Program directions and guidelines in all matters related to the ECU
- Manage all activities of the ECU
- Revise/adapt ECU work plans
- Review/adapt ECU staff/consultants profiles
- Locate, evaluate, hire, manage staff and consultants
- Execute ECU work plan
- Ensure quality of deliverables specified in work plan

### ***Experience***

- *Proven experience in project management with multidisciplinary teams*
- *Experience in logistics management desirable*
- *Experience in information technology project management desirable*
- *Experience in website design/development desirable*
- *Experience in USAID procurement rules/regulations desirable*

### ***Skills***

- *Interpersonal and communications skills*
- *Project management and productivity tools (like MS Office and MS Project)*

## **Web Design Consultant**

### ***Responsibilities***

- Assist/advise ECU manager with all matters related to website design and development
- Work with other members of Portal Development Team (PDT)
- Review/adapt specifications for portal development and promotion services to be outsourced
- Assist in RFP preparation
- Assist in bid evaluations
- Assist in developing quality control criteria

### ***Experience***

- Proven experience with website design
- Proven experience with web portal design
- Proven experience with storefront development packages

### ***Skills***

- HTML/XML
- Web page design tools
- Web graphics design tools

## **Web Promotion Consultant**

### ***Responsibilities***

- Assist/advise ECU manager with all matters related to portal promotion
- Work with other members of Portal Development Team (PDT)
- Review/adapt specifications for portal development and promotion services to be outsourced
- Assist in RFP preparation
- Assist in bid evaluations
- Assist in developing quality control criteria

### ***Experience***

- Proven experience with website promotion
- Proven experience with listing in online markets (eBay, Amazon, Ubid, etc.)
- Proven experience with product comparison engines (NextTag, Google Product Search, Yahoo Shopping, etc.)
- Proven experience with placement of pop-up and banner ads
- Proven experience with search engine visibility techniques
- Experience with storefront/e-commerce packages highly desirable

### ***Skills***

- HTML/XML
- Search engine registration/placement techniques
- Storefront/e-commerce development tools

## **E-commerce Consultant**

### ***Responsibilities***

- Assist/advise ECU manager with all matters related to E-commerce implementation
- Work with other members of Portal Development Team (PDT)
- Review/adapt specifications for portal development and promotion services to be outsourced
- Assist in RFP preparation
- Assist in bid evaluations
- Assist in developing quality control criteria

### ***Experience***

- Proven experience with e-commerce/order management solutions
- Proven experience with online shopping cart systems
- Proven experience with order fulfillment systems
- Proven experience with inventory/warehouse management systems

### ***Skills***

- HTML/XML
- Storefront/e-commerce development tools

## **Logistics Consultant**

### ***Responsibilities***

- Assist/advise ECU manager with outsourcing of logistics components of the E-Commerce Initiative
- Work with other members of Logistics Team (LT)
- Review/adapt specifications for logistics services to be outsourced
- Assist in Request-for-Bids preparation
- Assist in bid evaluations
- Assist in developing quality control criteria for outsourced services

### ***Experience***

- Proven experience with 3<sup>rd</sup> party logistics (3PL) solutions
- Proven experience with 3rd party order fulfillment (3PF) solutions
- Proven experience with inventory/warehouse management systems (WMS)
- Experience with e-commerce oriented logistics desirable

### ***Skills***

- Inventory control systems
- Storefront/e-commerce systems
- MS Office

## **Procurement Consultant**

### ***Responsibilities***

- Assist/advise ECU manager with all matters related to procurement of outsourced services
- Work with other members of Portal Development Team (PDT) and Logistics Team (LT)
- Review/adapt minimum requirements for portal development and logistics services to be outsourced
- Draft RFP, RFB, contracts, and related bidding documents
- Assist in bid evaluations
- Assist in developing quality control criteria for outsourced services

### ***Experience***

- Proven experience with USAID procurement rules and regulations
- Proven experience in packaging outsourced services
- Proven experience in evaluating technical proposals, awarding and negotiating contracts

### ***Skills***

- MS Office

# Outsourced Services – Minimum Requirements

## ***Portal Design, Development, Promotion and Management***

The Program seeks to outsource the full design, development, promotion and ongoing management of the e-commerce portal and related storefronts.

The services requested include:

- Design and development according to Program specifications, under E-Commerce Unit (ECU) supervision
- Promotion in all appropriate search engines and relevant online venues
- Ongoing management and maintenance.

At a minimum, the portal will include the following:

- ***Main portal page*** – Landing page that presents the E-Commerce Initiative to the public; explains its purpose and objectives and invites the visitor to browse and purchase the Salvadoran products and services online.
- ***Product category sub-portals*** - For each product category, such as musical instruments or specialty foods, there will be a sub-portal, i.e. a set of web pages that present the product category as a whole. At this level there will be links (reciprocal and otherwise) with other appropriate websites that are directly related to the product category such as relevant trade sites, local and international professional organizations, etc. and presentations of each of the Salvadoran SMEs offering products/services in the category.
- ***Individual SME web pages*** - Each SME will have a page where the enterprise is presented to the public and its products are listed and described. In this page, there can be reciprocal links to the SME's own website, if any.
- ***Common shopping cart*** - The visitor can select items to purchase in any page in the portal. The items selected will be temporarily stored in an online shopping cart until checkout and payment.
- ***Payment gateways*** - During checkout, the visitor will be given a choice of common payment gateways, including Paypal, as well as the ability to use most major credit cards.
- ***Shipment tracking*** - All shipping to the retail consumer in the destination country is done through the major shippers who offer online tracking (UPS, FedEx, etc.). Initially, only items on hand at distribution warehouses will be allowed to be sold online through the portal. Eventually, if backordering capability is put in place, items can be backordered through the supply chain back to the SME in El Salvador.

All content (style, images, graphics and text) in all pages will follow a common theme and be approved by the ECU.

## **Order Fulfillment in the US**

The Program seeks a US-based 3PL vendor with warehousing and transportation facilities in the US, preferably Miami or Houston, which will provide at a minimum the following services:

### **Merchandise Receiving**

- Receive merchandise in containers shipped from El Salvador
- Inspecting, counting and adjusting the stock
- Assign to shelves or racks for order fulfillment

### **Warehousing**

- Dry storage space for items of different types and sizes
- Storage for non-perishable food items

### **Pick & Pack**

- Assemble all components of orders
- Pick and pack orders using bar code systems
- Label and generate all required forms, tracking numbers, packing slips
- Transfer the data to the carrier's shipping system

### **Shipping**

- Same day and next business day shipping
- Light assembly of some component orders
- Shrink-wrapping and custom packaging
- Multiple carriers (U.S.P.S., FedEx, UPS, DHL, etc.)

### **Inventory and Order Management Systems**

- Web based
- Customer accessible
- Online real-time info on merchandise received, quantity-on-hand, shipped, order status, tracking numbers, etc.

### **Customer Service**

- Toll-free inbound customer service, staffed during working hours
- Provide product information
- Answer questions about billing and order status
- Process credits and refunds
- Take phone orders
- Provide online access to customer order history and status

### **Returns Processing**

- Issue RMA (Returned Merchandise Authorizations) and return tags
- Return products to inventory
- Disposal of damaged/defective products

## ***Delivery from SMEs to US Warehouse***

The Program seeks a US based 3PL vendor with warehousing and transportation facilities in El Salvador that will provide at a minimum the following services:

### **Merchandise Receiving**

- Receive merchandise from local manufacturers in El Salvador
- Inspect, count and adjust stock

### **Warehousing**

- Provide short term dry storage space for items of different kinds and sizes
- Provide short term storage for non-perishable food items

### **Loading Containers**

- Consolidate, load and ship containers
- Pick and pack orders using bar code systems
- Label and generate all required forms, tracking numbers, packing slips
- Transfer the data to the carrier's shipping system

### **Shipping & Freight forwarding**

- Ship from El Salvador to US port
- Freight forward
- Clear Customs in US
- Deliver containers to US warehouse

### **Inventory and Order Management Systems**

- Web based
- Customer accessible
- Online real-time info on:
  - Merchandise received
  - Merchandise in stock
  - Merchandise in containers
  - Container status/location (in transit, at customs, delivered, etc.)