USAID | GEORGIA
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number: 72011422RFA00001

USAID Civic and Economic Integration Activity

Issue Date:	**November 8, 2021**	
Deadline for Question:	**November 17, 2021**	**10:00 AM Tbilisi Time**
Closing Date:	**December 21, 2021**	
Closing Time:	**10:00 AM Tbilisi Time**	

Subject: Notice of Funding Opportunity Number: 72011422RFA00001

Program Title: USAID Civic and Economic Integration Program

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 98.001

Ladies/Gentlemen:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is seeking applications for a Cooperative Agreement from qualified entities to implement the USAID Civic and Economic Integration Program. Eligibility for this award is not restricted. See Section C of this NOFO for eligibility requirements.

USAID intends to make an award to the applicant(s) who best meets the objectives of this funding opportunity based on the merit review criteria described in this NOFO subject to a risk assessment. Eligible parties interested in submitting an application are encouraged to read this NOFO thoroughly to understand the type of program sought, application submission requirements and selection process.

To be eligible for award, the applicant must provide all information as required in this NOFO and meet eligibility standards in Section C of this NOFO. This funding opportunity is posted on www.grants.gov, and may be amended. It is the responsibility of the applicant to regularly check the website to ensure they have the latest information pertaining to this notice of funding opportunity and to ensure that the NOFO has been received from the internet in its entirety. USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion process. If you have difficulty registering on www.grants.gov or accessing the NOFO, please contact the Grants.gov Helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or via email at support@grants.gov for technical assistance.

<u>USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements detailed in Section D.6.f.</u> The registration process may take many weeks to complete. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to begin registration early in the process.

Any questions concerning this Notice of Funding Opportunity should be submitted in writing to Eka Gamezardashvili, Acquisition and Assistance Specialist at egamezardashvili@usaid.gov and rcocaucasus@usaid.gov. Responses to questions received prior to the deadline listed above will be furnished to all potential applicants via www.grants.gov.

Applications for this Notice of Funding Opportunity must be submitted in writing to Eka Gamezardashvili, Acquisition and Assistance Specialist at egamezardashvili@usaid.gov and rcocaucasus@usaid.gov.

Issuance of this notice of funding opportunity does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government, nor does it commit the Government to pay for any costs incurred in preparation or submission of questions or an application. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Thank you for your interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

Deborah G. Perlman Digitally signed by Deborah G. Perlman
Date: 2021.11.08 16:56:49 +04'00'

Deborah Perlman
Contracting and Agreement Officer
USAID/Georgia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION A: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This funding opportunity is authorized under the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, as amended. The resulting award will be subject to 2 CFR 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, and USAID's supplement, 2 CFR 700, as well as the additional requirements found in Section F. Set forth below is a description of the proposed program, covering:

1. Title of activity;
2. Purpose;
3. Background;
4. Operating Priorities and Policy Guidance; and
5. Program Activities

1. TITLE OF ACTIVITY

The title of the activity is the "USAID Civic and Economic Integration Activity."

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the USAID Civic and Economic Integration activity is to better integrate ethnic and religious minorities into wider Georgian social, political, and economic life, in order to create the environment necessary for the social cohesion and acceptance of diversity necessary for democracy to function. In so doing, USAID builds Georgia's resilience to external and internal malign influences that seek to undermine its democratic and economic development, as well as its territorial integrity. The activity will achieve its purpose through two **integrated and mutually reinforcing objectives**:

1. Increase participation of ethnic and religious minorities in government policies and services; and
2. Expand and strengthen mutually beneficial socio-economic linkages between majority and minority communities.

Integration is a two-way process with society and government facilitating the integration efforts of individuals as well as promoting mainstream public support for diversity, so that all citizens, regardless of their origin, can effectively contribute to the country's economic, social, and democratic development. The USAID Civic and Economic Integration activity will be different from previous USAID civic integration work by focusing on an integrated and mutually reinforcing approach which addresses both governance and economic barriers to integration. This activity should use, but not be limited to, youth-led people-to-people approaches, and also engage the business sector and establish new forms of partnership with the private sector in order to increase economic opportunities for ethnic and religious minorities within Georgia's labor markets and value chains. **USAID is seeking new, ambitious approaches that will have impact at scale.**

3. BACKGROUND

The following provides relevant background information, including the challenges and opportunities for integration of ethnic and religious minorities in Georgia, relevant ongoing Government of Georgia (GOG) strategies and initiatives, and prior relevant USAID activities.

a. Challenges and opportunities for integration of ethnic and religious minorities

Over the past several years, Georgia has strengthened its legislative framework to promote the rights of national minorities and to advance diversity, but the country still faces challenges in integrating minority communities into its social, economic, and political structures. The 2019 Report on Human Rights and Freedoms by Georgia's Public Defender refers to advancements related to protections for the country's minority communities, but it also identifies several ongoing challenges in the protection of cultural heritage, self-identity, and participation in decision-making. While the report notes the progress made by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia to address alleged crimes motivated by religious hatred, it laments a stagnation in the protection of freedom of religion, referencing an ongoing debate about structural discrimination in access to funding and places of worship.

USAID's 2019 Conflict Assessment found a range of tensions between the Georgian Orthodox Church and the ethnic minority communities. Reflective of the trend of religious and national identity based around Orthodox religion, there is a perception that Georgian Muslims and Samtskhe Javakheti Armenian Christians are discriminated against by the central government. Key concerns contributing to this perception are the lack of government support in rehabilitating Armenian churches, minorities being viewed through a "security lens" or seen as a threat, and the linking of Georgian identity to Georgian Orthodoxy. These issues are underpinned by a lack of representation of minorities in the central government.

Unemployment continues to disproportionately affect ethnic minority youth, as 75 percent of people in minority-majority regions self-report being unemployed. Finally, ethnic minorities continue to be susceptible to anti-Western propaganda, and they are wary of the Georgian government's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. According to a 2019 survey by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), only 57 percent of those surveyed in minority areas approve of the government's stated goal to join the European Union (EU) as compared to the national approval rate of 78 percent.

b. Relevant Government of Georgia strategies and initiatives

Despite these challenges, a number of GOG strategies and initiatives are beginning to address the multilayered challenges undermining forward progress around integration. The new State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration is a major guiding document defining civic engagement policy in Georgia for the period 2021-2030. The strategy is led by the Office of the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality (SMR), which supports initiatives aimed at enabling the full-fledged participation of all citizens in the civic and political life of the country, while protecting the identity and cultural heritage of each member of society.

The major strategic directions of the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration are: 1) State language for integration; 2) Access to quality education; 3) Equity, civic, and political participation; 4) Social and economic integration; and 5) Inter-cultural dialogue. These five focus areas emphasize the pre-conditions which must be established prior to sustainable progress in inclusion in Georgia.

State efforts to increase minority participation in civic and political life include language education; internships at state agencies; and Public Consultation Councils to facilitate ethnic and religious minority participation in local-level decision-making processes. Separately, SMR offers programs for smaller vulnerable ethnic minorities, such as the Ossetian, Abkhaz, and Kist populations. SMR engages in public awareness campaigns to inform ethnic minority populations on the progress and benefits of Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic integration, alongside efforts to improve access to information and media in minority languages and to preserve the cultural venues of ethnic minorities.

To date, the government's most successful effort at improving access to quality university education for ethnic minorities remains the "1+4" program. The program, created in 2010, provides prospective minority students with the opportunity to enroll in Georgian universities by taking the entrance General Skills exam in their mother tongue, after which they attend a one-year intensive Georgian language course. Successful completion of this course entitles participating minority students to continue their studies at the university of their choice. Program beneficiaries can also participate in internships at government agencies.

c. Previous Relevant USAID/Georgia activities

As stated in the Purpose section above, the USAID Civic and Economic Integration activity is more cohesive and ambitious than previous USAID civic and economic integration interventions. In the past, aspects of this issue had been addressed by multiple implementing mechanisms, but had not formed a cohesive whole. This activity will greatly expand upon the following previous programming:

Promoting Integration, Tolerance, and Awareness (PITA): Through PITA, USAID partnered with the Government of Georgia, civil society organizations, and the private sector to ensure that all Georgians, regardless of background, have opportunities to contribute to and benefit from the country's overall development. The activity supported the Government of Georgia to engage ethnic and religious minorities in civic life, with a special focus on young people; fostered person-to-person contact and encouraged the social inclusion of marginalized groups; and raised public awareness and education about diversity. The activity also sponsored Youth Centers across the country and monitored hate speech in the media and public discourse.
Implementing Partner: UN Association of Georgia; Life of activity: June 2015 – June 2021; Total Estimated Cost: $5,879,691

Zrda: Zrda catalyzes economic growth in rural areas by supporting Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises to grow into profitable businesses capable of providing employment opportunities. The activity works in 81 communities across Georgia, with a special focus on areas adjacent to the Administrative Boundary Lines and in regions with underserved ethnic minority populations.
Implementing Partner: Chemonics International; Life of activity: March 2016 – December 2021; Total Estimated Cost: $24,650,000

Pankisi Community Links: Georgia's Pankisi Gorge is home to the Kists, a Sunni Muslim ethnic group with a long history of peaceful interaction with neighboring communities. This interaction was disrupted by the lawlessness of the 1990s and early 2000s, causing Pankisi to become largely isolated from the rest of the country, hampering economic development, and rendering local communities vulnerable to malign influences. Pankisi Community Links partnered with communities in Georgia's Pankisi Gorge to build social and economic ties with the rest of the country, empowering residents to contribute to Georgia's overall development, creating a more cohesive society within Pankisi, and making the area more resilient to conflict. Implementing Partner: Chemonics International; Life of activity: September 2018 – September 2021; Total Estimated Cost: $1,500,000

4. OPERATING PRIORITIES AND POLICY GUIDANCE

The following operational guidance will be crucial for the successful and sustainable implementation of this activity and should be applied to all services and deliverables specified in the Cooperative Agreement. These priorities and guidance relate to: a) Relationship to CDCS; b) Private Sector Engagement; c) Diverse Partnerships/Consortium and Leveraging Local Expertise; d) Coordination; e) Collaboration, Learning, and Adapting; f) Positive Youth Development; and i) Target Population and Geographic Location.

a. *RELATIONSHIP TO USAID/GEORGIA'S COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION STRATEGY*

The USAID Civic and Economic Integration activity directly supports USAID/Georgia's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (2020-2025). Its results contribute to USAID/Georgia's Development Objective 1: "Resilience to External Malign Influence Strengthened." In the past, USAID/Georgia has leveraged individual programs or sectors to address Kremlin and other aggression on an ad hoc basis. Given the acute need to build Georgia's resilience to external malign influence, mitigate backsliding, and address development challenges, the Mission developed a highly specific and targeted DO to ensure proper coordination and renewed focus to achieve the greatest impact.

DO 1 focuses on strengthening the resilience of local institutions and communities (irrespective of ethnicity, language, or religion) to external factors through greater inclusion, social group equality, and citizen capacity. The USAID Civic and Economic Integration activity will ensure Georgia's increased resilience to the external exploitation of community cleavages and efforts to manipulate social and economic relationships as a political lever to discredit Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

b. PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

USAID recognizes the value of engaging the private sector to help shape market-based solutions that achieve sustained impact and can carry forward long after USAID's support has ended. Through its PSE Policy, USAID has issued an Agency-wide call to action and mandate to work hand-in-hand with the private sector to design and deliver development and humanitarian programs in all sectors. This policy signals an intentional shift towards enterprise driven development as a more sustainable way to achieve development outcomes.

In accordance with USAID's Private Sector Engagement strategy, the USAID Civic and Economic Integration activity will seek opportunities to incorporate private sector engagement and market-based solutions. Potential areas for private sector engagement include: 1) co-investments to support minority/majority youth service projects, internships, and exchange opportunities; 2) co-create and co-fund solutions with private sector resource partners to attract private investment and catalyze local economic and business development in minority communities; and 3) convene both the public and private sectors to build relationships between and trust in each other, in order to advance integration goals whenever possible. USAID/Georgia is building relationships with key private sector actors through the use of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) which may be useful to the USAID Civic and Economic Integration Activity, including the recently signed MOUs with British Petroleum and Adjara Group, and encourages the development of additional MOUs through this activity. The USAID Civic and Economic Integration activity will prioritize and directly engage these partners to advance shared objectives.

c. DIVERSE PARTNERSHIPS/CONSORTIUM AND LEVERAGING LOCAL EXPERTISE

The activity should take an integrated approach to address the aforementioned challenges and objectives. In doing so, the activity is expected to recognize, leverage, and strengthen existing national and local expertise and to collaborate with a wide range of public and private sector actors. USAID/Georgia recognizes that the activity incorporates a wide technical range of democracy, rights, and governance and economic growth objectives. In light of this, the use of a strong consortium or alliance of partners (prime and sub-awardees) in an integrated approach to achieving objectives including partnerships with the private-sector may be considered.

d. COORDINATION

The U.S. Government programs in Georgia support a diverse portfolio across a broad spectrum of sectors. Given this activity has the potential to engage the education, economic growth, and democracy, rights, and governance sectors, close and continuous coordination with relevant implementing partners and projects will be required to avoid duplication, and all interventions should be developed in consultation with local stakeholders to accurately reflect the context and challenges. As noted above, the Government of Georgia has implemented strategies and initiatives aimed at civic and economic integration. Interventions under this activity should leverage and complement these initiatives.

e. COLLABORATION, LEARNING, AND ADAPTING

USAID/Georgia intends to support activities that utilize data and evidence to inform and carry out interventions with the greatest chance of success. Collecting, measuring and using data and evidence will be important for developing policies and interventions. USAID/Georgia strongly encourages potential partners to use collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) approaches as highlighted in ADS 201.3.7 to achieve better development outcomes. This approach involves strategic collaboration, systematic and continuous learning and adaptive management.

While CLA is not a new approach, these practices often do not occur regularly, are not systematic and not deliberate. CLA is not a different work stream or done for its own sake. It is a different way of approaching activity design and making implementation as effective as possible to maximize development impact. Strong CLA practices vary according to their organizational culture, project context, and enabling environment.

Partners will achieve this intentionally by identifying knowledge gaps in their activity's theory of change or by filling gaps in the evidence that designers used when creating the activity. Intentionality may be achieved by creating and taking opportunities for stakeholders to track progress and to discuss challenges, opportunities, and changes in context. See ADS 201.3.7.5 for potential CLA approaches. To complement the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning plan's functions, the recipient will continuously review progress and challenges, integrate and document lessons learned, and adapt interventions accordingly.

f. POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

As a core constituency in integration efforts, a positive youth development approach will be central to the program's success. Like many countries in the region, Georgia faces a high youth emigration rate as young people, regardless of background, face limited economic opportunities, and are under-represented in electoral and public affairs. Without scope to make their voices heard in official channels, young people lack agency to advocate for the Georgia in which they wish to live. These challenges are heightened for young people in remote regions with higher rates of unemployment and poverty.

g. TARGET POPULATION AND GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

USAID views the target beneficiaries as ethnic and religious minorities, recognizing that the activity will need to work with value chains and majority populations nationwide in order to achieve the objectives. While the activity is expected to focus on expanding and strengthening socio-economic linkages between minority communities in Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kakheti (Pankisi Valley), and Muslim minority areas of Adjara with wider Georgia, significant aspects of the program may be nationwide. This activity does not envision interventions in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, or along the Georgian controlled sides of the Administrative Boundary Lines.

5. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Critical barriers to integration can be grouped in two primary categories: policy and governance barriers, and social and economic barriers. To address these barriers, the USAID Civic and Economic Integration activity will 1) support the introduction and implementation of policies and government services that enhance participation of ethnic and religious minorities; and 2) strengthen mutually beneficial socio-economic linkages between majority and minority communities. This approach is designed so that both of the objectives are **integrated and mutually-reinforcing** within one cohesive activity**.**

Objective 1 provides the legal and policy framework necessary to support the strengthening of socio-economic linkages. Simultaneously, the social and economic links and networks between majority and minority communities achieved in Objective 2 will support the growth of local interest groups and create demand for the democratic representation necessary to create equitable laws and policies. Economic interdependence and labor-market integration is a necessary, though insufficient, condition for civic integration. The success of the activity requires achieving both objectives - without one, the other will not be sustainable or maximally impactful.

The USAID Civic and Economic Integration activity's theory of change is that:

- *If,* policy and government services include minorities and engage them meaningfully in decision-making processes, and
- *If,* mutually-beneficial socio-economic linkages increase between minority and majority communities,
- *Then,* ethnic and religious minorities will become better integrated into Georgia's social, economic, and political life, contributing to the social cohesion and respect for diversity necessary for democracy to function.

The following describes each objective in more detail and highlights expected high-level results and potential interventions.

a. Objective 1: Increase participation of ethnic and religious minorities in government policies and services

USAID's 2019 Conflict Assessment demonstrated the extent to which the Kremlin concentrates on understanding and targeting local grievances in order to exploit preexisting fissures among ethnic and religious groups. The perception of inequitable treatment and outcomes for minority populations risks continuing to push minority communities away from identification with Georgia and helps ensure that foreign influence meets a receptive audience.

Lack of minority representation in local and national government limits the extent to which minority equities are taken into account during policy and legislation formulation. There are currently few institutionalized mechanisms for policymakers to engage when barriers to integration are identified, and limited incentives for local and national governments to further evidence-based policies that promote equality, equitable opportunities, and better outcomes for ethnic and religious minorities. Through this Objective, USAID/Georgia aims to measurably improve the equitable allocation of public resources and investments to minority communities. This will be achieved through two mutually-reinforcing expected results:

> **Result 1:** Participatory policy-development mechanisms regularly engage minority and majority constituencies in substantive consultation.
> **Result 2:** Target Government of Georgia entities demonstrate improved capacity to design and implement policies and services that are inclusive of ethnic and religious minorities.

Expected Result 1: Participatory policy-development mechanisms regularly engage minority and majority constituencies in substantive consultation.

The activity will support the GOG to build or more effectively utilize existing mechanisms within local and national government in order to regularly solicit contributions and feedback from minority groups, advocacy organizations, religious organizations, private sector, and other stakeholders regarding policies and key decisions regarding issues of importance to those constituencies. These policy dialogue mechanisms may be designed to cater to the specific language needs of minority groups and other constituencies in order to enable them to consistently and actively engage with GOG entities, such as the State Ministry for Reconciliation (SMR), Public Defender's Office (PDO), Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MoESD), Ministry of Education and Science (MES), Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI), local governments, and others.

Policy development need not be aimed at the minority population in order to benefit minorities. The activity should consider cross-sectoral linkages between policies that can provide more efficient and effective integration practices. Success is highly dependent on mainstream public support, and it is crucial that the activity engages the public to see the benefits of diverse participation in society.

Expected interventions under this result should include but should not be limited to:

- Consistently and actively engage minority groups, advocacy organizations, and religious organizations, such as the Councils of Ethnic Minorities and Religions under the Public Defender's Office in consultative policy dialogue with the GOG to overcome barriers to integration;
- Support business advocacy organizations, industry associations, think tanks, academia, and others to analyze and advocate for improved policies, services, and more equitable resource allocation for minority populations;
- Identify and engage champions within the Georgian Orthodox Church clergy in dialogue with civil society and ethnic and religious minority groups in order to promote tolerance and inclusivity.

Expected Result 2: Target GOG entities demonstrate improved capacity to design and implement policies and services that are inclusive of ethnic and religious minorities.

The activity will support the effective implementation of the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021-2030. The activity will build the capacity of the SMR to implement the Strategy and to design practical solutions to the issues ethnic minorities are facing in Georgia. In addition to direct collaboration with the SMR, the implementation of the strategy will require the identification and engagement of elected officials who can serve as champions within the GOG to keep the issue of integration high on the government's agenda.

The activity will also assist the government in making key government services such as education or access to finance accessible and affordable to minority populations. In order to improve government services for minority populations, the activity will need to engage and/or build the capacity of agencies such as MOESD, MES, and MRDI.

Expected interventions under this result should include but should not be limited to:

- Support local government officials and relevant line ministries to capably implement the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration;
- Enhance the monitoring, networking, and advocacy functions of the Council of Ethnic Minorities and Council of Religions;
- Facilitate GOG's programmatic and budgetary expansion of their existing Georgian language programs, such as the 1+4 Georgian language and State Internship program.

b. Objective 2: Expand and strengthen mutually beneficial socio-economic linkages between majority and minority communities

The geographic separation of majority and minority populations reinforces Georgia's social and economic integration status quo. Economically isolated communities reinforce language preferences that are often tied to ethnicity, deteriorating Georgian language capabilities among those who studied Georgian at school, and removing incentives for those who do not speak Georgian at all. This separation limits interactions and exposure between majority and minority communities.

Opportunities to break away from this isolation through compelling integration into the labor market or quality post-education employment are rare, resulting in poverty and unemployment, disenchanted youth, and persistent stereotypes. Meanwhile, appealing educational and economic opportunities increasingly originate from Russia.

Through this Objective, USAID/Georgia aims to expand meaningful connections between young people nationwide, measurably increase the number of minority youth who have access to education, employment, and civic opportunities within Georgia, and increase mutually-beneficial trade and business linkages between minority communities and wider Georgia. This will be achieved through two mutually-reinforcing expected results:

Result 1: Mutually-beneficial business linkages between minority and majority regions are increased.
Result 2: Mutually-beneficial socio-cultural linkages between minority and majority youth are expanded.

Expected Result 1: Mutually-beneficial business linkages between minority and majority regions are increased.

The activity will identify communities with high potential for expanded trade and economic linkages with the rest of Georgia, and may leverage cost contributions from the GOG and private sources to catalyze local economic development in target regions. The activity will foster enduring market linkages of rural households, trade associations, and other local stakeholders to strengthen the market system between minority and majority areas. Crucially, the activity should explore incentives to attract established market players to minority regions, in order to bring resources, expertise, supply chain infrastructure, market linkages, skills development, jobs, youth opportunities, and economic integration to minority regions.

To increase business linkages and incentivize trade between minority and majority regions, the activity will explore ways to create and strengthen links between local businesses to national supply chains and create new jobs. The activity should explore how local businesses in minority communities can expand their operations, improve productivity, enter new domestic sales markets, connect to new value-chain players outside of their regions, and attract investments. These businesses may represent a broad range of sectors, and should be identified in a way that engages a wide variety of local stakeholders. Engagement of new members from minority communities in sectoral associations would improve dialogue between majority and minority populations and introduce minority-centered procedures and services inside those organizations.

In order to build a long-term hiring pipeline for businesses in minority regions, the activity may link minority youth to higher, vocational, and professional educational institutions. The activity may utilize business consulting organizations as a vehicle to deliver basic business soft skills training tailored to the needs of potential employers, and will link youth to internship and employment opportunities within public and private sector organizations.

Expected interventions under this result should include but should not be limited to:

- Co-create and co-fund solutions with private sector resource partners to attract private investment and catalyze local economic and business development in minority communities. The activity may consider setting aside a designated PSE fund to solicit, incentivize, and co-fund ideas from the private sector to expand to and/or benefit minority regions;
- Facilitate market-sensitive linkages with higher and vocational education to create a pipeline of minorities with high-demand skills into the labor-market;
- Expand business and professional associations in minority regions and connect to value chains. For example, activities could include support to farm service centers and consulting businesses to expand their presence, services, and customer base in the minority regions.

Expected Result 2: Mutually-beneficial socio-cultural linkages between minority and majority youth are expanded.

Across the country, youth are demonstrating their openness to minority-majority counterparts. The activity will build on donor investments to establish programming via a countrywide network of youth centers. The activity may utilize or expand this network in order to strengthen civic engagement and participation among youth, build connections between young people nationwide, equip youth with knowledge and skills needed for employment, and leverage youth as the natural drivers of social change in valuing and promoting diversity.

In collaboration with the SMR, the activity should continue youth engagement initiatives that both meet the immediate needs and interests of ethnic minority groups but also be financed by government institutions. To the extent possible, the activity should help the SMR identify “low hanging fruit” - programs that have a high likelihood of success as well as the possibility of ownership by the GOG or which are aligned with core business interests of private sector partners. For example, the government has demonstrated success in communicating the importance of learning Georgian. Interventions may include helping youth access the existing Georgian language learning opportunities. The activity may also consider English language learning activities for majority and minority youth to promote western values and obtain better opportunities for future employment.

The activity may consider breaking stereotypes through civic activism and service projects for youth across Georgia to advance integration while addressing societal needs, or with exchange visits. Cross-regional interactions may include regional exchange programs to provide youth from minority communities with opportunities to travel to the areas with predominantly ethnic Georgian populations for two to three week visits and to live with host families. The same should apply to youth from majority areas visiting their minority peers.

Expected interventions under this result should include but should not be limited to:

- Offer relevant programming via the existing network of Youth centers established within NGOs or Universities across the country;
- Increase opportunities for substantive, longer-term exposure to other communities for both minority and majority youth;
- Facilitate co-investment with the private sector to support youth internships, service projects, and exchange opportunities.

SECTION B: FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. ESTIMATE OF FUNDS AVAILABLE AND NUMBER OF AWARDS CONTEMPLATED

USAID intends to award one Cooperative Agreement pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity. Subject to funding availability and at the discretion of the Agency, USAID intends to provide $20,000,000 in total USAID funding over a 5-year period.

USAID reserves the right to fund any one or none of the applications submitted.

2. START DATE AND PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE FOR FEDERAL AWARDS

The anticipated period of performance is 5 years from the signing of the Cooperative Agreement. The estimated start date will be on/about April 2022.

3. SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT

Substantial involvement during the implementation of this Agreement must be limited to approval of the elements listed below. An Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) will substantially be involved in the administration of a cooperative agreement to help the implementer achieve the agreement objectives in the following areas in accordance with ADS 303.3.11:

- Review and Approval of Recipient's Work Plans and Monitoring and Evaluation for Learning Plan (MEL) by the AOR;
- Review and Approval of key personnel by the Agreement Officer (AO) following technical concurrence of the AOR;
- Approval of sub-awards and the substantive technical/programmatic provisions of the sub-awards by the Agreement Officer following technical concurrence of the AOR;
- USAID monitoring to permit specific kinds of direction or redirection of the work because of the interrelationships with other projects or activities or due to GoG priorities and guidance;
- The ability to immediately halt an activity if the recipient does not achieve the specified results and/or targets specified in the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan or otherwise fails to comply with the terms and conditions in the Cooperative Agreement.

4. KEY PERSONNEL

Five key personnel positions for this Cooperative Agreement are: Chief of Party, Deputy Chief of Party, Cross-Sectoral Activity Coordinator, and two additional positions to be identified by the applicant as appropriate for accomplishing the objectives of the program.

Minimum Qualifications for the Key Personnel are as follows:

- **Chief of Party (COP)** should demonstrate subject matter expertise and a thorough understanding of the issues surrounding the integration of ethnic and religious minority populations in Georgia. Demonstrated ability to effectively manage a diverse team of employees is required. The COP should have experience with co-creation exercises, fostering experimentation and encouraging programmatic risks where warranted; the COP should also have strong interpersonal skills and demonstrated ability to network and maintain effective working relationships with diverse sets of actors, including CSOs and civic groups, the government, private and public sectors, and donors. The COP should be a citizen of Georgia. The COP should be full-time and located in Georgia and have sufficient authority for the program to run efficiently and effectively. Fluency in English (both verbal and written) is required.

- **Deputy Chief of Party (DCOP)** should have knowledge and understanding of integration issues in Georgia, and experience working with donor-funded programs. The DCOP should have the strong interpersonal skills necessary to maintain good relations with formal and informal civic groups, constituents, partners, government officials, USAID, and other personnel associated with this program. The DCOP must have extensive professional experience in managing and implementing multi-component programs and demonstrated ability to effectively manage staff. The DCOP should be a citizen of Georgia. Fluency in English (both verbal and written) is required.

- **Cross-Sectoral Activity Coordinator** should have strong interpersonal skills necessary to maintain good relations with implementing partners, government officials, and donors, and should have a thorough understanding of USAID, GOG, and other donors' activities in Georgia that have specific relevance to enhancing and amplifying activities aimed at the integration of ethnic and religious minorities. Since the program will serve as the central hub of USAID's integration work in Georgia, with 'spokes' extending to existing related programming, to ensure effective leveraging of these complementary development efforts, the Cross-Sectoral Activity Manager is expected to interact with USAID implementing partners, other donors and Government of Georgia representatives at the working level. The Cross-Sectoral Activity Coordinator must have at least five years of professional experience in working with donor-funded programs.

USAID encourages Applicants to propose highly qualified Georgian or regional key personnel. At least one of the five key personnel should have a background in economic investment, business, or private sector engagement.

5. AUTHORIZED GEOGRAPHIC CODE

The authorized geographic codes for procurement of goods and services under this award are 937 (the United States, the recipient country, and developing countries other than advanced developing countries, but excluding any country that is a prohibited source) and 110 (the United States, the independent states of the former Soviet Union, or a developing country, but excluding any country that is a prohibited source).

6. PLACE OF PERFORMANCE

The activity will be implemented in Georgia.

7. TITLE TO PROPERTY

Property title under the resultant agreement shall vest with the recipient in accordance with the requirements of 2 CFR 200 regarding the use, accountability, and disposition of such property.

8. NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN USAID AND THE RECIPIENT

The principal purpose of the relationship with the Recipient and under the subject program is to transfer funds to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation of the USAID Civic and Economic Integration Program which is authorized by Federal statute. The successful Recipient will be responsible for ensuring the achievement of the program objectives and the efficient and effective administration of the award through the application of sound management practices. The Recipient will assume responsibility for administering Federal funds in a manner consistent with underlying agreements, program objectives, and the terms and conditions of the Federal award.

9. SELECTION OF INSTRUMENT

In 2019, USAID/Georgia requested an assessment of the current conflict dynamics and mitigating factors to inform the new Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for 2020-2025. Given the recent and ongoing evolution of conflict dynamics and political changes in Georgia since earlier conflict assessments, the ongoing unresolved conflicts in Abkhazia and former South Ossetia following the 2008 war, and diverse ethnic and religious landscape in Georgia, the Mission wanted to better understand the grievances currently undermining reconciliation with the occupied territories and impeding integration of ethnic and religious minorities throughout Georgia to ensure that the new programming addresses key conflict drivers as effectively as possible.

The assessment that took place in October-November 2019 was aimed to support USAID's efforts to implement conflict-sensitive and conflict-prevention programming. Utilizing USAID's Conflict Assessment Framework (CAF) 2.0, the assessment team conducted an analysis of the context, identities, institutional factors, grievances, mitigating factors, opportunities, key actors for peace/violence, trends, and possible triggers. The outcome of the assessment was the development of the concept for the new USAID Civic and Economic Integration Program. The goal of this Activity is to better integrate ethnic and religious minorities into general society to strengthen Georgia's resilience to malign influences. This activity will seek to improve coordination among different actors addressing these issues and to strengthen the capacities to provide more data-driven and impactful approaches. The Conflict Assessment, as well as subsequent research related to the design of a new integration activity, have showed that there are potential implementing partners who can and will be interested in the implementation of this activity.

Georgia continues to contend with chronic problems associated with physical, economic, and social division among majority and minority communities. The existence of the divides allows for multiple entry points for exploitation by domestic and international malign actors. The 2019 Conflict Assessment demonstrated the extent to which the Kremlin concentrates on understanding and targeting local grievances in order to exploit preexisting fissures among ethnic and religious groups. The Kremlin also supplies a steady flow of disinformation to help erode the credibility of democratic processes and denigrate Euro-Atlantic goals. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, disinformation and propaganda have intensified. Initial domestic reactions were skewed by a limited number of individuals blaming the spread in Georgia on minority groups, creating cleavages ripe for the Kremlin or other nefarious actors to exploit at the expense of Georgian integration. More recently, the country has been plagued by disinformation related to vaccine efficacy and trustworthiness, a microcosm of the global vaccine competition.

The perception of inequitable outcomes for minority populations risks continuing to push minority communities away from identification with Georgia and helps ensure that foreign malign influence meets a receptive audience. As evidenced by NDI polling in 2020, ethnic Armenian and Azerbaijani communities feel that Georgia would be better off abandoning European and Euro-Atlantic integration in favor of better relations with Russia.

Addressing the above and other complex problems requires a close examination and understanding of the overarching barriers, including policy and governance, and societal and economic. Given the political sensitivity of the topic, USAID support for minority integration within Georgian society should be provided through an assistance mechanism.

If USAID were to contract for the services for its direct use or benefit, that could be construed as USG interference in Georgia's sovereign affairs. Instead, USAID intends to provide funds to an eligible organization that has the experience and already implements its own projects in the area of minority integration.

It is the policy of the Agency to help countries increase their own local capacity to support minority integration by providing Federal financial assistance to development actors who merit federal support or assistance by reason of their mission, programs, and activities in a Program Area/s for which the Agency has funding. Through the provision of Equal Rights for Marginalized Communities Federal financial assistance under a Cooperative Agreement for this Activity, the Agency intends to support development actors in the civil society sector, who will help Integration of minorities sector outcomes by carrying out their mission, programs, and activities in a manner that advances sustainable development in the above Program Areas.

SECTION C: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

U.S. and non-US organizations may participate under this NOFO.

USAID welcomes applications from organizations which have not previously received financial assistance from USAID. USAID will not accept applications from individuals.

Applicants must have established financial management, monitoring and evaluation processes, internal control systems, and policies and procedures that comply with established U.S. Government standards, laws, and regulations. The successful applicant(s) may be subject to a responsibility determination assessment (Pre-award Survey) by the Agreement Officer (AO).

The Recipient must be a responsible entity. The AO may determine a pre-award survey is required to conduct an examination that will determine whether the prospective recipient has the necessary organization, experience, accounting and operational controls, and technical skills – or ability to obtain them – in order to achieve the objectives of the program and comply with the terms and conditions of the award.

<u>Diverse Partnerships/Consortium and Leveraging Local Expertise</u>
Applicants are expected to recognize, leverage, and strengthen existing national and local expertise and to collaborate with a wide range of public and private sector actors. USAID/Georgia recognizes that the activity incorporates a wide technical range of democracy, rights, and governance, and economic growth objectives. In light of this, the use of a strong consortium or alliance of partners (prime and sub-awardees) in an integrated approach to achieving objectives including partnerships with the private sector may be considered.

2. COST SHARING OR MATCHING

Cost sharing is voluntary, but not required.

If proposed, such funds may be provided directly by the recipient; other multilateral, bilateral, and foundation donors; host governments; and local organizations, communities, and private businesses that contribute financially and in-kind to the implementation of activities at the country level. This may include the contribution of staff level of effort, office space, or other facilities or equipment which may be used for the program, provided by the recipient. For guidance on cost-sharing in grants and cooperative agreements see 2 CFR 200.306.

3. OTHER

In support of the Agency's interest in fostering a larger assistance base and expanding the number and sustainability of development partners, USAID encourages applications from potential new partners.

When considering making an award to a potential partner with limited or no previous USAID experience, USAID will undertake necessary pre-award reviews to determine the organization's "responsibility" as discussed below. The resultant award to this organization may take some time. The applicant should take this into account and plan their implementation dates and activities accordingly.

"Responsibility" of Applicant:

In order for an award to be made, the Agreement Officer must make an affirmative determination that the applicant is "responsible." A positive responsibility determination means that the applicant possesses or has the ability to obtain the necessary management and technical competence to plan and carry out the program to be funded and that the applicant will practice mutually agreed-upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided by USAID.

SECTION D: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Agency Point of Contact:

Name: Eka Gamezardashvili
Title: Acquisition and Assistance Specialist
Email: egamezardashvili@usaid.gov AND rcocaucasus@usaid.gov
Mail Address: Regional Contracting Office, 29, Georgian American Friendship Avenue, Tbilisi 0131 Georgia

2. Questions and Answers

Questions regarding this NOFO should be submitted in writing to Eka Gamezardashvili via email at egamezardashvili@usaid.gov AND rcocaucasus@usaid.gov, no later than the date and time indicated on the cover letter. Any information given to a prospective Applicant concerning this NOFO will be furnished promptly to all other prospective Applicants as an amendment to this NOFO, if that information is necessary for submitting applications or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective Applicant.

3. General Content and Form of Application

Applications in response to this NOFO must be submitted by email to Eka Gamezardashvili, Acquisition and Assistance Specialist at egamezardashvili@usaid.gov and rcocaucasus@usaid.gov. Email submissions must include the NOFO number and applicant's name in the subject line heading. In addition, for an application sent by multiple emails, the subject line must also indicate whether the email relates to the technical or cost application, and the desired sequence of the emails and their attachments (e.g. "No. 1 of 4," etc.). For example, if your cost application is being sent in two emails, the first email should have a subject line that states: "[NOFO number], [organization name], Cost Application, Part 1 of 2."

If you have not received confirmation of USAID receipt of your application within two days of sending it, please contact Ms. Eka Gamezardashvili at egamezardashvili@usaid.gov and rcocaucasus@usaid.gov to inquire if your application was received. You must provide evidence of timely sending of the application.

USAID's preference is that the technical application and the cost application each be submitted as consolidated email attachments, i.e., that you consolidate the various parts of a technical application into a single document before sending it. If this is not possible, please provide instructions on how to collate the attachments. USAID will not be responsible for errors in compiling electronic applications if no instructions are provided or are unclear.

After submitting an application electronically, applicants should immediately check their own email to confirm that the attachments were indeed sent. If an applicant discovers an error in transmission, please send the material again and note in the subject line of the email or indicate in the file name if submitted via grants.gov that it is a "corrected" submission. Do not send the same email more than once unless there has been a change, and if so, please note that it is a "corrected" email.

Applicants are reminded that email is NOT instantaneous, and in some cases delays of several hours occur from transmission to receipt. Therefore, applicants are requested to send the application in sufficient time ahead of the deadline. For this NOFO, the initial point of entry to the government infrastructure is the USAID mail server.

Size limit for e-mail with one attachment is 25MB compatible with MS Word (.doc), Excel (.xls), Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) in a MS Windows environment. If several files are attached to the e-mail submission, the total size of all attachments per e-mail shall not exceed 25MB compatible with MS Word (.doc), Excel (.xls), Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) in a MS Windows environment.

There may be a problem with the receipt of *.zip files due to anti-virus software. Therefore, applicants are discouraged from sending files in this format as USAID/Georgia cannot guarantee their acceptance by the internet server.

4. Preparation of Applications

Each Applicant must furnish the information required by this NOFO. Applications must be submitted in two separate parts: The Technical Application and the Business (Cost) Application. This subsection addresses general content requirements applying to the full application. Please see subsections 5 and 6, below, for information on the content specific to the Technical and Business (Cost) applications. The Technical application must address technical aspects only while the Business (Cost) Application must present the costs, and address risk and other related issues.

Both the Technical and Business (Cost) Applications must include a cover page containing the following information:

- Name of the organization(s) submitting the application;
- Identification and signature of the primary contact person (by name, title, organization, mailing address, telephone number and email address) and the identification of the alternate contact person (by name, title, organization, mailing address, telephone number and email address);
- Program name;
- Notice of Funding Opportunity number;
- Name of any proposed sub-recipients or partnerships (identify if any of the organizations are local organizations, per USAID’s definition of ‘local entity’ under ADS 303);
- Organization DUNS number.

Any erasures or other changes to the application must be initialed by the person signing the application. Applications signed by an agent on behalf of the Applicant must be accompanied by evidence of that agent’s authority, unless that evidence has been previously furnished to the issuing office.

Applicants may choose to submit a cover letter in addition to the cover pages, but it will serve only as a transmittal letter to the Agreement Officer. The cover letter will not be reviewed as part of the merit review criteria.

Applications must comply with the following:

- USAID will not review any pages in excess of the page limits noted in the subsequent sections. Please ensure that applications comply with the page limitations.
- Written in English.
- Use standard 8 ½" x 11", single sided, single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, 1" margins, left justification and headers and/or footers on each page with consecutive page numbers, date of submission, and Applicant's name.
- 10 point font can be used for graphs and charts. Tables must comply with the 12 point Times New Roman requirement.
- Submitted via Microsoft Word or PDF formats, except budget files which must be submitted in unlocked Microsoft Excel format.
- The estimated start date identified in Section B of this NOFO must be used in the cost application.
- The technical application must be a searchable and editable Word or PDF format as appropriate.
- The cost application must include an Excel spreadsheet with all cells unlocked and no hidden formulas or sheets. A PDF version of the Excel spreadsheet may be submitted in addition to the Excel version at the applicant's discretion, however, the official cost application submission is the unlocked Excel version.

Applicants must review, understand, and comply with all aspects of this NOFO. Failure to do so may be considered as being non-responsive and may be evaluated accordingly. Applicants should retain a copy of the application and all enclosures for their records.

The Cost/Business Application is to be submitted under separate cover from the technical application. The Applicant is requested to submit a budget broken down by program years (in MS Excel with formulas unlocked) with an accompanying detailed budget narrative (in Word or PDF text accessible) which provides in detail the total costs for implementation of the program.

Applicants who include data that they do not want disclosed to the public for any purpose or used by the U.S. Government except for evaluation purpose should mark the title page with the following legend:

"This application includes data that shall not be disclosed outside the U.S. Government and shall not be duplicated, used, or disclosed – in whole or in part – for any purpose other than to evaluate this application. If, however, a grant is awarded to this Applicant as a result of – or in connection with – the submission of this data, the U.S. Government shall have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting grant. This restriction does not limit the U.S. Government's right to use information contained in this data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction are contained in sheets {insert sheet numbers}."

and mark each sheet of data it wished to restrict with the following legend:

"Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this application."

5. Technical Application Format

The technical application will be the most important factor for consideration in selection for award of the proposed Cooperative Agreement. The technical application should be specific, complete, and presented concisely. The Technical Application in response to this solicitation shall address how the Applicant intends to carry out the Program Description contained in Section B. It should clearly demonstrate how the Applicant will meet the goals and objectives of the program, and fulfill the Applicant's program implementation responsibilities. The application should take into account the requirements of the program and evaluation criteria found in this NOFO.

Technical applications shall be organized by the technical evaluation criteria listed below as clarified further below. The Technical Application is limited to 25 pages. Any pages beyond these twenty five (25) will NOT be evaluated. However, required Annexes specified below will not be counted towards the page limit.

Required Order of the Technical Application:

1. Cover page: The cover page must not exceed one page and must contain information as specified in Section D.3 for the cover page of the Technical and Business (Cost) Applications. (not included in the 25-page limit)
2. Table of Contents (not included in the 25-page limit)
3. Abbreviation list (not included in the 25-page limit)
4. Executive summary (not included in the 25-page limit): must provide a maximum two-page high-level overview of key elements of the Technical Application.
5. Technical Approach (15-page limit)
6. Use of Partnerships, Management Approach and Staffing (8-page limit)
7. Organizational Capacity (2-page limit)
8. Required Annexes (not included in the 25-page limit)
    a. Illustrative First Year Work Plan (not to exceed 3 pages)
    b. Organizational Chart
    c. Résumés for Key Personnel (CVs/Resumes may not exceed 3 pages each)

    Other annexes, as applicable:

    d. Letters of Commitment for Key Personnel (exclusive commitments are not recommended)

    e. A list of partners, including information on their capabilities and signed letters of commitment for any such partner organizations (exclusive commitments are discouraged).

1.1 Technical Approach

The Technical Approach Section should include information sufficient to evaluate the application under the Technical Approach Criterion. This Section should address the overall approach to accomplish the objectives stated in the Program Description in an integrated fashion. The activity design should clearly demonstrate how each objective mutually reinforces and builds on the results of the other objective.

The Technical Approach Section must include a description of the Georgian context as it relates to the objectives of this Activity. It should demonstrate an understanding of the relevant GOG stakeholders and other donor projects. It should include a clear description of the conceptual approach and the general strategy being proposed, including how the activity addresses gaps in the sector and complements other interventions. More specifically, the technical approach should clearly articulate: 1) the feasibility and relevance to the Georgian context; and 2) approaches to achieve impact in terms of number of people, including the ability to scale to increase the reach of the approach, and 3) actionable approaches to analysis and learning.

This Section should explain how the results to be achieved will have a significant impact on the overall goal of the Activity and how the results are realistic

The draft first year work plan should consist of a Gantt chart or similar chart that shows the timetable for the implementation of all planned activities intended to make progress toward the agreement's objectives as well as institutional responsibilities.

This Section should also include an approach to monitoring, evaluation, and learning, which describes how the Applicant will measure the achievement of results, discuss plans for identifying learning gaps, and help the project to capture lessons learned from innovative approaches. It should describe how it will measure the impact and track progress towards achievement of the component's results and how proposed indicators will be used for timely management decisions and credibly reflect the actual performance of the activity.

In addition to the information authorized in this Section, the following annex is authorized:

- Draft Work Plan for the first year.

1.2. Use of Partnerships, Management Approach and Staffing

This section must detail the overall organizational structure of the applicant and its partners, its staffing approach and qualifications and capacities of the Key Personnel.

The Use of Partnerships, Management Approach and Staffing Section should include information sufficient to properly evaluate the application under the Use of Partnerships, Management Approach and Staffing Criterion. Applicants should address how the technical experience, operational assets, and organizational structure will advance activity objectives. It should also address the organization structure and location of any field offices. Discussion of the organizational structure should include the program team, how each of the program components will be managed, roles and responsibilities of the key personnel and lines of authority and accountability among staff and any proposed sub-awardees.

This Section should describe how the Applicant will use partnerships to achieve the goals of the Activity. As noted above, the program contemplated by this NOFO would benefit from the use of diverse partnerships that leverage a wide variety of local expertise.

This Section should discuss the capabilities of all partners and how those capabilities fit their role in the implementation of the Activity. This includes describing the unique capabilities, relationships or other assets that the proposed partners bring that are relevant to achieving the goals of this Activity. Unique capabilities should include demonstrated ability to identify, develop, and implement market-based solutions to development challenges.

This Section should also address how the Applicant will strengthen the capacity of its partners to maximize the benefits of local expertise. This would include formal training, mentorship and any other form of learning and capacity building.

In addition to the information authorized in this Section, an annex is authorized that lists partners, includes information on their capabilities and provides signed letters of commitment for any such partner organizations (exclusive commitments are discouraged).

This Section should explain the plan to start-up the program. This should consider how to:

- Effectively start implementation of initial activities;
- Foster productive working relationships with diverse stakeholders including the GOG; and
- Address the logistical and operational challenges inherent in launching an activity across a diverse range of areas.

This Section should concisely address the skills, experience and education of five key personnel positions and describe how their proposed Chief of Party, Deputy Chief of Party, and Cross-Sectoral Activity Coordinator meet the requirements in Section B.4 Key Personnel.

The applicant must propose candidates for the three required positions detailed by USAID above. In addition, the applicant must also propose two additional key personnel that the applicant deems most appropriate for reaching the objectives of the program, for a total of five required key personnel. The two additional key personnel positions and the minimum qualifications for each should be described in this Section, including the role in the organizational structure and a rationale why the position is key. At least one of the five key personnel should have a background in economic investment, business, or private sector engagement.

In support of the staffing approach narrative section, the applicant will also provide resumes/CVs of key personnel and an organizational chart in an annex. Resumes/CVs for key personnel may not exceed 3 pages in length and must demonstrate the communication skills, managerial capabilities, and technical capacities of key personnel, among other relevant factors as determined by the applicant. Each key personnel resume/CV will include at least 3 references within the last 3 years, along with an email address and phone number for each reference. The references can be listed on a fourth page.

The applicant should submit letters of commitment for key personnel in an Annex. Exclusive commitments are not recommended.

The Management Approach and Staffing Section should also describe the overall staffing plan, beyond key personnel. The Applicant must demonstrate support for local capacity development; not only as an activity output but as an explicit means to achieve the expected results. In-country, locally-resident Georgian expertise is the preferred source for recruitment. The Applicant should therefore maximize the use of Georgian long-term professional and short-term professional positions, including key personnel as appropriate, as a means of ensuring strong linkages with local realities.

In addition to the information authorized in this Section, the following annexes are authorized:

- Organizational Chart; and
- Resumes and letters of commitment for the key personnel positions.

1.3. Organizational Capacity

The Organizational Capacity Section should include information sufficient to evaluate the application under the Organizational Capacity criterion. The Applicant must demonstrate technical resources and expertise. Specifically, this should include a discussion of the ability to scale up activities and the capacity to manage resources of this magnitude and meet USAID reporting, monitoring, evaluation and vetting requirements, as well as the capacity to responsibly absorb financial resources and expend them in a reasonable amount of time.

1.4. Applicant's Past Performance

In this section the Applicant (including all partners of a joint venture) must provide information regarding its recent history of performance for all of its cost-reimbursement contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements involving similar or related programs, not to exceed seven (7) awards during the last five (5) years using the attached Past Performance Information (PPI) form (Annex 2) for itself and each major sub-applicant (defined as a sub-applicant whose proposed cost exceeds 10% of the applicant's total proposed cost) in accordance with the following:

1. Descriptions of the five most recent and relevant programs (assistance agreements or contracts) for the applicant; and description of the five most recent and relevant programs (assistance agreements or contracts) for each major sub-applicants. The descriptions should include:
    a. Name of the Awarding Organization,
    b. Award Number,
    c. Activity Title,
    d. A brief description of the activity including scope of work or complexity/diversity of tasks,
    e. Primary location(s) of work,
    f. Term of performance, and
    g. Dollar value.
    h. Reports and findings from any audits performed in the last 3 years; and
    i. Name of at least two (2) updated professional contacts who most directly observed the work at the organization for which the service was performed with complete current contact information including telephone number, and e-mail address for each proposed individual.
2. PPI must be submitted as an Annex to the Application.

USAID recommends that applicants alert the contacts that their names have been submitted and that they are authorized to provide performance information concerning the listed contracts if and when USAID requests it.

If the Applicant encountered problems on any of the referenced Awards, it may provide a short explanation and the corrective action taken. The applicant should not provide general information on its performance. USAID reserves the right to obtain relevant information concerning an Applicant's history of performance from any sources and may consider such information in its review of the Applicant's risk. The Agency may request additional information and conduct a pre-award survey if it determines that it is necessary to inform the risk assessment.

Past Performance is not an evaluation factor under this solicitation; however, PPI will be reviewed as part of a Pre-Award Risk Assessment of the apparently successful Applicant.

6. Business (Cost) Application Format

The Business (Cost) Application must be submitted separately from the Technical Application. While no page limit exists for the full cost application, Applicants are encouraged to be as concise as possible while still providing the necessary details. The business (cost) application must illustrate the entire period of performance, using the budget format shown in the SF-424A.

Prior to award, Applicants may be required to submit additional documentation deemed necessary for the Agreement Officer to assess the Applicant's risk in accordance with 2 CFR 200.205. Applicants should not submit any additional information with their initial application.

The Cost Application must contain the following sections (which are further elaborated below this listing with the letters for each requirement):

a) Cover Page (See Section D.3 above for requirements)

b) SF 424 Form(s)

The Applicant must sign and submit the cost application using the SF-424 series. Standard Forms can be accessed electronically at www.grants.gov or using the following links:

Instructions for SF-424 http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424-instructions.html

Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html

Instructions for SF-424A http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-

424a-instructions.html

Budget Information (SF-424A) https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html

Instructions for SF-424B http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424b-instructions.html

Assurances (SF-424B) https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html

Failure to accurately complete these forms could result in the rejection of the application.

c) Required Certifications and Assurances

The applicant must complete the following documents and submit a signed copy with their application:

(1) "Certifications, Assurances, Representations, and Other Statements of the Recipient" document found at http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mav.pdf
(2) Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)
(3) Certificate of Compliance: Please submit a copy of your Certificate of Compliance if your organization's systems have been certified by USAID/Washington's Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA).

d) Budget and Budget Narrative

The Budget must be submitted as one unprotected Excel file (MS Office 2000 or later versions) with visible formulas and references and must be broken out by project year, including itemization of the federal and non-federal (cost share) amount. Files must not contain any hidden or otherwise inaccessible cells. **Budgets with hidden cells lengthen the cost analysis time required to make award and may result in a rejection of the cost application.**

The Budget Narrative must contain sufficient detail to allow USAID to understand the proposed costs. The Applicant must ensure the budgeted costs address any additional requirements identified in Section F, such as Branding and Marking. The Budget Narrative must be thorough, including sources for costs to support USAID's determination that the proposed costs are fair and reasonable.

The Budget must include the following worksheets or tabs, and contents, at a minimum:

- Summary Budget, inclusive of all program costs (federal and non-federal), broken out by major budget category and by year for activities implemented by the Applicant and any potential sub-applicants for the entire period of the program. See Section H, Annex 1 for Summary Budget Template
- Detailed Budget, including a breakdown by year, sufficient to allow the Agency to determine that the costs represent a realistic and efficient use of funding to implement the applicant's program and are allowable in accordance with the cost

principles found in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E.

- Detailed Budgets for each sub-recipient, for all federal funding and cost share, broken out by budget category and by year, for the entire implementation period of the project.

The Detailed Budget must contain the following budget categories and information, at a minimum:

1) **Salaries and Allowances** – Must be proposed consistent with 2 CFR 200.430 Compensation - Personal Services. The Applicant's budget must include position title, salary rate, level of effort, and salary escalation factors for each position. Allowances, when proposed, must be broken down by specific type and by position. Applicants must explain all assumptions in the Budget Narrative. The Budget Narrative must demonstrate that the proposed compensation is reasonable for the services rendered and consistent with what is paid for similar work in other activities of the applicant. Applicants must provide their established written policies on personnel compensation. If the Applicant's written policies do not address a specific element of compensation that is being proposed, the Budget Narrative must describe the rationale used and supporting market research.

2) **Fringe Benefits** – (if applicable) If the Applicant has a fringe benefit rate approved by an agency of the U.S. Government, the Applicant must use such rate and provide evidence of its approval. If an Applicant does not have a fringe benefit rate approved, the Applicant must propose a rate and explain how the Applicant determined the rate. In this case, the Budget Narrative must include a detailed breakdown comprised of all items of fringe benefits (e.g., superannuation, gratuity, etc.) and the costs of each, expressed in U.S. dollars and as a percentage of salaries.

3) **Travel and Transportation** – Provide details to explain the purpose of the trips, the number of trips, the origin and destination, the number of individuals traveling, and the duration of the trips. Per Diem and associated travel costs must be based on the applicant's normal travel policies. When appropriate please provide supporting documentation as an attachment, such as company travel policy, and explain assumptions in the Budget Narrative.

4) **Procurement or Rental of Goods (Equipment & Supplies), Services, and Real Property** – Must include information on estimated types of equipment, models, supplies and the cost per unit and quantity. The Budget Narrative must include the purpose of the equipment and supplies and the basis for the estimates. The Budget Narrative must support the necessity of any rental costs and reasonableness in light of such factors as: rental costs of comparable property, if any; market conditions in the area; alternatives available; and the type, life expectancy, condition, and value of the property leased.

5) **Subawards** – Specify the budget for the portion of the program to be passed through to any subrecipients. See 2 CFR 200.330 for assistance in determining whether the sub-tier entity is a subrecipient or contractor. The subrecipient budgets must align with the same requirements as the Applicant's budget, including those related to fringe and indirect costs.

6) **Construction** – Not applicable

7) Other Direct Costs – This may include other costs not elsewhere specified, such as report preparation costs, passports and visas fees, medical exams and inoculations, as well as any other miscellaneous costs which directly benefit the program proposed by the applicant. The applicant should indicate the subject, venue and duration of any proposed conferences and seminars, and their relationship to the objectives of the program, along with estimates of costs. Otherwise, the narrative should be minimal.

8) Indirect Costs – Applicants must indicate whether they are proposing indirect costs or will charge all costs directly. In order to better understand indirect costs please see Subpart E of 2 CFR 200.414. The application must identify which approach they are requesting and provide the applicable supporting information. Below are the most commonly used Indirect Cost Rate methods:

Method 1 - Direct Charge Only
Eligibility: Any applicant
Initial Application Requirements: See above on direct costs

Method 2 - Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)
Eligibility: Any applicant with a NICRA issued by a USG Agency must use that NICRA
Initial Application Requirements: If the applicant has a current NICRA, submit your approved NICRA and the associated disclosed practices. Additionally, at the Agency's discretion, a provisional rate may be set forth in the award subject to audit and finalization. See USAID's Indirect Cost Rate Guide for Non Profit Organizations for further guidance.

Method 3 - De minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC)
Eligibility: Any applicant that has never received a NICRA
Initial Application Requirements: Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate an indirect rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time. The applicant must describe which cost elements it charges indirectly vs. directly. See 2 CFR 200.414(f) for further information.

Method 4 - Indirect Costs Charged as A Fixed Amount
Eligibility: Non-U.S. non-profit organizations without a NICRA may request, but approval is at the discretion of the AO.
Initial Application Requirements: Provide the proposed fixed amount and a worksheet that includes the following:

- Total costs incurred by the organization for the previous fiscal year and estimates for the current year. Guidance to AO: If the indirect costs are expected to be minimal or easily attributed to performance of a USAID agreement, the AO should delete this first bullet.
- Indirect costs (common costs that benefit the day-to-day operations of the organization, including categories such as salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting, or that benefit and are identifiable to more than one program or activity, such as depreciation, rental costs, operations and maintenance of facilities, and telephone expenses) for the previous fiscal year and estimates for the current year.
- Proposed method for prorating the indirect costs equitably and consistently across

all programs and activities of using a base that measures the benefits of that particular cost to each program or activity to which the cost applies.

If the applicant does not have an approved NICRA and does not elect to utilize the 10% de minimis rate, the Agreement Officer will provide further instructions and may request additional supporting information, including financial statements and audits, should the application still be under consideration after the merit review. USAID is under no obligation to approve the applicant's requested method.

9) Cost Sharing – While Cost Sharing is not required, if proposed, the Applicant should estimate the amount of cost-sharing resources to be provided over the life of the agreement and specify the sources of such resources, and the basis of calculation in the budget narrative. Applicants should also provide a breakdown of the cost share (financial and in-kind contributions) of all organizations involved in implementing the resulting award.

e) Prior Approvals in accordance with 2 CFR 200.407

Inclusion of an item of cost in the detailed application budget does not satisfy any requirements for prior approval by the Agency. If the applicant would like the award to reflect approval of any cost elements for which prior written approval is specifically required for allowability, the Applicant must specify and justify that cost. See 2 CFR 200.407 for information regarding which cost elements require prior written approval.

f) Approval of Subawards

The Applicant must submit information for all subawards that it wishes to have approved at the time of award. For each proposed subaward the Applicant must provide the following:

- Name of organization
- DUNS Number
- Confirmation that the subrecipient does not appear on the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) list
- Confirmation that the subrecipient does not have active exclusions in the System for Award Management (SAM)
- Confirmation that the subrecipient is not listed in the United Nations Security designation list
- Confirmation that the subrecipient is not suspended or debarred
- Confirmation that the applicant has completed a risk assessment of the subrecipient, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.331(b)
- Any negative findings as a result of the risk assessment and the applicant's plan for mitigation.

g) Dun and Bradstreet and SAM Requirements

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier (DUNS number) and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements. Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is exempted from requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to:

1. Provide a valid DUNS number for the Applicant and all proposed sub-recipients;
2. Be registered in SAM before submitting its application. SAM is streamlining processes, eliminating the need to enter the same data multiple times, and consolidating hosting to make the process of doing business with the government more efficient (www.sam.gov).
3. Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

The registration process may take many weeks to complete. Therefore, Applicants are encouraged to begin the process early. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements above by the time USAID is ready to make an award, USAID may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

DUNS number: http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform
SAM registration: http://www.sam.gov

Non-U.S. applicants can find additional resources for registering in SAM, including a Quick Start Guide and a video on how to obtain an NCAGE code, on www.sam.gov , navigate to Help, then to International Registrants.

h) Branding Strategy & Marking Plan

The apparently successful applicant will be asked to provide a Branding Strategy and Marking Plan to be evaluated and approved by the Agreement Officer and incorporated into any resulting award

Branding Strategy

a. Applicants recommended for an assistance award must submit and negotiate a "Branding Strategy," describing how the program, project, or activity is named and positioned, and how it is promoted and communicated to beneficiaries and host country citizens.

b. The request for a Branding Strategy, by the Agreement Officer from the applicant, confers no rights to the applicant and constitutes no USAID commitment to an award.

c. Failure to submit and negotiate a Branding Strategy within the time frame specified by the Agreement Officer will make the applicant ineligible for an award.

d. The applicant must include all estimated costs associated with branding and marking USAID programs, such as plaques, stickers, banners, press events, materials, and so forth, in the budget portion of the application. These costs are subject to the revision and negotiation with the Agreement Officer and will be incorporated into the Total Estimated Amount of the grant, cooperative agreement or other assistance instrument.

e. The Branding Strategy must include, at a minimum, all of the following:

(1) All estimated costs associated with branding and marking USAID programs, such as plaques, stickers, banners, press events, materials, and so forth.

(2) The intended name of the program, project, or activity.

(i) USAID requires the applicant to use the "USAID Identity," comprised of the USAID logo and brandmark, with the tagline "from the American people" as found on the USAID Web site at http://www.usaid.gov/branding, unless Section VI of the RFA or APS states that the USAID Administrator has approved the use of an additional or substitute logo, seal, or tagline.

(ii) (USAID prefers local language translations of the phrase "made possible by (or with) the generous support of the American People" next to the USAID Identity when acknowledging contributions.

(iii) It is acceptable to cobrand the title with the USAID Identity and the applicant's identity.

(iv) If branding in the above manner is inappropriate or not possible, the applicant must explain how USAID's involvement will be showcased during publicity for the program or project.

(v) USAID prefers to fund projects that do not have a separate logo or identity that competes with the USAID Identity. If there is a plan to develop a separate logo to consistently identify this program, the applicant must attach a copy of the proposed logos. Section VI of the RFA or APS will state if an Administrator approved the use of an additional or substitute logo, seal, or tagline.

(3) The intended primary and secondary audiences for this project or program, including direct beneficiaries and any special target segments.

(4) Planned communication or program materials used to explain or market the program to beneficiaries.

(i) Describe the main program message.

(ii) Provide plans for training materials, posters, pamphlets, public service announcement, billboards, Web sites, and so forth, as appropriate.

(iii) Provide any plans to announce and promote publicly this program or project to host country citizens, such as media releases, press conferences, public events, and so forth. Applicant must incorporate the USAID Identity and the message, "USAID is from the American People."

(iv) Provide any additional ideas to increase awareness that the American people support this project or program.

(5) Information on any direct involvement from host-country government or ministry, including any planned acknowledgement of the host-country government.

(6) Any other groups whose logo or identity the applicant will use on program materials and related materials. Indicate if they are a donor or why they will be visibly acknowledged, and if they will receive the same prominence as USAID. e. The Agreement Officer will review the Branding Strategy to ensure the above information is adequately included and consistent with the stated objectives of the award, the applicant's cost data submissions, and the performance plan.

f. If the applicant receives an assistance award, the Branding Strategy will be included in and made part of the resulting grant or cooperative agreement

Marking Plan

a. Applicants recommended for an assistance award must submit and negotiate a “Marking Plan,” detailing the public communications, commodities, and program materials, and other items that will visibly bear the “USAID Identity,” which comprises of the USAID logo and brandmark, with the tagline “from the American people.” The USAID Identity is the official marking for the Agency, and is found on the USAID Web site at http://www.usaid.gov/branding.

b. The request for a Marking Plan, by the Agreement Officer from the applicant, confers no rights to the applicant and constitutes no USAID commitment to an award.

c. Failure to submit and negotiate a Marking Plan within the time frame specified by the Agreement Officer will make the applicant ineligible for an award.

d. The applicant must include all estimated costs associated with branding and marking USAID programs, such as plaques, stickers, banners, press events, materials, and so forth, in the budget portion of the application. These costs are subject to the revision and negotiation with the Agreement Officer and will be incorporated into the Total Estimated Amount of the grant, cooperative agreement or other assistance instrument.

e. The Marking Plan must include all of the following:

(1) A description of the public communications, commodities, and program materials that the applicant plans to produce and which will bear the USAID Identity as part of the award, including:

(i) Program, project, or activity sites funded by USAID, including visible infrastructure projects or other sites physical in nature;

(ii) Technical assistance, studies, reports, papers, publications, audiovisual productions, public service announcements, Web sites/Internet activities, promotional, informational, media, or communications products funded by USAID;

(iii) Commodities, equipment, supplies, and other materials funded by USAID, including commodities or equipment provided under humanitarian assistance or disaster relief programs; and

(iv) It is acceptable to cobrand the title with the USAID Identity and the applicant's identity.

(v) Events financed by USAID, such as training courses, conferences, seminars, exhibitions, fairs, workshops, press conferences and other public activities. If the USAID Identity cannot be displayed, the recipient is encouraged to otherwise acknowledge USAID and the support of the American people.

(2) A table on the program deliverables with the following details:

(i) The program deliverables that the applicant plans to mark with the USAID Identity;

(ii) The type of marking and what materials the applicant will use to mark the program deliverables;

(iii) When in the performance period the applicant will mark the program deliverables, and where the applicant will place the marking;

(iv) What program deliverables the applicant does not plan to mark with the USAID Identity, and

(v) The rationale for not marking program deliverables.

(3) Any requests for an exemption from USAID marking requirements, and an explanation of why the exemption would apply. The applicant may request an exemption if USAID marking requirements would:

(i) Compromise the intrinsic independence or neutrality of a program or materials where independence or neutrality is an inherent aspect of the program and materials. The applicant must identify the USAID Development Objective, Interim Result, or program goal furthered by an appearance of neutrality, or state why an aspect of the award is presumptively neutral. Identify by category or deliverable item, examples of material for which an exemption is sought.

(ii) Diminish the credibility of audits, reports, analyses, studies, or policy recommendations whose data or findings must be seen as independent. The applicant must explain why each particular deliverable must be seen as credible.

(iii) Undercut host-country government "ownership" of constitutions, laws, regulations, policies, studies, assessments, reports, publications, surveys or audits, public service announcements, or other communications. The applicant must explain why each particular item or product is better positioned as host-country government item or product.

(iv) Impair the functionality of an item. The applicant must explain how marking the item or commodity would impair its functionality.

(v) Incur substantial costs or be impractical. The applicant must explain why marking would not be cost beneficial or practical.

(vi) Offend local cultural or social norms, or be considered inappropriate. The applicant must identify the relevant norm, and explain why marking would violate that norm or otherwise be inappropriate.

(vii) Conflict with international law. The applicant must identify the applicable international law violated by the marking.

f. The Agreement Officer will consider the Marking Plan's adequacy and reasonableness and will approve or disapprove any exemption requests. The Marking Plan will be reviewed to ensure the above information is adequately included and consistent with the stated objectives of the award, the applicant's cost data submissions, and the performance plan. g. If the applicant receives an assistance award, the Marking Plan, including any approved exemptions, will be included in and made part of the resulting grant or cooperative agreement, and will apply for the term of the award unless provided otherwise.

i) Funding Restrictions

Profit is not allowable for recipients or subrecipients under this award. See 2 CFR 200.330 for assistance in determining whether a sub-tier entity is a subrecipient or contractor.

Construction will not be authorized under this award.

USAID will not allow the reimbursement of pre-award costs under this award without the explicit written approval of the Agreement Officer.

Except as may be specifically approved in advance by the AO, all commodities and services that will be reimbursed by USAID under this award must be from the authorized geographic code specified in Section B.4 of this NOFO and must meet the source and nationality requirements set forth in 22 CFR 228.

j) Conflict of Interest

a. Personal Conflict of Interest

1. An actual or appearance of a conflict of interest exists when an applicant organization or an employee of the organization has a relationship with an 8 Agency official involved in the competitive award decision-making process that could affect that Agency official's impartiality. The term "conflict of interest" includes situations in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise, or have the appearance of compromising, the obligations and duties of a USAID employee or recipient employee.

2. The applicant must provide conflict of interest disclosures when it submits an

SF-424. Should the applicant discover a previously undisclosed conflict of interest after submitting the application, the applicant must disclose the conflict of interest to the AO no later than ten (10) calendar days following discovery.

b. Organizational Conflict of Interest
The applicant must notify USAID of any actual or potential conflict of interest that they are aware of that may provide the applicant with an unfair competitive advantage in competing for this financial assistance award. Examples of an unfair competitive advantage include but are not limited to situations in which an applicant or the applicant's employee gained access to non-public information regarding a federal assistance funding opportunity, or an applicant or applicant's employee was substantially involved in the preparation of a federal assistance funding opportunity. USAID will promptly take appropriate action upon receiving any such notification from the applicant.

SECTION E: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. TECHNICAL EVALUATION

The application should represent the applicant's best ideas and efforts, and clearly respond to the subject Program Description. USAID reserves right, but is not under obligation, to enter into discussions with one or more applicants in order to obtain clarifications, additional details, or to suggest refinements in the proposed technical approach, budget, or other aspects of application, if doing so is determined to be in the best interest of the U.S. Government.

Applicants must note that these factors serve as the standard against which all technical information will be evaluated and serve to identify the significant matters which applications must address. Technical Approach; Use of Partnerships, Management Approach and Staffing; and Organizational Capacity, in that order of importance, as described herein and prescribed by the Technical Application format.

Merit Review

The merit review criteria prescribed here are tailored to the requirements of this particular NOFO. Technical and other factors will be evaluated relative to each other, as described here and prescribed by the Technical Application Format. The Technical Application will be scored by a Selection Committee (SC) using the criteria described in this section.

USAID will conduct a merit review of all applications received that comply with the instructions in this NOFO. Applications will be reviewed and evaluated in accordance with the criteria shown below.

The criteria are presented in **descending order of importance**. Technical Approach; Use of Partnerships, Management Approach and Staffing; and Organizational Capacity will be evaluated, in that order of importance, as described herein and prescribed by the Technical Application format.

Technical applications will be evaluated by a technical evaluation committee using the following criteria. The Selection Committee (SC) will evaluate the various components of the application set forth below in descending order of importance.

1. Technical Approach;
2. Use of Partnerships, Management Approach and Staffing; and
3. Organizational Capacity

These Merit Review Criterion above will be used to determine the apparently successful applicant(s). A final risk assessment, including a review of cost and performance history, will then determine the final award(s) decisions.

Additional guidance on the four Merit Review Criteria are set forth below.

Evaluation Criterion No. 1, Technical Approach:

The Technical Approach Criterion will be evaluated in terms of overall quality and the extent to which the proposed technical approach demonstrates a clear understanding of the objectives of the program and a convincing approach to achieve meaningful results. This includes, but is not limited to, the following considerations (not sub-criteria):

- How well the Applicant demonstrates its understanding of the relevant context, including, but not limited to, relevant GOG stakeholders and donor programs and the gaps that exist that can be effectively addressed by the program proposed;

- The viability and quality of the proposed technical approach, including (i) the extent to which the approach responds to the objectives and expected results, (ii) utilizes a market-based approach, (iii) the clarity, relevance, feasibility, practicality, use of evidence and mutually reinforcing concepts to achieve the overall objective, (iv) the strength of the critical thinking and analysis and (v) how well the technical approach is tied to the Expected Results to be achieved;
- The extent to which the technical approach integrates the objectives, clearly demonstrating how each objective mutually reinforces and builds on the results of the other two objectives.
- The extent to which technical approach effectively utilizes market-based solutions, and supports private sector-led growth; and
- The extent to which the technical approach supports building (or promoting) the local capacities and ownership beyond USAID funding. Applicants are mandated to find effective approaches to engage with the private sector and other non-donor sources; and
- The level of impact of the results proposed and the degree of realism, including how well the results proposed are logically tied to the activities proposed.
- The extent to which the draft work plan demonstrates how the proposed activities build upon one another and are logically sequenced in order to achieve the desired outcome based on the proposed strategy and methodology.

Evaluation Criterion No. 2, Use of Partnerships, Management Approach and Staffing:

The Use of Partnerships, Management Approach and Staffing Criterion will be evaluated for its effectiveness to successfully implement activities and to achieve Activity objectives and the quality, clarity and responsiveness of the Applicant's overall Management Approach, including partners, any sub awardees, and home office technical support. This includes the following considerations:

- The capacity, technical strength, diversity and suitability of the partners proposed based on the role identified for the respective partner.
- The strength of the approach to maximize the value of the local expertise obtained through partnerships.
- The extent to which the management structure is clear and consistent with the Activity objectives and results, including the extent to which the

proposed organizational structure, roles of the team, staffing and partnerships maximize flexibility and adaptive management.
- The appropriateness and feasibility of the plan to start-up the program, including the extent to which it addresses the political, logistical, and operational challenges inherent in launching an activity across a diverse range of technical areas.
- The effectiveness and efficiency of the proposed overall Staffing Plan, such that proposed positions possess the full range of complementary functions required to successfully implement the necessary technical and managerial tasks required to achieve the objectives of the Activity;
- The extent to which the staffing plan effectively maximizes the use of locally-resident Georgian expertise; and
- The extent to which Key Personnel meet the minimum qualifications and possess relevant and demonstrated qualifications, experience, performance and skills applicable to the roles/positions being proposed.

Evaluation Criterion No. 3, Organizational Capacity:

The Organizational Capacity Criterion will be evaluated on the existing capacity of the Applicant to successfully implement the specified activities and achieve desired results. Specifically, experience in the following areas will be considered:
- Experience in the technical areas set forth in the Program Description; and
- Experience in managing programs/activities of similar size.

2. BUSINESS REVIEW

While Cost is less important than technical and is not rated, the cost applications of the apparently successful technical applications will be evaluated for cost completeness, realism, reasonability and allocability.

The Agency will evaluate the cost application of the applicant(s) under consideration for an award as a result of the merit criteria review to determine whether the costs are allowable in accordance with the cost principles found in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E.

The Agency will also consider (1) the extent of the applicant's understanding of the financial aspects of the program and the applicant's ability to perform the activities within the amount requested; (2) whether the applicant's plans will achieve the program objectives with reasonable economy and efficiency; and (3) whether any special conditions relating to costs should be included in the award.

Proposed cost share, if any, will be reviewed for compliance with the standards set forth in 2 CFR 200.306, 2 CFR 700.10, and the Standard Provision "Cost Sharing (Matching)" for U.S. entities, or the Standard Provision "Cost Share" for non-U.S. entities.

The AO will perform a risk assessment (2 CFR 200.206). The AO may determine that a pre-award survey is required to inform the risk assessment in determining whether the prospective recipient has the necessary organizational, experience, accounting and operational controls, financial resources, and technical skills – or ability to obtain them – in order to achieve the objectives of the program and comply with the terms and conditions of the award. Depending on the result of the risk assessment, the AO will decide to execute the award, not execute the award, or award with “specific conditions” (2 CFR 200.208).

SECTION F: FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. FEDERAL AWARD NOTICES

Award of the agreement contemplated by this NOFO cannot be made until funds have been appropriated, allocated and committed through internal USAID procedures. While USAID anticipates that these procedures will be successfully completed, potential applicants are hereby notified of these requirements and conditions for the award. The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. No costs chargeable to the proposed Agreement may be incurred before receipt of either a fully executed Agreement or a specific, written authorization from the Agreement Officer.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE & NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

The resulting award from this NOFO will be administered in accordance with the following policies and regulations.

For US organizations: ADS 303, 2 CFR 700, 2 CFR 200, and Standard Provisions for U.S. Non-governmental organizations.

For Non US organizations: Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-governmental Organizations.

Please see USAID's ADS Sections 303.4 and 303.5 The actual Standard Provisions included in the award will be dependent on the organization that is selected. The award will include the latest Mandatory Provisions for either U.S. or non-U.S. Nongovernmental organizations. The award will also contain the following "required as applicable" Standard Provisions:

Please note that the resulting award will include all standard provisions (both mandatory and required as applicable) in full text.

3. Reporting Requirements

3.1 Financial Reporting:

The recipient must provide the following reports to the Agreement Officer Representative (AOR), with a copy to the Agreement Officer, as specified below, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.327 and 2 CFR200.328.

(1) The recipient must submit the Federal Financial Form (SF-425) on a quarterly basis via electronic format to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (http://www.dpm.psc.gov). The recipient must submit a copy of the FFR at the same time to the Agreement Officer Representative (AOR) and to the Agreement Officer.

The recipient must submit these forms no later than 30 calendar days after the end of each standard Federal quarter (i.e. October-December, January-March, April-June, July to September).

The recipient must submit quarterly financial reports no later than 30 calendar days after the end of each reporting period.

(2) The recipient must submit the original and two copies of all final financial reports to USAID/Washington, M/CFO/CMPLOC Unit, the AOR and to the Agreement Officer. The recipient must submit an electronic version of the final Federal Financial Form (SF-425) to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in accordance with paragraph (1) above.

The recipient must submit the final financial report no later than 90 calendar days from the end of the agreement.

3.2 Performance Reporting

3.2.1 Annual Work Plans

Annual work plans (AWP) are developed yearly and include proposed activities for the given year, time-frame, implementation of activities, budget, review of the previous year's accomplishments (if applicable), problems and challenges encountered in achieving specified results, proposed annual outputs, and progress towards achieving results

The USAID Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) will approve work plans and any revisions to them. The first work plan will be due forty-five days after the signing of the award and should cover the time from the date of the award through the end of USG Fiscal Year Q4. Subsequent annual work plans will be due to USAID 60 days prior to the start of USG Fiscal Year Q1 unless an alternative schedule is agreed to by both USAID and the recipient.

3.2.2 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan:

The recipient must submit an activity Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) plan that includes baseline data based on a USG fiscal year calendar (reporting on progress should be based on achievements and results that occurred in the fiscal year ending September 30 and must meet ADS 201 requirements). The MEL plan is due within ninety calendar days of the award date.

The MEL Plan will include sections with the following elements:

- List of key project objectives, expected results and project outputs (output is a count of services delivered or items produced) as well as a brief description of the linkages between the project outputs and its expected results.
- Performance Indicators Reference Sheets (PIRs), which include a definition and detailed description of the performance indicators to be tracked including: unit of measure; data source; method of data collection; justification/management utility; baseline values; annual targets; annual actual data; frequency and schedule for data collection; individual responsibility for data collection and availability of data; and detailed plans for data analysis, review and reporting.

- Sufficient indicators and targets should be presented at both the activity output level and at the outcome level to permit USAID to judge the efficacy of the activity being proposed.
- Tracking table for all indicators.
- The activity's monitoring approach, including relevant performance indicators of activity outputs and outcomes;
- Plans for collaborating with any external evaluations planned by the Mission;
- Any proposed internal evaluations;
- Learning activities, including knowledge capture at activity close out;
- Estimated resources for these monitoring, evaluation and learning activities that are a part of the implementing partner's budget; and
- Roles and responsibilities for all proposed monitoring, evaluation and learning actions.

The Activity MEL Plan should be revised as needed in response to changes in the activity or context that occur during the life of the activity.

The Recipient and USAID must agree upon the final choice of performance indicators useful for timely management decisions and credibly reflecting the actual performance of the project. MEL data must meet reasonable quality criteria of validity, reliability, timeliness, precision and integrity, and be disaggregated by gender, geographic location, disability status as appropriate and feasible.

3.2.3 Quarterly Performance Reports

Within 30 days after each quarter of the USG Fiscal Year, the Recipient shall provide a quarterly performance report which will document overall progress towards the sub-purposes of the project, activities completed during the reporting period, any problems and challenges encountered during implementation (including financial issues) and how they were mitigated, data on all indicators established in the MEL Plan, and specific activities planned for the next quarterly reporting period. The format of the progress reports will be determined in consultation with the AOR.

3.2.4 Annual Reports:

The fourth quarterly report serves as the annual report to USAID – thus, it is more extensive and contains more information than a quarterly report. Annual Reports should reflect the structure of the annual work plan. Annual is defined according to the U.S. Government's Fiscal Year: October 1st to September 30th. The Annual Report must be submitted to the USAID by October 31 of each year. In addition to the requirements of the Quarterly Report, the Annual Report must also:

- Describe overall performance against targets and goals during the fiscal year, and why targets and goals were not achieved or why they were exceeded. Discuss problems and challenges and how they may affect out-year planning.
- Provide a table displaying the indicators the Recipient is responsible for reporting on and the indicator values for the year, along with prior year values and future year targets. It should also include explanations for any indicator values falling above or below target.

- Provide illustrative activities to demonstrate whether the overall goals of the project are being achieved.
- Identify prospects for achieving longer term impact where applicable.

3.2.5 Final Report

The recipient shall prepare a final report on the award in lieu of the final quarterly performance report. The final report must be submitted no later than 90 days after the end of the award.

The final report will clearly describe major accomplishments and results achieved attributable to activities under this award, an account of the sustainability of these efforts and/or results, final data for indicators in the performance management plan, an account of any problems encountered during implementation (including financial issues), and lessons learned and/or best practices identified during implementation.

The final report must be submitted to the Agreement Officer's Representative, to the Agreement Officer, and to USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) electronically.

3.3 Gender Reporting

As part of its regular reports, the recipient must collect, analyze and submit sex disaggregated data and propose actions that will address any gender-related challenges that might arise from that data. The recipient will report any challenges to the AOR who, in turn, will work with the USAID Mission's gender specialist to find reasonable solutions.

3.4 Development Experience Clearinghouse Requirements

a) Submissions to the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC).

1) The recipient must provide the Agreement Officer's Representative one copy of any Intellectual Work that is published, and a list of any Intellectual Work that is not published.

2) In addition, the recipient must submit Intellectual Work, whether published or not, to the DEC on-line. The recipient must review the DEC Web site for submission instructions, including document formatting and the types of documents to submit. Submission instructions can be found at: http://dec.usaid.gov.

3) For purposes of submissions to the DEC, Intellectual Work includes all works that document the implementation, evaluation, and results of international development assistance activities developed or acquired under this award, which may include program and communications materials, evaluations and assessments, information products, research and technical reports, progress and performance reports required under this award (excluding administrative financial information), and other reports, articles and papers prepared by the recipient under the award, whether published or not. The term

does not include the recipient's information that is incidental to award administration, such as financial, administrative, cost or pricing, or management information.

4) Each document submitted should contain essential bibliographic information, such as (1) descriptive title; (2) author(s) name; (3) award number; (4) sponsoring USAID office; (5) development objective; and (6) date of publication.

5) The recipient must not submit to the DEC any financially sensitive information or personally identifiable information, such as social security numbers, home addresses and dates of birth. Such information must be removed prior to submission. The recipient must not submit classified documents to the DEC.

b. In the event award funds are used to underwrite the cost of publishing, in lieu of the publisher assuming this cost as is the normal practice, any profits or royalties up to the amount of such cost must be credited to the award unless the schedule of the award has identified the profits or royalties as program income.

3.5 Close-out Plans

Three (3) months prior to the completion of activities and/or the award end date, the recipient must submit a close-out plan for the award.

3.6 Geographic Information System (GIS) Reporting

1. Activity Location Data: The recipient must provide the AOR and Mission GIS Specialist with Activity Location Data semi-annually on April 15 and October 15. For this purpose, the recipient must fill in the appropriate Excel Spreadsheet "Activity Location Data GIS Report Template." This template will be provided by the USAID/Caucasus Program Office.

2. Performance Indicators: The recipient must submit annually data for several key Performance Indicators that measure the most significant results (outcomes and outputs/deliverables) of the activity by region, municipality, town or village. This data must be submitted no later than November 15 each year and must reflect the results for the previous fiscal year disaggregated by geographic location. The recipient must work closely with the AOR to review the activity-level Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan to identify jointly key Performance Indicators that reflect and convey the most important results achieved or to be achieved. USAID is interested in Performance Indicators in the M&E plan that can be meaningfully disaggregated by geographic location. The number of these indicators will depend upon the complexity of the activity and could range in number approximately from 1 to 10. For this purpose, the recipient must fill in the appropriate Excel Spreadsheet "Performance Indicators GIS Report Template." This template will be provided by the USAID/Caucasus Program Office.

3. Geographic Data: If created or acquired under this award, the recipient must provide annually on October 15 to the AOR and mission GIS Specialist any of the following types of Geographic Data:

- thematic data such as social and economic statistics at municipality level, poverty data, demographic and health indicators, land use, land cover, hydrology, and transportation infrastructure; USAID prefers to receive this data in GIS standard formats, however standard database formats are also allowed (e.g. poverty data can be submitted as an Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.);

- activity specific geographic data such as the analytical output of a geographic analysis that is conducted while implementing the activity and is useful to USAID's development planning and project design purposes; or
- any other geographic data, such as cartographic products (e.g. maps, geographic data visualizations), aerial and satellite imagery created or acquired under this award. Cartographic products submitted to USAID must be in industry standard Esri Map Document .mxd format and in high resolution .jpg or .pdf formats. All data contained in the .mxd must be submitted according to the Geographic Data standards outlined in next paragraph.

Geographic Data submitted to USAID under this paragraph must be in industry standard formats such as Shapefile (.shp) or in a File Geodatabase and include metadata. Metadata is a summary document providing content, quality, type, creation, and spatial information about a data set. It represents who, what, when, where, why and how of the resource. Metadata can be stored in any format such as a text file, Extensible Markup Language (XML), or database record. Metadata records include core library catalog elements such as Title, Abstract, and Publication Data; geographic elements such as Geographic Extent and Projection Information; and database elements such as Attribute Label Definitions and Attribute Domain Values. Geographic Data must be projected to the Geographic Coordinate System World Geodetic System 1984 (GCS WGS 1984). All data must use the World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS 1984) datum.

3.7. Other Requirements

The successful Applicant will use the standard form Performance Progress Report (SF-PPR) to report performance progress for the program under the award when the program exceeds $100,000 or more per project/grant period.

Program Income

Program income, if any, will be generated under the award, will be treated under the award in accordance with 2 CFR 200.307 or, for non-U.S. organizations, see the standard provision "Program Income."

Branding & Marking:

It is a federal statutory and regulatory requirement (see Section 641, Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, 2 CFR 700.16 and 22 CFR 226.91) that all USAID programs, projects, activities, public communications, and commodities that USAID partially or fully funds under a USAID grant or cooperative agreement or other assistance award or sub-award must be marked appropriately overseas with the USAID identity. In accordance with ADS 320.3.3 Branding and Marking Requirements for Assistance Awards USAID's policy is that programs, projects, activities, public communications, or commodities implemented or delivered under co-funded instruments – such as grants, cooperative agreements, or other assistance awards that usually require a cost share – generally are "co-branded and co-marked."

The successful applicant will be required to submit a branding strategy and marking plan. The Applicant may request a presumptive exemption to marking requirements established in 22 CFR 226.91 and 2 CFR 700.16. More information on Branding strategy and Marking plan are available at http://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/branding/assistance-awards .

The branding strategy and marking plan will become a material element of the cooperative agreement. Information on USAID's branding "assistance" applies to this RFA. ADS Chapter 320 sections concerning "acquisition" do not apply to this RFA. ADS Chapter 320 can be found on USAID website:
http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/320.pdf .

Environmental Compliance

1a) The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, Section 117 requires that the impact of USAID's activities on the environment be considered and that USAID include environmental sustainability as a central consideration in designing and carrying out its development programs. This mandate is codified in Federal Regulations (22 CFR 216) and in USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS) Parts 201.5.10g and 204 (http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/200/), which, in part, require that the potential environmental impacts of USAID-financed activities are identified prior to a final decision to proceed and that appropriate environmental safeguards are adopted for all activities. Contractor environmental compliance obligations under these regulations and procedures are specified in the following paragraphs of this contract.

1b) In addition, the contractor must comply with host country environmental regulations unless otherwise directed in writing by USAID. In case of conflict between host country and USAID regulations, the latter will govern.

1c) No activity funded under this contract will be implemented unless an environmental threshold determination, as defined by 22 CFR 216, has been reached for that activity, as documented in a Request for Categorical Exclusion (RCE), Initial Environmental Examination (IEE), or Environmental Assessment (EA) duly signed by the Bureau Environmental Officer (BEO). (Hereinafter, such documents are described as "Regulation 216 environmental documentation.")

2) An Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) describing the successful activity's purpose, location, duration and intensity; considering alternatives; and assessing impacts, including cumulative impacts, in light of existing and proposed activities will be prepared as a part of review and approval process in accordance with USAID Environmental Procedures. The Environmental Compliance requirements will be developed and incorporated into the award based on the IEE.

SECTION G: FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

See Section D, Paragraph 1.

SECTION H: OTHER INFORMATION

USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. Any award and subsequent incremental funding will be subject to the availability of funds and continued relevance to Agency programming.

ANNEX 1 - SUMMARY BUDGET TEMPLATE

Budget Item	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total USAID	Cost Share (if proposed)	Total Proje
Labor	$	$	$	$	$	$	$
Fringe Benefits	$	$	$	$	$	$	$
Travel	$	$	$	$	$	$	$
Equipment	$	$	$	$	$	$	$
Supplies	$	$	$	$	$	$	$
Contractual/Subagreements	$	$	$	$	$	$	$
Other Direct Cost	$	$	$	$	$	$	$
Total Direct Costs	$	$	$	$	$	$	$
Indirect Costs	$	$	$	$	$	$	$
TOTAL PROJECT COST	$	$	$	$	$	$	$

ANNEX 2 – PAST PERFORMANCE INFORMATION (PPI)

(To be completed by the applicant)

1.	**Award Number:**
2.	**Contractor/Recipient (Name and Address):**
3.	**Type of Award:**
4.	**Complexity of Work: Difficult ____Routine ______**
5.	**Description, location, and relevancy of work:**
6.	**Dollar Value of Work : _________________ Status: Active __Completed ___**
7.	**Date of Award: __________** **Award Completion Date (including extensions): _______ _____**
8.	**Type and Extent of Subawards:**
9.	**Name, Address, Telephone Number, and E-mail Address of the Awarding Contracting/Agreement Officer and/or the Contracting/Agreement Officer 's Representative (and other references as applicable):**