

## Request for Proposal (RFP)

ASEAN-Japan Center (AJC) will hold open competitive bidding as follows and invite interested bidders.

### 1. Contents

(1) Title of the service

"Consultant for the Circular Economy (CE) Capacity Building for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in ASEAN"

(2) The activity of the consultant

Organising a series of online capacity-building activities for SMEs from ASEAN for four days.  
(Please refer to **4. Reference Information**)

(3) The expected period of the service

Successful bidder concludes a contract for consulting service with AJC as soon as the bidding process ends. "*CE Capacity Building for MSMEs in ASEAN*" is expected to be held before the end of the fiscal year 2022.

### 2. Submission of Proposal

The interested bidders are requested to submit a proposal. The proposal is made in free format and shall cover the details of:

- i. Background and information of your organization, including the past and current projects of a nature similar to this service.
- ii. Name, background, and professional experience of expert staff to be assigned to the project, regarding their work experiences similar to this assignment.
- iii. Technical Proposal: activity plan (\* Please specify the plan on delivering a series of online workshop sessions for Circular Economy (CE) Capacity Building for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in ASEAN
- iv. Financial Proposal: quotation and its breakdown

### Submission

Please submit your proposal to the following email by:

**16:00 (Japan Standard time), 28 October 2022.** (Email: [info\\_cs@asean.or.jp](mailto:info_cs@asean.or.jp))

\* Should you desire additional information, please send inquiries to the email above (Attn: Dr. Nguyen Tuan Anh)

### **3. Note**

#### (1) Evaluation

The evaluation of the proposal is based on the following criteria.

- i. The proposal shows an accurate understanding of the purpose and content of the service and specifies ways to achieve that purpose.
- ii. The proposal content has originalities.
- iii. The proposal shows work processes that enable the consultant to accomplish the work within the expected timeline and to the expected standard.

(2) AJC will contact the bidders who successfully meet evaluation criteria, negotiate the contract terms, agree on the contract and start service after the conclusion of the contract.

(3) AJC will conduct hearings on the contents of the submitted proposal as necessary.

(4) Bidders are responsible for the costs of creating a proposal and submission.

(5) Regarding the submitted documents, we may ask a third party for advice regarding the appropriateness of the content and the amount of money to use as a reference for selecting a consultant.

(6) The intellectual property rights and all rights of the products produced under this consulting agreement belong to the AJC. If it becomes necessary to coordinate with a third party regarding intellectual property rights, the contractor (consultant) shall make necessary adjustments.

### **4. Reference Information**

#### (1) Background

Circular Economy (CE) is an inevitable trend for development in the nowadays context of increasing environmental pollution, resource depletion, climate changes, and biodiversity damages. CE enables resources to be maintained longer in the production and consumption cycle. Thus, it helps improve resource efficiency, which is one of ASEAN's three substantial growth sources. CE is also considered one of the vital pillars of the post-COVID19 recovery as it allows for more diversification, sustainability, and flexibility in the face of disruptions.

Many nations and regions have successfully formulated legal frameworks to realise CE's economic and environmental benefits. For instance, the European Union established a detailed action plan regarding CE in 2020. Furthermore, many European countries, such as the Netherland,

France, and Finland, have their own CE guidelines to envision these nations' environmental consciousness. In the Asian context, China, hoping to improve the domestic environment, initiated its national sustainability program in "China's 13th Five-Years Plan" and included the idea of CE in its policy agenda. ASEAN is also among regions that quickly catch up with the trend. The region has adopted the "Framework for Circular Economy for the ASEAN Economic Community" at the 20th AEC Council Meeting in 2021.

Nevertheless, CE and circular transformation are still limited to the macro-level: among academics and policymakers. Using the sample of 26,783 companies from 49 countries and ten sectors for the period 2014–2019, García-Sánchez, I.M., Somohano-Rodríguez, F.-., Amor-Esteban, V., & Frías-Aceituno, J.V. (2021) found that there is a minimal commitment from companies to CE, thus, calling for initiatives for boosting CE engagement from micro-level actors. The authors also found that most of the circular transition is happening in Europe (where France, Finland, and Germany are the leaders) and Japan. It indicates even less involvement from business communities from ASEAN nations. CE transition needs the cooperation of all economic actors, including the government, private firms, and consumers. Thus, it is a pressing need to get more businesses involved in the circular transition activities.

Businesses can benefit significantly from implementing CE in their production cycle. It improves firms' competitiveness through better waste management and reducing dependency on resources, which are becoming scarcer and more subject to significant price volatility. In addition, with the gaining interest in sustainability from consumers and authorities, the circular transition will help firms gain competitive advantages and access to markets with higher requirements. However, incorporating CE's ideas and practices into the business model is not a simple task. It requires a comprehensive overview of the operations: (i) identifying points that can be improved, (ii) formulating strategies to improve such matters concerning avoiding the "greenwashing," and (iii) determining Key Performance Indicators to measure the progress and success of the transition. Firms need assistance from professionals who have knowledge about the field and are familiar with international free trade agreements (such as Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP)). This support and training are essential but costly, especially for MSMEs and young startups whose resources are limited.

ASEAN-Japan Centre (AJC) has been supporting ASEAN Member States (AMS) in developing their capacity for export since its establishment. AJC seeks to bridge the capacity gap in circular transition by organising an "Online Workshop on Circular Economy Capacity Building for MSMEs in ASEAN." Given the centre's knowledge of ASEAN and Japan—one of the well-developed nations in terms of circular transition—we believe that we can identify the suitable lecturers and successful practices that are appropriate for the development context of ASEAN. In addition, since ASEAN is

emerging as the world's manufacturing hub, quickly transitioning the private sector toward sustainability will create more significant impacts for the region and globally.

Based on this background, this RFP invites bidders to submit proposals to accomplish a training course to contribute to the realisation of the programme's objectives.

## (2) Objective and goals

- i. Improving the understanding of CE among MSMEs, showcasing good practices from Japanese and ASEAN firms
- ii. Developing the capacity to apply CE practices from MSMEs, thereby developing sustainable products/ services and taking advantage of International Trade Agreements
- iii. Promoting collaboration and investment between AMS and Japan

## (3) Targeted Participants

- The number of participants: 50 for each workshop session. Including:
  - ❖ Micro Small Medium Enterprise representatives from ASEAN and Japan suggested through coordination with ASEAN counterparts
  - ❖ Governmental officers, researchers, scholars, NPOs, and NGO staff interested in sustainability and circular transition.

## (4) Types of Deliverables

- i. Developing Workshop Modules
  - The training modules may include but are not limited to:
    - ✓ Introduction, an overview of the Circular Economy and its benefits.
    - ✓ Policies relating to CE in ASEAN, and key nations, regions such as Europe, Japan
    - ✓ Current Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and their requirements
    - ✓ Successful stories and practices
- ii. Organising online workshop sessions four (4) times, periodically (the time between sessions — e.g., weekly, monthly — are proposed by the consultant and in coordination with AJC), providing customised tools and guidelines for the circular transition that match with business nature (sectors), and post-workshop questionnaires for evaluation
  - ✓ The consultant identifies and secures the appropriate lecturer(s)
  - ✓ The lecturers provide lectures based on the modules and assess and assist the development of the CE model by participating firms.

✓ Proposed themes for each workshop session is as follow:

1 <sup>st</sup> day	<b>General information</b> about Circular Economy, Sustainable Business, Benefits and Challenges faced by SMEs in Circular Transition (with the discussion of the Free Trade Agreement and its requirement for sustainable goods and services)
2 <sup>nd</sup> day	Applying Circular Transition in <b>Agriculture</b> : the Model, Tools and Good Practices
3 <sup>rd</sup> day	Applying Circular Transition in <b>Textile and Fashion</b> : the Model, Tools and Good Practices
4 <sup>th</sup> day	: Applying Circular Transition in <b>Tourism</b> : the Model, Tools and Good Practices

- iii. Post-event consultation with committed firms to support the development and implementation of the circular model

(5) Expected outcome

- i. Improve the understanding of sustainability, circular economy, and its benefits to the economy (to both firms and macro) and the environment
- ii. At the end of the training course, the participants will obtain the ability to evaluate and develop a circular transition plan that could be applied to their business.
- iii. Formation of the business community (alumni network) to share information and success stories and receive inputs for future activities relating to sustainability and circular economy

**5. Contact**

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(formerly Capacity Building Cluster)  
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