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# **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, GOVERNANCE, AND ENTERPRISE GROWTH (EDGE) PROJECT**

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**Grants under Contract Program Presentation**

**October 18, 2021**

## EDGE OVERVIEW

**Project Objective:** To create inclusive, sustainable economic growth and to support intra-regional and Euro-Atlantic integration.

**Countries (regional coverage, 3 regions, 12 countries):** Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Ukraine.

**Approach:** EDGE generates synergies among the USAID projects working in economic growth and brings together stakeholders across countries to work on mutual problems, giving the E&E portfolio a regional dimension.

**Period of Performance:** August 2019 - July 2022  
(plus: two one-year option periods)

**Contract Value:** up to \$21m

**Components:** Core, Buy-in, Grants



## EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT OBJECTIVE

**GUC Program Objective:** *“Local Capacity Building and Greater Intra-Regional Linkages through Grants Under Contract (GUC)”*

EDGE seeks to build local capacity and integrate local organizations into implementation when possible. A Grants Under Contract (GUC) mechanism will be used to promote capacity building and sustainability of local associations and organizations, government entities, and the private sector.

**First Round of GUC Budget:** US\$ 1,250,000 awarded to up to 10 Grantees with awards in the range of \$70,000 to \$150,000.

**Leverage:** All grants require a minimum of 1:1 leverage i.e. 50% matching contributions.

## INTERMEDIATE RESULTS (IR)

**IR 1:** Improved Business Enabling Environment (BEE) and Reduced Barriers to Trade

**IR 2:** Improved Financial Sector Stability and Increased Access to Finance (buy-in only)

**IR 3:** Improved Competitiveness through Value Chains and Trade Promotion

### Value Chains

- Fruits and vegetables
- Incoming eco/agro/cultural tourism
- Textiles and wood processing/furniture production
- Across the three value chains, an emphasis is put on digitalization and cooperation with the ICT sector



Soko Gorica (fruit juice company) obtained an ISO certification through a grant provided to IQS, a food safety consulting firm. Soko Gorica is now able to export to the EU.

*Photo Credit: SOKO GORICA*

## EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT

	<b>Grantee</b>	<b>Targeted Results and VCs</b>	<b>Countries</b>	<b>Grant End Date</b>
1	AHK	Ag processing, Light manufacturing, Tourism and ICT	AZE, UKR, BEL	31-May-21
2	Active Albania	Tourism and ICT	ALB, NMK, KOS, MNE	30-Jun-21
3	ICT HUB	Tourism and ICT	SER, MNE, B&H	30-Jun-21
4	IQS	Ag and ag processing F&V	NMK, KOS	30-Jun-21
5	GFA	Tourism and ICT	GEO, ARM, AZE	30-Sep-21
6	CENN	Agro Tourism	GEO, ARM, AZE	30-Nov-21
7	MASIT	Ag processing, Light manufacturing, Tourism and ICT	NMK, SER, KOS	30-Nov-21
8	Customs Administration NMK	Reduced barriers to trade	NMK, ALB	31-Oct-21
9	LinkAcross	Ag processing, Light manufacturing, Tourism and ICT	NMK, ALB	31-Dec-21
10	SWG	Agro Tourism	WB6	31-Dec-21

## EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT

Name of Grantee	Partners	Project title
Active Albania shpk	World Rafting Federation, international organization based in Italy; MontAlb, SME, Kosovo; BLT D.O.O., SME, Montenegro; VEBGLAJDERS DOOEL, SME, N. Macedonia	“Embrace Balkans Adventure”

**Main objective:** *Increase offerings of tour operators for inbound tourism to Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia by introducing a new tourism innovative and eco-friendly product ‘Pack rafting’, under the expertise of the World Rafting Federation.*

Success story



Active Albania rafting training at river Vjosa, Albania Photo Credit: EDGE, 2021

## EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT

### Active Albania – Embrace Balkans Adventure

**Result 1:** Developed a new eco - rural - adventure experience offer for the Balkans “Pack rafting epic adventures”.

- **Rafting training** for tourism professionals from Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo and Montenegro
- **Hospitality Training** from the Adventure Travel Trade Association
- **Trekking Training**
- Developed certification curricula that was adopted by the University of Sports in Tirana and the **first rafting guides certificate was issued by the Ministry of Tourism in Albania.**
- **Procured packrafting equipment** that was used for introducing the product for the trainings.

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**Result 2:** Developed digitalization package to grow business performance and sales.

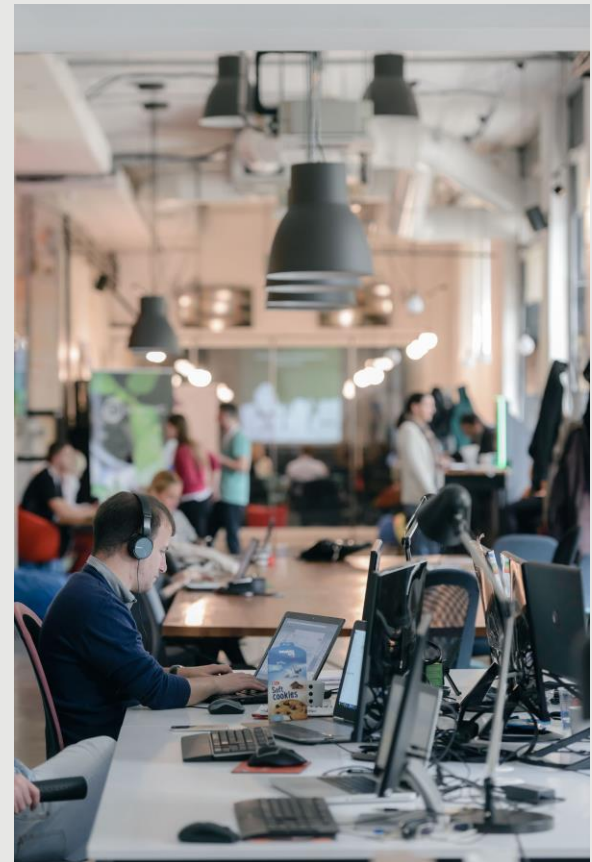
- Improvement of the hardware and software and ability for **on-line sales and held training on online selling and customer experience**, focusing on marketing operations adaptations caused by the COVID-19;
- Developed and promoted **international tourism digital campaign** to continue the efforts in raising the profile of Western Balkans as an adventure tourism destination.
- 8 representatives from tour operators from Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo and Montenegro participated in the **Adventure Elevate Europe**.
- Organization of **familiarization tour with tv media, online journalists, bloggers, vloggers**
- As a result of all these interventions **134 tourism professionals** were trained and **16 SMEs received USG technical assistance** for improving business performance. The international tourism digital campaign resulted in Facebook and Instagram posts viewed by **170,000 users** that increased the on-line sales and income.



## EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT

Name of Grantee	Partners	Project title
ICT HUB- Serbia	Digitalizij.me- Montenegro JS Guru- Bosnia and Herzegovina	Improving Digital Skills of Tourism Businesses in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro (D-tour project)

**Main objective:** D-tour project worked to improve the Digital Skills of Tourism Businesses in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. Also aimed to increase the volume of business in the tourism sector in the region, through the application of ICT.



ICT Hub Digital Academy Photo Credit: EDGE, 2021

## EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT

The intervention included four distinct groups of activities:

1. **Assessment of needs:** Survey on digital awareness and competences
2. **Nine Digital Awareness Workshops** each participating country hosting 3 of them, where relevant experts presented the current offer of available open source ICT tools and digital platforms (*Booking.com, Trip Advisor, Google for businesses, Mailchimp, Instagram, etc*).
3. **Digital Academies:** ICT tools and digital platforms for tourism SMEs to work with ICT experts in a unique setup for learning and exchange. Held three digital academies for 45 participants (15 per country). The detailed step-by-step training enabled them to successfully use a variety of ICT solutions and digital platforms and improve different aspects of their businesses.
4. **Publication:** Insights about the use of digital tools in the tourism industry in Serbia, BiH, and Montenegro including lessons learned and experiences gathered during project implementation.

## EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT

Name of Grantee	Partners	Project title
MASIT - Information and Communication Technologies Chamber of Commerce – MASIT-NMK	STIKK – Kosovo ICT Net- Serbia	Digitalization path

**Main objective:** Support SMEs from the 3 targeted value chains from North Macedonia, Kosovo, and Serbia in their activities to:

- (1) analyse their current level of digital transformation and create (90) Digital Transformation Strategies identifying and prioritizing needed IT solutions; and
- (2) financially support 30 SMEs in the process of purchasing and implementing IT solutions in order to improve their business activities.

### Publications:

- How to digitally transform
- Digital transformation insights in Kosovo
- Digital transformation to improve internal processes
- E-Commerce in Serbia



## EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT

Name of Grantee	Partners	Project title
Integrirani Sistemi za Kvalitet (IQS)- NMK	Association of Fruits and Vegetables Processors of Kosovo “PePeKo”	Increasing Competitiveness through Strengthening Fruit and Vegetable Value Chains

IQS team supported Macedonian and Kosovar SMEs producing fresh and processed fruit and vegetables to implement international food quality control and safety assurance standards such as *ISO 22000*, *HACCP*, *ISO 9001* and *International Featured Standards (IFS)*.

The assistance was provided through:

- introductory trainings for producers’ employees, consulting services during the implementation process, and
- support in formal standard certification of 13 SMEs.



RUDINE MM, BIM FOOD, GREEN PRODUCT & VORI, fruit and vegetable processors from North Macedonia invested over **USD 200,000** to upgrade equipment and infrastructure to meet the **IFS, ISO 9001 & HACCP** standards and improve their competitiveness.



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The activities were aimed to strengthening competitiveness of the project’s client businesses and to enhancing their products marketability at international markets.

## EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT

Name of Grantee	Partners	Project title
LinkAcross – North Macedonia	LinkAcross – Albania LinkAcross - USA	SME Business Expansion in the Agriculture, Light Manufacturing and Tourism Sectors in Candidate Countries for EU Enlargement

The project aims to increase the market competitiveness of at least 40 high potential SMEs in North Macedonia and Albania in the agricultural, light manufacturing, and tourism sectors by improving business sophistication and market integration by:

- attending business training tailored to address value-chain relevant topics which will help fill known knowledge and information gaps.
- take part in intensive one-on-one coaching and consulting geared towards the development and execution of a tailored business expansion plan.
- providing personalized video production and digital marketing services specifically designed to improve their market integration and expand market linkages.
- receive environmental or manufacturing audits.
- attend B2B events or trade fairs, resulting in linkages to new buyers for the participating SMEs.

## EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT

Name of Grantee	Partners	Project title
The Customs Administration of the Republic of North Macedonia	The Customs Administration of the Republic of Albania	Enhancing the efficiency of joint controls at the border crossing point Kjafasan – Qafe Thane between North Macedonia and Albania, aimed at trade and transport facilitation, cross-border cooperation and investments

**Main objective:** Strengthen the capacity of customs and border agencies of North Macedonia and Albania to establish and perform joint controls at the border crossing point Kjafasan - Qafe Thane, in line with international standards and best practices.



U.S. Ambassadors to Albania and North Macedonia attended an EDGE event at the Kjafasan – Qafë Thanë bordering crossing for the handover of customs equipment purchased through an EDGE grant to the Government of North Macedonia.

*Photo Credit: EDGE*

## EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT

### Activities:

1. **Procurement of equipment** to ensure efficient and effective border controls (including necessary non-intrusive tools for customs officers' daily operations that will speed up the process of crossing the border, while providing higher level of security and protection)
2. **Expert advice** for implementation of specific long-term measures necessary for improving the efficiency of the joint border controls in line with best EU and global practices relating to issue(s) identified as most hampering to the overall process
3. **Study visits** for the staff of NMK Customs and Albanian Customs aimed at familiarization of the process of establishment, management and operation of border crossing points with joint border controls, familiarization with the best practices of the operation of Border Control Points at external EU land borders.

## EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT

Name of Grantee	Partners	Project title
AHK Azerbaijan	DWV Georgia, AHK Belarus, AHK Ukraine, 100 Business Women in Azerbaijan, SMBDA	“Joining forces to make SMEs stronger: Diversification and Innovation through partnership”

**Main objective:** Fostering the competitiveness of the SMEs from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, and Belarus from the selected three value chains, by promoting new business linkages of domestic suppliers with German international investors by establishing cross-regional cooperation, accelerating the digital transformation and promoting female entrepreneurship.



Photo Credit: EDGE



## EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT

### Activities:

- "How to do Business with Germany and the EU“ Workshop
- 8 tourism companies participated at the virtual ITB Berlin, which took place from March 9 to 12, 2021. By participating in B2B matchings, conferences various masterclasses, the companies were able to connect with a vast number of potential partners and clients from all over the world. Around 65,700 users used the ITB online platform, of which about one-third (35.5 percent) came from Germany. 3,513 exhibitors from 120 countries presented themselves, and over 1,000 media representatives and travel bloggers from 54 nations reported live from the event.

SME Development Project website (<https://www.smedevelopment-project.de/> )

## EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT

Name of Grantee	Partners	Project title
Georgian Farmers' Association (GFA)- Georgia	Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development (CARD) in Armenia & Savour Travel LLC in Azerbaijan	Promoting Agritourism in the South Caucasus Countries' Activities in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan

**Main objective:** Promote agritourism and improve regional partnerships and networking among South Caucasus countries.

**Results:** The project identified, trained, supported (technically and financially) 100 agritourism farms and enterprises in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Developed an on-line booking website with the full package of information on each agritourist site and hold the South Caucasus agritourism conferences with over 200 participants involved in the Caucasus tourism value chain. The website is: [www.agrogate.world](http://www.agrogate.world)



Ambassador Degan planting a grapevine at the GFA conference. *Photo Credit: EDGE*

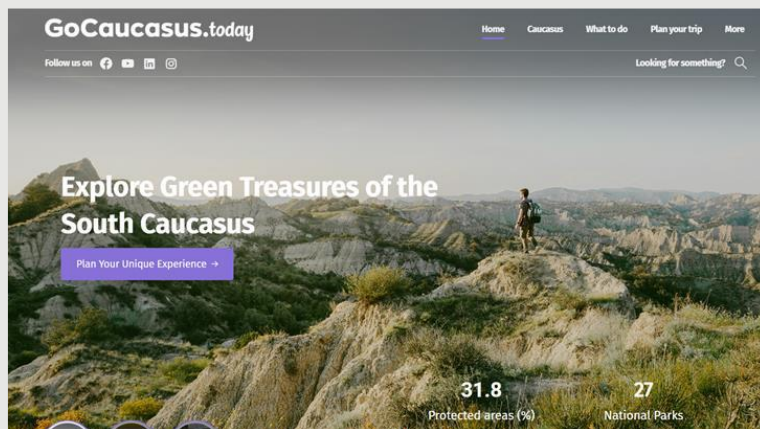
## EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT

Name of Grantee	Partners	Project title
CENN – Caucasus Environmental NGO Network- Georgia	Green Lane NGO- Armenia	Synergies and Digital Transformation of SMEs for Smart Economic Growth in the Caucasus

**Main objective:** Ensure the economic growth of the Caucasus tourism sector by catalysing its digital transformation as well as building strong regional partnerships and new alliances between SMEs in the Caucasus region.

To this end, the project promotes the online presence of the Caucasus region by creating a Caucasus Tourist Destination Portal called GoCaucasusToday.

The project supports up to 250 SMEs from Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan to improve their business operations and increase their sales.



A single-entry point for visitors, providing access to all Caucasus tourism information and offers eco, adventure, and rural tourism opportunities in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

*Photo Credit: EDGE*

# EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT

## Additional Capacity Building Activities

Training during June – December 2021 that will strengthen the internal capacities of the Grant recipients on the following topics:

1. *Best tools and practices for conducting online activities and events*
2. *Fundraising*
3. *Organizational Management*
4. *Business Planning and Development*
5. *Communications Management and PR*

## EDGE GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT RESULTS

- **120 events** were held (study tours, B2Bs, training and other)
- **3,471** total participants
- **83% of the participants** attending various events organized by grantees reported positive impact as a result of their participation on the work of their companies
- **540** private sector companies were supported by the Grantees
- **249 of the supported private sector companies** improved their management practices or technologies. Improvements include - new equipment, introducing e-commerce, new products, quality standards certifications, digital strategies
- **132 SMEs** with linkages to new buyers as a result of activity interventions

EDGE Grant Amount	Grantees Leverage Commitment	Total Investment
\$ 1,246,882	\$ 1,413,881	\$ 2,660,763

## NEXT GUCs BATCH II RFA

**Grants Performance Period:** April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023

**Activities and beneficiaries:** from at least countries of the three regions.

**Budget:** US\$ 500,000 to be awarded to up to 7 Grantees with awards in the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000.

**Leverage:** All grants require a minimum of 1:1 leverage i.e., 50% matching contributions. Participating partners can utilize in-kind contributions to meet this requirement, but matching **cash contributions** will be preferred, especially with the private sector.

**Link to RFA:** [EDGE is soliciting grant applications from qualified applicants in 12 countries throughout Europe and Eurasia - International Development Group](#)

## NEXT EDGE TOURISM ACTIVITIES

The tourism program for the **WB6** is focusing on rural, adventure and eco-tourism (July 2021-2022)

**1. Training and Education for Rural Accommodation providers** in and around national parks and protected areas on EU standards, customer service, marketing, product development, environmental standards, and other key aspects of improving and/or establishing accommodation facilities in rural areas.

**2. Joint Program with Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA):** Full 1-year membership for 22 adventure companies; training adventure companies on how to make sales pitches to buyers; Destination Webinar for B2B meetings with renowned international buyers; establishing a HUB on the ATTA web platform to promote businesses and tourism offers of the WB6.

**3. Workshops and training for adventure travel companies in all WB6 countries.** An expert from Peru, who helped develop the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu will be invited to work with local adventure tour operators on product development, incorporating agriculture and gastronomy in rural areas into programs/itineraries, best environmental practices, and international green certifications such as 'Rain Forest Alliance.'



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# THANK YOU!

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