Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
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Swiss Confederation

Federal Departement of Economic Affairs,
Education and Research EAER
State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold (ASGM)

Country/region
Global

Partner/National Facilitator
Baastel, SBGA, ETH, Local Governments

Duration
2025-2029

Total budget
CHF 5,868,519

SECO contribution
CHF 4,000,000

Call for Proposals Package

Part 1 – Call for Proposals

1. Introduction

The Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM) Programme (2025–2029), supported by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), aims to strengthen responsible ASGM value chains connected to the Swiss gold market while improving the environmental, social, and economic conditions of mining communities in producing countries.

Artisanal and small-scale gold mining provides livelihoods for millions of people worldwide but is often associated with significant environmental degradation, unsafe working conditions, informality, and limited access to responsible international markets. The programme seeks to address these challenges by supporting the transition of ASGM operations toward more responsible production practices, improved governance, and greater integration into transparent and traceable gold supply chains.

The programme promotes improved environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices in mining operations, including better environmental management, safer labour conditions, stronger organisational structures among miners, and increased compliance with internationally recognized sustainability standards. At the same time, it supports the development of market linkages that enable ASGM producers to access responsible buyers and premium markets in Switzerland.

The ASGM Programme operates through three complementary components: (1) a Challenge Fund that co-finances projects supporting responsible ASGM supply chains and private-sector engagement, (2) policy dialogue and technical support aimed at improving the regulatory and institutional environment for ASGM in producing countries, and (3) knowledge sharing and dissemination activities that promote learning, evidence generation, and the exchange of good practices across stakeholders.

One of the key instruments of the programme is therefore the **Challenge Fund**, designed to catalyse private-sector engagement and co-finance initiatives that support responsible ASGM gold supply chains and facilitate the integration of new mining operations into responsible international markets.

2. Objectives of the Challenge Fund

The Challenge Fund is a competitive co-financing mechanism through which the ASGM Programme provides catalytic funding to organisations and partnerships working directly with mining operations, traders, and other value-chain actors to improve environmental, social, and governance practices and enable responsible gold exports to Switzerland. The fund is intended to support projects that demonstrate strong development impact, credible market linkages, and the potential to scale responsible sourcing models to new mining areas and supply chains.

Specifically, the Challenge Fund aims to:

• Expand the scope of responsible ASGM value chains supplying the Swiss market
• Support ASGM mines in new contexts or territories to adopt responsible mining practices
• Enable export readiness under recognized voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) accreditations and continuous improvement programmes[1]
• Catalyse private sector investment in responsible gold supply chains

3. Guiding Principles

Projects must comply with SECO's Private Sector Engagement principles:

Subsidiarity
Funding must not substitute financing that could reasonably be provided by the private sector or other investors.

Additionality
The intervention must demonstrate that the activity would not occur without Challenge Fund support.

Complementarity
Projects should complement existing initiatives and generate learning across the sector.

Avoidance of Market Distortion
Funding decisions will be made through an open and competitive process.

4. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include:

- Private sector companies
- Civil society organisations and NGOs
- Research institutions
- Industry associations
- International Development Organisations
- Consortia involving the above actors

Applicants must demonstrate active engagement with ASGM mining operations or communities.

[1] The objective is for the project to help ASGM operators' export readiness to become credible and time-bound.

5. Eligible Activities

The Challenge Fund is designed to be open and inclusive to encourage a broad range of actors working in the ASGM sector to propose innovative and impactful projects. There are no strict restrictions regarding the type or size of organisation that may apply. Both private sector entities and nonprofit organisations are welcome to submit proposals, either individually or as part of partnerships or consortia. The programme seeks to attract organisations that can demonstrate credible engagement with ASGM supply chains and the capacity to deliver concrete improvements in responsible gold production and market access.

Rather than limiting participation through rigid eligibility categories, the Challenge Fund prioritises the quality, credibility, and development impact of the proposed projects. Proposals will therefore be assessed primarily on the strength of their technical approach, the realism of their implementation plan, the credibility of their market linkages, and the expected benefits for ASGM communities and responsible gold supply chains. Additionally, the applicants' track record in the ASGM sector will also play an important role in the selection process as an asset.

Eligible project activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Technical assistance to ASGM mines
- Capacity building and organisational strengthening
- Environmental improvements, including mercury reduction
- Traceability systems and digital tools
- Export readiness support
- ESG improvements and worker safety

6. Financial Framework

Maximum grant per project: CHF 400,000

Minimum cofinancing (no in-kind): 25% of total project cost. You are encouraged to bring in private sector co-funding.

Project duration: Up to 36 months

7. Management and Application Process

The Challenge Fund will be administered by the programme coordination unit, Baastel, under the overall strategic oversight of SECO. Baastel will be responsible for launching the calls for proposals, organising the evaluation process, coordinating the technical review of applications by the selection panel, and overseeing the contracting and monitoring of selected projects. The selection process will involve a technical assessment of proposals followed by a decision by the selection panel and SECO. The Selection Panel will be composed of SECO and ETH Zurich representatives and external experts may be consulted during the evaluation process when specific technical expertise is required.

The Challenge Fund will operate through up to three competitive calls for proposals during the programme period. The overall funding envelope will be allocated across these calls in a flexible manner in order to ensure that high-quality proposals can be supported whenever they emerge. While the programme anticipates a broadly balanced distribution of funds across the calls, the final allocation may vary depending on the number, quality, and strategic relevance of the proposals received in each round.

Applicants will submit full project proposals directly in response to the call for proposals. All submissions will be evaluated based on the complete proposal package provided by the applicant. Following submission, proposals will undergo an administrative screening to verify eligibility and completeness, after which eligible proposals will proceed to a technical evaluation based on the established selection criteria and scoring framework.

Stage 1 – Eligibility screening
Stage 2 – Technical evaluation
Stage 3 – Selection committee decision

Part 2 – Application Template

Section 1 – Applicant Information

Organisation name:

Country of registration:

Type of organisation:

Legal status:

Year established:

Number of employees:

Annual turnover (last fiscal year):

Primary contact person:

Email:

Phone:

Web page:

Consortium partners (if applicable):

Section 2 – Project Summary

Project title:

Country/ies of implementation:

Total project budget (CHF):

Amount requested from Challenge Fund (CHF):

Cofinancing amount (CHF) 25% of the whole requested budget:

Summary of the project's description

Project duration (months):

Target ASGM sites / communities:

Number of miners targeted:

Number of community beneficiaries:

Expected gold export volume to Switzerland per year (if known):

Section 3 – Problem Statement

Describe the main challenge faced by the ASGM value chain addressed by the project.

Include for example:

- technical constraints
- organisational, capacity and administrative constraints
- environmental challenges
- social and gender related challenges
- labour-related and health and safety issues
- traceability and market access challenges (e.g., Swiss markets)

Section 4 – Project Objectives

Applicants must structure the proposed project using **Results-Based Management (RBM)** principles and clearly articulate the logical chain between activities, outputs, outcomes, and the intended development impact. The project design should be aligned with a clear **theory of change**, explaining how the proposed interventions will lead to measurable improvements in responsible ASGM value chains and access to the Swiss market.

Applicants are requested to present their project using the following logical framework structure.

Impact (long-term development change)

Describe the broader development change that the project contributes to in the ASGM sector. This should relate to improved livelihoods, environmental performance, responsible gold production, or improved governance in mining communities.

- Impact statement:
- Expected long-term beneficiaries:
- Key assumptions at impact level:

Outcome (changes resulting from the project)

Describe the specific changes that are expected to occur as a result of the project within the project timeframe or shortly thereafter. Outcomes should describe changes in behaviour, practices, systems, or market access among ASGM actors.

Outcome statements:

Outcome indicators:

Means of verification:

Key assumptions at outcome level:

Outputs (direct results produced by the project)

Describe the concrete deliverables or services that will be produced by the project activities (for example: training programmes delivered, traceability systems established, mining cooperatives strengthened, environmental

practices improved) and that will lead to the outcomes described above. Include targeted VSS scheme or continuous improvement programme.

A table with these headers is welcomed at all levels of results:

| Output | Indicators | Means of Verification | Key Assumptions |

Section 5 – Project Activities

Provide a detailed description of planned activities.

A table with these headers or a Gantt chart are welcomed

| Activity | Description | Timeline | Responsible partner |

Section 6 – Private Sector Engagement

Private Sector Engagement (PSE) is a central principle of the ASGM Programme and reflects SECO's broader development cooperation approach of working with market actors to achieve sustainable development outcomes. The programme recognises that long-term improvements in the ASGM sector require not only technical assistance and capacity building, but also **sustainable commercial relationships and investment from private sector actors** across the gold value chain.

Through PSE, the programme seeks to mobilise the expertise, innovation capacity, and financial resources of private companies—including traders, refiners, technology providers, and downstream market actors—to support responsible gold supply chains. Private sector partners can play a critical role in establishing market demand, investing in responsible sourcing systems, supporting traceability mechanisms, and creating incentives for ASGM producers to adopt improved environmental and social practices.

Projects supported by the Challenge Fund are therefore expected to demonstrate meaningful private sector engagement. This may include financial contributions, long-term sourcing commitments, technical collaboration, or the development of new responsible sourcing models.

Applicants should clearly describe how private sector actors are involved in the proposed project. In particular, applicants should provide information on:

- the role and responsibilities of private sector partners within the project
- investments or financial contributions committed by private sector actors
- commercial relationships or sourcing arrangements that support responsible gold exports
- market linkages with Swiss buyers, refiners, or other downstream actors
- how private sector engagement contributes to the sustainability and scalability of the project

Section 7 – Implementation Capacity

Provide information on:

- organisational experience

- past projects
- technical expertise
- partnerships

Extra Section – Export Roadmap (asset, if possible)

Describe the pathway towards export of responsible gold to Switzerland. For example, the different milestones, the different activities

Include:

- buyer engagement
- certification milestones
- estimated export timeline

Part 3 – Budget Template

Budget Category	**Challenge Fund Contribution (CHF)**	**Applicant / Partner Contribution (CHF)**	**Total (CHF)**
Personnel			
Consultants			
Training and Workshops			
Equipment			
Field Activities / Implementation Costs			
Travel			
Communication and Outreach			
Monitoring and Evaluation			
Administrative / Overhead Costs			
Total			

Part 4 – Risk Matrix Template

Risk Category	Description	Probability	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Political / regulatory				
Environmental				
Operational				
Security				

Financial				
Market risks				
Reputational risks				

Part 5 – Evaluation Grid

Stage 1 – Eligibility Screening (Pass/Fail)

The proposal must demonstrate:

- Support to responsible ASGM value chains
- Technical assistance / capacity building focus
- Clear roadmap toward export
- Demonstrated Swiss market demand
- Additionality
- ASGM source not previously certified
- No previous SECO support
- Minimum 25% co-financing
- Submission of risk matrix

Only proposals passing all criteria proceed to scoring.

Stage 2 – Scoring Matrix

Strategic relevance and Swiss market linkage (20 points)

Alignment with programme objectives as described above – 10

Demonstrated relevance for ASGM – 10

Long-term impact in at least two of the topics listed (10 points, 5 points each)

Livelihood impact

Environmental performance and biodiversity conservation

Environmental performance and climate change

Social cohesion

Labour conditions

Alignment of project outputs, outcomes and impact (10)

Number of beneficiaries impacted (10)

Additionality and private sector engagement (20 points)

Additionality – 12

Private sector engagement – 8

Feasibility and implementation capacity (20 points)

Technical feasibility (adequation between budget, activities, results and timeline) – 6

Institutional capacity (e.g., demonstrated experience managing similar projects; presence of qualified technical and managerial staff; established systems for financial management, monitoring and reporting)à – 6

Risk management – 8

Learning and scalability (10 points)

Complementarity – 4

Knowledge sharing – 3

Scalability – 3

Funding Decision Thresholds

≥75 – Fundable

65–74 – Conditionally fundable

<65 – Not fundable

Part 6 – Required Attachments

Applicants must submit:

- Completed application template
- Budget template
- Risk matrix
- Proof of co-financing
- Letters of intent from buyers (if available)
- Organisational financial statements