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ANNUAL PROGRAM STATEMENT APS-114-15-000002 FOR STRENGTHENING TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE IN GEORGIA THROUGH DIRECT AWARDS TO GEORGIA'S CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Table of Contents

SECTION I- PROGRAM DESCRIPTION.....	3
A. PURPOSE	3
B. PROBLEM STATEMENT.....	3
C. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORKS AND PROGRAM COORDINATION	6
D. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS.....	10
SECTION II – ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION	13
A. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS.....	13
B. ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTS	13
SECTION III – APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION	15
A. APPLICATION PROCESS	15
B. CONCEPT PAPER INSTRUCTIONS.....	16
C. FULL APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS.....	17
SECTION IV – APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION.....	21
A. EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR CONCEPT PAPERS	21
B. EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR FULL APPLICATIONS	21
C. OTHER REQUIREMENTS	22
ANNEXES	
1. Country Development Cooperation Strategy, Georgia	
2. Transparent and Accountable Governance (TAG) Project Summary	
3. Local Systems Framework	

TIMELINE

Tbilisi Information Session:

December 18, 2014

Regional Information Sessions (Gori, Telavi, Kutaisi, Zugdidi): December 22-23, 2014

Concept Paper Deadline:

February 17, 2015

USAID Response:

March 30, 2015

SECTION I- PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A. PURPOSE

The United States Government, represented by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission in Georgia, requests applications from local Georgian non-governmental organizations for direct financial support for innovative programs to strengthen transparent and accountable governance in Georgia.

USAID uses an Annual Program Statement (APS) to generate competition for awards when the Agency intends to support a variety of creative approaches and activities that contribute to the attainment of its strategic objectives. The overall goal of USAID's **Strengthening Transparent and Accountable Governance in Georgia through Direct Awards to Georgia's Civil Society Organizations APS** is to support activities of non-governmental organizations to increase civil society engagement and government transparency and accountability on key governance and policy issues. Strong democratic institutions and participatory, accountable governance are crucial elements for improving peoples' lives in a sustainable way.

To achieve this goal, USAID intends to issue multiple awards under this APS to applicants who address the following objective: strengthen civil society engagement in governance and policy development processes that promote government transparency, accountability and access to information. This APS has been designed to seek relationships beyond traditional USAID norms by encouraging submissions from local partner organizations, including those who have never received direct funding from USAID. Subject to the availability of funds, USAID intends to provide grants of up to \$250,000 with durations of up to 36 months related to transparent and accountable governance.

For details on eligibility, see section III- Eligibility Information. For details on the application process, please see Section IV-Application and Submission Information. The first deadline for concept papers under this APS is February 17, 2015.

B. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Strong and effective democracies need well-functioning legal frameworks, institutions, systems and processes to ensure government accountability, transparency, and checks and balances. Citizen participation and the free flow of information play a fundamental role in ensuring government accountability and transparency, as well as furthering government legitimacy and effectiveness.

Civic Engagement

Despite progress in some areas of governance over the past decade through the elimination of petty corruption, improvements in service provision, and the introduction of e-governance systems, there continues to be a need for increased and sustained civic engagement in Georgia to ensure government accountability. While some civil society organizations (CSOs) have successfully advocated for improved policies and legislation on policy issues important to them,

civic engagement in those processes is not yet institutionalized within government and parliament. Meanwhile, many Georgian CSOs do not have diverse and sustainable sources of income and remain reliant on international donor funding. One of the biggest challenges for civil society today is the low level of citizen involvement. Georgian CSOs have become adept at engaging with government and donors, but less so with the citizenry and the private sector. While CSOs are beginning to form constituent bases and are steadily gaining a reputation as advocates for citizens' needs, according to a recent survey funded by USAID and commissioned through the Caucasus Research and Resource Center (CRRC) in the fall of 2014, only 28% of Georgians trust non-governmental organizations. In addition, there still exists low public citizen participation and confidence in Georgia's democratic process. Citizens do not have sufficient knowledge about formal democratic structures and processes and are unaware of the opportunities that exist for advancing their interests at the local, regional, or national levels beyond voting. Also evident in the recent survey is a high rate of willingness of Georgians to participate in NGO activities in comparison to the very low levels of actual participation. While 65% remain uninterested in participating, the 35% who express a willingness to join presents an opportunity for increased volunteerism and civic engagement.

Government Transparency and Accountability

In recent years, Georgia has made great strides in accountability and transparency at the national level although challenges remain. According to Freedom House's 2014 *Nations in Transit* report, of the 12 Eurasian countries assessed, Georgia scored the best in corruption and tied with Moldova as the best in national governance. Since 2011, Georgia has been an active member of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and this year Georgia's Minister of Justice secured enough votes to serve on the OGP Steering Committee, a testament to Georgia's leadership on government transparency. The OGP Action Plan serves as a vehicle for the Prime Minister's Office to make transparency-related commitments to the citizens of Georgia. One of the biggest achievements under Georgia's first Action Plan (2012-2013) was a government decree on proactive disclosure of public information, which made it mandatory for all national-level government institutions to comply with electronic requests and proactively disclose public information. However, freedom of information (FOI) response rates in 2014 were considerably lower compared to the previous year, suggesting that a government culture of FOI compliance is not fully consolidated. Currently, a civil society-led campaign aimed at limiting the government's authority to conduct unchecked surveillance of telecommunications networks has thrust the issue of accountability into the spotlight.

Most people encounter their government at the local level, which is responsible for limited service provision, including pre-school education, public transportation, waste management and fire safety. Yet local government budgets in Georgia are determined at the national level, which limits local governments' ability to respond transparently and accountably to constituents' needs. For example, many important services, including health care and education, do not fall within the responsibility of local governments to deliver. As a result of limited local authority, historically, civil society has not had a strong incentive to actively engage government at the sub-national level.

Georgia's recent Local Self-Governance (LSG) Code reform, enacted in 2014, has led to direct elections of 72 mayors and *gamgebelis* (local executives) across the country, as well as self-governing status for seven new cities. Such changes have opened up space for increased civic engagement and accountability at the local level, though it is unclear at this time how other aspects of the LSG reform will ultimately affect local governments, including the total number of local government units, the allocation formula for transferring central funds, and the structure of civic participation mechanisms. In ethnic minority communities, the distance between the central government and local governments is exacerbated by the lack of communications from the central government to local authorities in languages they can understand.

Policy and Legislative Development Processes

Georgian policy and legislative development and implementation processes often proceed without sufficient policy analysis and stakeholder consultation. According to the recent survey on civic engagement, a majority of Georgians (66%) agree that the "state will only get stronger if the Government takes into consideration people's opinions, even if this process takes more time." The executive and legislative branches, as well as civil society, need access to necessary information for the analysis and development of policies and legislation. Budgets are often formulated outside of evidence-based research, leading to public expenditure decisions made without adequate consideration. Additionally, the Government of Georgia's (GOG) policy-making processes do not consistently seek or enjoy public input and the engagement of relevant stakeholders, including women. Due to Parliament's heavy workload, public posting of draft laws throughout the parliamentary review process is often neglected. The provision of analytical information, diverse points of view, and oversight information is a function of think tanks, watchdog groups, and other civil society organizations. Georgian CSOs are well positioned to provide this kind of support to the legislative and policy development processes.

Access to Reliable Sources of Information

One reason for weak civic participation is the need for independent, balanced and reliable sources of information. Georgia has achieved a pluralistic, but not a professionalized, media.

Large media outlets and the media regulatory body are perceived as politically polarized and largely controlled by special interests. Media portrayals of women too often serve to perpetuate the perceptions of women's traditionally subordinate role in society. A number of regional and nationwide media outlets are not financially viable, and owners are vulnerable to financial support associated with political interests, particularly during elections. With a few notable exceptions, journalists are also unable to pursue serious investigative stories that would help them to serve as watchdogs of government. Most media content remains focused on daily political reporting, paying less attention to broader issues of public interest to citizens, particularly outside the capital. The general public does not actively demand that journalists or media outlets provide better, more professional, more objective or more in-depth reporting than is currently on offer. The basis for CSOs to advocate independent, reliable and balanced media, or even to produce content for the public interest, is well established.

C. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORKS AND PROGRAM COORDINATION

This APS has been designed to advance USAID's 2013-2017 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for Georgia and the strategic goals of USAID's More Transparent and Accountable Governance (TAG) project along with the Agency's USAID Forward objectives related to building local capacity. It supports the GOG's reforms intended to increase government transparency, accountability, effectiveness, and engagement with citizens. Successful applicants under this APS will coordinate closely with other USAID activities which support common objectives.

For further information, please see the following documents in annex to the APS:

- 2013-2017 USAID/Caucasus CDCS;
- Transparent and Accountable Governance (TAG) Project Summary; and
- Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development.

USAID Strategic Framework

In 2011-2012, USAID/Caucasus developed a CDCS for Georgia, an overarching strategy document for development activities in the country from 2013 through 2017. The goal of the CDCS is: *Georgia's democratic, free-market, Western-oriented transformation strengthened and sustained.* Of the three Development Objectives (DOs) included therein, activities under this APS will primarily fall under DO 1 ***Democratic checks and balances and accountable governance enhanced.***

If DO1 is achieved, an increased percentage of Georgians will be more actively participating in the governance of their nation. Government will become increasingly accountable to Georgians' aspirations, preferences, and needs. Georgia's political system will become more democratic with stronger links between state and society, with more institutionalized mechanisms for accommodation of citizens' needs.

This APS will directly contribute to DO 1's following Intermediate Results (IR):

IR 1.1 A more informed and engaged citizenry

IR 1.3 Transparent, responsive and effective governance and service delivery

These IRs recognize that citizens who actively participate in their nation's public affairs play a critically important role in a vibrant democracy. Groups of citizens in non-governmental organizations and associations also play a vital role in educating the public and the government on important local and national policy issues. An informed and engaged citizenry provides both a check on government power and valuable feedback the government can use to become more responsive.

Government of Georgia Policy Priorities

Reforms initiated by the GOG demonstrate a willingness to improve good governance and civic participation. USAID supports the GOG's efforts to enshrine a culture of government transparency and accountability as evidenced in important policy documents such as the 2014-2015 OGP Action Plan, the 2015-2016 Anti-Corruption Action Plan (currently in draft form) and the EU Association Agreement. Awards made under this APS will help to advance good governance in Georgia.

While proposed approaches may vary, applications must address the following objective: strengthen civil society engagement in governance and policy development processes that promote government transparency, accountability and access to information. Awards under this APS will strengthen civic engagement by expanding the number and effectiveness of active citizens and organizations, in both Tbilisi and the regions, that monitor, report on, and engage with governing institutions on issues of good governance. To the extent that applications relate to policy and legislative reform, applications which address the following key reform areas are encouraged:

- Public administration reform (including civil service reform)
- Local self-government and decentralization reform
- Independent media reform
- Healthcare reform
- Gender equality, including implementation of gender-related laws and action plans
- Open Government Partnership
- European and Euro-Atlantic integration
- Minority integration

USAID may also support applications to advance other policy and legislative reforms, if the applicant provides evidence and justification that there is or likely to be sufficient political will to address the issue.

Current USAID Activities

Awards under this APS will complement current activities under USAID's broader TAG Project (see attached TAG summary document). TAG promotes more transparent and accountable governance at the national and local levels through increased civic participation, improved access to reliable information and more effective governing institutions, systems and processes. TAG will engage government institutions on a local and national basis. At the same time, it will support the demand side of governance through civil society and media, with the goal of ultimately building equally strong pillars of good governance to better serve the public interest.

TAG identifies seven policy areas that anchor the Project's activities. Implementing partners under TAG will work together to increase civic engagement within these seven policy areas that address access to information and government transparency and accountability. The policy areas are:

- Public administration reform (including civil service reform)

- Local self-government and decentralization reform
- Independent media reform
- Healthcare reform
- Gender equality, including implementation of gender-related laws and action plans
- Open Government Partnership
- European and Euro-Atlantic integration
- Minority integration

There are four activities under TAG. Each of these awards builds on successes gained through previous USAID activities.

- **Momavlis Taoba** (Future Generation), implemented by PH International, will promote greater civic engagement among young people and expand and institutionalize secondary school civic education curricula through practical applications.
- **Media for Transparent and Accountable Government (M-TAG)**, implemented by IREX, will work to improve on the coverage of public interest areas in the media and support regional media outlets.
- The **Advancing CSO Capacities and Engaging Society for Sustainability (ACCESS)** project, implemented by East-West Management Institute, will work on increasing citizen engagement in CSOs and support their institutional capacity and sustainability. ACCESS will also work to increase effective government oversight by CSOs.
- The **Good Governance Initiative (GGI)** activity is planned to start in December 2014 and will work towards the following results: improve the administrative and financial management of public institutions at all levels, increase the openness of government, strengthen policy development and lawmaking processes and strengthen institutional oversight of government.

Successful applicants under this APS will coordinate closely with the above activities through regular, collaborative meetings to discuss and assess progress and challenges in achieving the TAG purpose and sub-purposes. In addition, successful applicants will be eligible for organizational capacity development support provided by ACCESS.

Recent USAID Activities in Support of Transparent and Accountable Governance

The TAG Project is building on previous USAID successes. To increase civic activism, in 2011-2012 USAID supported the establishment of ten Centers for Civic Engagement (CCEs) throughout the country through its Good Governance in Georgia (G3) project. CCEs offer public space for local communities to engage in open debate on issues of public concern. They have proven to be an important mechanism to foster active civic participation in the regions. Given the lack of politically neutral space outside Tbilisi for civic discussions of governance issues, the CCEs played an important role before and during October 2012 parliamentary elections as emphasized by representatives of different political parties and CSOs. Starting in 2015, CCEs will receive continued support through ACCESS.

In addition, G3 supported strengthening civic participation and freedom of information as a means for informed decision making and creating the conditions for evidence-based policy

dialogue. G3 supported the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), which has been the lead GOG ministry on the Open Government Partnership initiative (OGP). In particular, G3 supported the establishment of a cross-governmental Freedom of Information (FOI) implementation committee and assisted the Committee in developing procedures and guidelines on FOI implementation for all GOG institutions based on international practice and local specifics. G3 has also provided assistance in building consensus by consolidating an NGO position on FOI and developing a specific set of recommendations on changes in the GOG's OGP Action Plan. Additionally, through G3, USAID supported GOG institutions in building their strategic planning and policy development capacities. G3 carried out activities to strengthen the capacity of the Prime Minister's Office, other partner agencies (Ministry of Justice, Civil Registry Agency, the State Audit Office, and the Government of Adjara), and local governments in strategic planning and institutional development.

The recently completed Policy, Advocacy, and Civil Society Development in Georgia (G-PAC) project supported Georgian CSOs to become effective advocates for an empowered citizenry while providing viable policy options to the government. G-PAC helped to develop a vibrant "middle-class" of 22 CSOs throughout Georgia with proper organizational structures and systems, as well as a distinctively identified think tank sector. Civil society's role in advocating for public policy reforms impacted policy changes at regional, local, and national levels. The results included safer schools, better healthcare services, stronger environmental protection regulation, greater civic participation, and new social assistance programs. The new ACCESS project will build upon G-PAC's successes while placing special emphasis on making citizens more aware of and involved in CSO activities.

USAID has been the only donor to provide important support to high school civic education in recent years through the Applied Civic Education and Teacher Training (ACETT) activity (2011-2014) and now the Momavlis Taoba activity. (Momavlis Taoba supports civic education in 480 secondary schools, encompassing 20% of all high schools in Georgia; this is in addition to the 740 schools supported under the previous ACETT activity.) USAID support for civic education in Georgia has worked to develop curriculum materials, provide civic education training for school teachers and principals, and train young leaders through small grants to execute service projects and advocacy campaigns in their communities. These activities have resulted in a new cadre of young activists and accredited civic education teachers. Notable achievements of past efforts include the formation of 300 school-based civics clubs through which students identified local needs and worked with local governments, the creation of an independent civic education teachers' forum that allowed 250 members across Georgia to share best practices and raise awareness about the field, and the training of teachers in Armenian and Azeri ethnic minority schools, as well as translation of textbooks into these languages. An evaluation of USAID support for civic education found that students in partner schools gained essential knowledge of democratic citizenship that was reinforced through practical experience in implementing civic initiatives.

USAID's Georgian Media Enhance Democracy, Informed Citizenry and Accountability (G-MEDIA) project (2011-2014) was designed to improve the quality and diversity of media content, professional journalism, the regulatory environment, and media outlets' viability. USAID's strategic approach entails supporting mostly regional media outlets outside Tbilisi

given they have greater independence and limited financial resources. G-MEDIA made strides in building the capacity of regional media to produce more balanced, accurate content including investigative reporting; training regional journalists on how to use online media to expand their reach; teaching practical journalism skills at the USAID-supported Multimedia Education Center (MEC); strengthening the broadcast sector through improved radio and television research methods; and increasing commercial revenue for targeted outlets. USAID support enhanced the professional skills of nearly 600 journalists using the MEC as a state-of-the-art learning hub with the equipment needed to put journalists' newly acquired skills into practice. The activity also resulted in a new curriculum based on gaining practical experience at the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs' journalism school, a thought center for Georgia's current and future journalism practitioners and teachers. Furthermore, USAID successfully supported Transparency International and the Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics to achieve new legislation on access to information and freedom of speech.

D. OBJECTIVE AND EXPECTED RESULTS

Strong democratic institutions and participatory, accountable governance are crucial elements for improving peoples' lives in a sustainable way. Despite the advancement of important reforms, Georgia's governance systems and processes are not well institutionalized, including those related to transparency, accountability and civic participation.

Participatory democratic governance requires government transparency, citizen engagement, and mechanisms for accountability that are supported by public access to information. Government policy must allow for the open and transparent transfer of information to the public. Well informed citizens can engage in public discussions and debate on decisions that affect them only if they have the relevant information and can trust its accuracy. When held to a high standard, the media-- whether print, broadcast, internet, or another form-- represents an integral part of accountability systems that, in turn, are critical to the effective functioning of democratic governance. In particular, an effective and investigative media can increase public awareness of governance processes and enable meaningful conversations and debates that are a vital component of a country's democratic system.

Objective: Strengthen civil society engagement in governance and policy development processes that promote government transparency, accountability and access to relevant information.

USAID intends to issue multiple awards under this APS to applicants who address the following objective: strengthen civil society engagement in governance and policy development processes that promote government transparency, accountability and access to relevant information at the local and national levels. Awards under this APS will strengthen civic engagement by expanding the number and effectiveness of active citizens and organizations, in both Tbilisi and the regions, that monitor, report on, advocate to and otherwise engage with governing institutions and citizens on issues of good governance. This APS has been designed to fund innovative and effective approaches to achieve this objective.

Applicants are requested to aim for at least one of the following anticipated results:

Anticipated Results:

- Increased civic engagement
- Strengthened oversight of government institutions
- Improved access to independent, reliable, and balanced information relevant to Georgia's governance

Illustrative Activities:

Georgia's CSOs may propose to work with national and/or local governing bodies to promote inclusion of the public, including through consultation and oversight. CSOs may also propose to develop and/or provide information to the government and/or public related to government performance. In addition, applicants may propose advocacy at the national and/or local level in order to influence policies, laws, and government systems. Applicants are welcome to propose a pilot strategy at the local level to work towards a national policy change.

Below are a list of illustrative activities that align with the Open Government Guide, a framework for the Open Government Partnership,¹ and are simply a means to guide the applicants' thinking on how to approach achieving the above objective and results. *Applicants need not limit their concepts to these activities.*

- Reforms to create a more robust, enabling environment for CSOs
- Engage citizens in deliberation on a priority issue
- Encourage the use of digital tools to engage the public
- Establish feedback mechanisms for public services
- Publish key public service performance data
- Independent monitoring efforts of government performance
- Enable public participation in budgeting
- Create opportunities for public oversight through budget hearings and/or a "Citizens' Budget"
- Reforms to support asset disclosure of elected and senior public officials in the form of open data
- Promote transparency and usability of government data
- Promote public awareness of the right to information
- Create public listings of government data, and audit data availability and management
- Reforms that ensure transparency and fairness of government contracting
- Support records management in line with the right to information and transparency
- Develop transparency and public debate strategies for specific industries such as natural resource management and healthcare
- Enhance whistleblower protections
- Conduct in-depth research and analyses on a specific governance issue or law
- Expand media coverage of topics dealing with public interest and government oversight
- Initiate innovative public information campaigns to make government more transparent

¹ www.opengovguide.com.

As stated above, the following policy areas are of strategic interest to USAID and will be integrated into the work of USAID implementing partners working on transparent and accountable governance. Applicants may address these policy areas in applications under this APS.

- Public administration reform (including civil service reform)
- Local self-government and decentralization reform
- Independent media reform
- Healthcare reform
- Gender equality, including implementation of gender-related laws and action plans
- Open Government Partnership
- European and Euro-Atlantic integration
- Minority integration

In addition, all applications should seek to:

- Document results and lessons learned demonstrating potential for replication, scaling up, and sustainability of proposed approaches; and
- Build effective partnerships with USAID and between local organizations.

USAID intends to support organizational and technical strengthening efforts of the funded recipients under this APS through the provision of training and mentoring by other USAID implementers.

SECTION II – ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

The USAID Mission in Georgia invites eligible and qualified organizations to submit concept papers and eventually, if requested by USAID, full applications in response to this APS.

Eligible Georgian organizations (such as NGOs, advocacy groups, for-profit businesses, trade and professional organizations, independent national institutions, research and public policy institutes, think tanks, and universities) must:

- o Be organized under the laws of Georgia;
- o Be registered in the Georgian NGO registry for at least two years;
- o Have their primary place of business in Georgia;
- o Be majority owned by individuals who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of Georgia or be managed by a governing body, the majority of whom are citizens or lawful permanent residents Georgia;
- o Not be controlled by foreign entity or by an individual or individuals who are not citizens or permanent residents of Georgia;
- o Have an annual budget of no less than \$50,000 per year in the past two years (2012 and 2013); and
- o Have at least two years of experience working in a related field.

Evidence that these criteria are met will be required to be submitted along with the full application for those organizations that are invited to that phase of the competition.

The term “controlled by” means a majority ownership or beneficiary interest as defined above, or the power, either directly or indirectly, whether exercised or exercisable, to control the election, appointment, or tenure of the organization’s managers or a majority of the organization’s governing body by any means, e.g., ownership, contract, or operation of law.

“Foreign entity” means an organization that fails to meet any part of the “local organization” definition. Government controlled and government owned organizations in which the recipient government owns a majority interest or in which the majority of a governing body are government employees, are included in the above definition of local organization.

Partnerships of eligible Georgian organizations are allowed. If applicable, lead applicants are encouraged to include institutional capacity building plans for partner organizations.

Regional organizations and applications with a scope outside Tbilisi are encouraged.

B. ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTS

Subject to the conditions for eligibility provided in Section II.A of this APS, if the applicant is selected to submit a full application, the applicant will submit official documentation of its organization’s formal legal status, as follows:

- a. State registration certificate
- b. By-laws

- c. Composition of Governing Body (indicating the citizenship of members)
- d. Organization's budget from 2012 and 2013, including funding sources.
- e. List of activities implemented by the organization in past two years related to the proposed activities.

SECTION III – APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. APPLICATION PROCESS

At this time, the application process involves two stages: an information session and the submission of a concept paper. After these two stages, USAID will invite the selected Concept Papers to submit a full application.

Stage 1. Information session: The Mission will hold an information session in Tbilisi, at Radisson Blu Iveria Hotel on December 18, 2014 to respond to questions of clarification from prospective applicants. Additional information sessions will be held in Telavi, Gori, Kutaisi and Zugdidi from December 22-23, 2014. Specifically, in Telavi: December 23, 2014, 12-1 pm at the CCE and in Gori – December 23, 2014, 2-3 pm at the CCE; in Kutaisi: December 22, 1-2 pm at the CCE; in Zugdidi – December 22, 2014, 6-7 pm at the CCE. Applicants interested in attending an information session should submit: (a) their questions on any APS-related issues, (b) the names of their representatives (maximum 2 persons), and (c) which city they wish to attend a meeting. This information should be sent to Eka Gamezardashvili at egamezardashvili@usaid.gov by December 15, 2014. The Mission will inform interested applicants about the date, time and venue of information sessions outside of Tbilisi by December 15, 2014.

Answers to all questions, posed both in advance and during the information session, will be posted on: <http://www.grants.gov/>, www.jobs.ge and the Mission's public website.

Stage 2. Submission and review of concept papers: Applicants must submit concept papers of no more than 8 pages (see detailed instructions below) electronically via e-mail to Regional Contracting Office, USAID Mission in Georgia at: rcocaucasus@usaid.gov with a cc to Eka Gamezardashvili, Acquisition Agent at egamezardashvili@usaid.gov no later than February 17, 2015. Late applications will not be considered for review. The Mission will review concept papers within 45 days following the closing date for concept papers. The Mission will notify unsuccessful applicants that their concept papers have not been selected.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Stage 3 and 4 are ONLY relevant if your Concept Paper has been selected. Please do not submit a full application unless requested by USAID.

Stage 3. Submission of full applications: Notified applicants will prepare and submit full applications by the date indicated by the Mission. Please note that the invitation to submit a full application does not constitute an award; USAID may choose not to fund full applications even after they have been requested.

Stage 4. Review and selection of full applications: The Mission's technical evaluation committee will review applications and notify both unsuccessful applicants and applicants under consideration for award within 45 days of the closing date for full applications. Applicants under consideration will be required to submit Standard Form (SF) 424, signed certifications, and Branding and Marking Plans, along with documents that support the organization's eligibility to apply. Applicants under consideration will be advised if budget-related discussions are to be

initiated, or if additional information (technical or budget-related) is required. Applicants under consideration for an award that have never received funding from USAID will be subject to a pre-award review of their financial systems. Award(s) will be made to responsible applicant(s) whose application(s) best meets the requirements of this APS and the evaluation criteria contained herein. Issuance of this APS does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. Government (USG), nor does it commit the USG to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. The Mission will notify unsuccessful applicants that their full applications have not been selected.

B. CONCEPT PAPER INSTRUCTIONS

All concept papers must contain the items below and **must comply with the listed page restrictions for each section** and be submitted by the deadline on February 17, 2015. This is the first step of the application process. Selected concept papers will then be invited for a full application. Concept papers must be:

- Typed, single space on A4 size paper;
- Printed in 12 font size; charts, tables and spreadsheets may be not less than 10 point font;
- Written in English;
- If submitted electronically, written in Word (version 2000 or later) or Adobe PDF format with spreadsheets in MS Excel (version 2000 or later) or in tables that are compatible with MS Word.

Concept papers must not exceed 8 pages (excluding cover page):

1. Cover page (use template provided)

- Concise title of project;
- Solicitation Number of this APS;
- Name and address of the (lead) organization;
- Type of organization (such as for-profit, non-profit, university, network, etc.);
- Contact point (lead contact name, relevant telephone, and e-mail information);
- Names of other organizations that have received (or will receive) the application or are funding some of the proposed activity;
- Confirmation of format and page limitations by checking each box;
- Signature of authorized representative of the applicant.

2. Problem statement (1 page)

A brief description of the development challenge, its causes, and impacts on men, women and other marginalized groups, including data that informed the applicant's overall analysis and concept (e.g. secondary data, findings from the evaluation of a development project, or the applicant's own analysis/assessment).

3. Technical approach, including project goal, intended results and key activities (2 pages)

- An overall goal, anticipated objectives, results and key activities to achieve those them;

- The applicant's hypothesis of desired change, which should encompass its approach to tackling the identified problem, and an explanation of why the applicant considers the proposed approach innovative and effective;
- An account of the target population, project duration, and the geographical focus;
- A reference to how the proposed activities contribute to advancing the Transparent and Accountable Governance (TAG) project and related objectives and results listed in this APS.

4. Plan for performance management and outreach (1 page and complete template provided)

- A summary plan for rigorous monitoring and evaluation including the main outcomes and impacts of the proposed activities;
- Completed Performance Management Plan chart showing a mixture of outcome and output indicators, data collection methods and illustrative indicator targets and/or performance benchmarks to be achieved by the activities.

5. Institutional past performance and capacity (1 page and self-assessment checklist)

- A brief description of applicant's, as well as any prospective or existing partners', past work and relevant experience in the last three years;
- A brief reference to the applicant's strengths, distinctive competence, and/or comparative advantage that make it well-suited to addressing the identified challenge;
- Completed self-assessment checklist on institutional capacity.

6. Summary Budget (1 page)

- Proposed budget, including annual breakdowns and disaggregated by direct and indirect program costs. Direct costs may include, but are not limited to, the costs of salaries, workshops, travel, communications, report preparation, environmental analysis, passport issuance, visas, medical exam and inoculations, insurance (other than insurance included in the applicant's fringe benefits), equipment, office rent, etc. Indirect costs may include those that are incurred by an organization but that cannot be attributed directly to a specific project.
- Proposed amount of the applicant's financial, as well as in-kind, participation clearly identifying, including identification of which resources are cash and which are in-kind and providing information on the nature and valuation of the in-kind contributions;
- Cost-share. If applicable, a proposed amount of leverage from prospective partners, both cash as well as in-kind. Applicants are not required to include cost-sharing (matching) funds; however, USAID encourages applications drawing on additional sources of funding to leverage USAID's limited resources.

C. FULL APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

IMPORTANT NOTE: Please, *do not* submit a full application unless requested to do so by USAID.

Full applications must be:

- Typed, single space on letter size, not legal size, paper;

- Printed in 12 font size; charts, tables and spreadsheets may be not less than 10 font;
- Written in English;
- If submitted electronically, written in Word (version 2000 or later) or Adobe PDF format with spreadsheets in MS Excel (version 2000 or later) or in tables that are compatible with MS Word.

Full applications must contain the following information. Excluding the cover page, table of contents, past performance, budget and annexes they must not exceed 17 pages (excluding cover page and annexes):

1. Cover page (use same cover page as for the concept paper)

2. Table of contents

3. Executive Summary (up to 2 pages)

4. Body of application (up to 15 pages), including:

4.1. Problem statement and analysis: A description of the development challenge; analysis of its causes and impacts on men, women and other marginalized populations, as well as opportunities for addressing identified issues effectively. The applicant must explain what data was used to inform the above analysis and the applicant's overall concept (e.g. secondary data, findings from the evaluation of a development project, or the applicant's own assessment/analysis).

4.2. Hypothesis of change and the applicant's overall approach: A description of the hypothesis of change that captures the programmatic approach to address the identified problem effectively. Simply put, a program hypothesis outlines the if-then statement underlying the proposed intervention. In general, a theory of change states what expected (changed) result will follow from a particular set of actions. A simple example would be, "If I add more fuel to the fire, then it will burn hotter."

In this section, applicants must also offer its assessment of potential risks related to the planned activities and ways to mitigate them. Applicants must also explain how the proposed action differs from, contributes to, and/or adds value to other stakeholders' programs in this field of activity.

4.3. Goal and objectives, activities and results, geographical focus and duration of the project: Applications must clearly explain connections between expected results, activities, and the goal of the project. Applicants must demonstrate an implementation approach based on logically sequenced activities and that is directly correlated to the hypothesis of change. Applicants must describe an intended impact on the target population of the project, as well as its geographical focus. They must indicate how it contributes to advancing the USAID/Caucasus in Georgia's Development Objectives. If applicable, applicants should indicate how they plan to cooperate with relevant USAID-

supported projects to maximize impact. If applicable, applicants should provide outreach and capacity building plans for small local NGOs with a description of expected impact.

4.4. Sustainability analysis and an environmental review:

Sustainability analysis: Applicants are required to identify and analyze the sustainability of the proposed technical approaches. Applicants should explain how they plan to promote sustainable outcomes going beyond the end of project timeframe. This involves analyzing the institutional capacity that will need to be in place or developed through the project, including systems, policies, and skills.

Environmental Review: Applicants must assess any potential environmental risks emanating from the proposed activities. Applicants must propose a plan that ensures that negative environmental impacts are analyzed, reduced, and monitored from design through implementation.

4.5. A performance management plan (PMP): A detailed performance management plan with clear objectives and sub-objectives, a mixture of outcome and output indicators, data sources, and data gathering methods, as well as estimated baseline data and indicator targets. Applicants must also explain how the indicator data and lessons learned in the course of implementation will be managed to contribute to achieving the intended development impact. Monitoring and evaluation methods must be specific, measurable, realistic and applicable to the goals and objectives. Plans must also include gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data as appropriate. The PMP must also include a logical framework (log frame) which clearly communicates the development hypothesis. Once a Concept Paper has been selected for a full application, additional guidance will be released on how to develop a log frame.

4.6 Implementation Schedule: A chart indicating when activities will take place over the course of the proposed program.

4.7. Institutional capacity: This section must include a description of roles, responsibilities, and contributions of the prospective partner organization(s). The composition and organizational structure of the proposed project team must be well described, indicating key staff and including team member titles, roles and requisite technical expertise. Applicants should provide sufficient information on the technical and managerial experience of the project staff and/or Position Descriptions for key staff. Applicants must provide experienced, qualified personnel in relevant disciplines and areas for project management and professional staff positions. Applicants must indicate their strengths, distinctive competence, and/or comparative advantage that make them well-suited to addressing the identified challenge.

5. Past Performance (up to 3 pages)

Applications should include a list of past performance references. Applicants are requested to list all contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements involving relevant (similar or related) programs conducted by the applicant (or consortium partners) over the past three years.

Reference information shall include the location, current telephone numbers, points of contact, overall dollar value of the program, and award numbers if available. A brief description of work performed by the applicant is also required. Newer organizations, or Applicants with no related prior grant awards, remain eligible for consideration and are encouraged to apply.

6. Budget

- Budget Information (a summary of the budget must be submitted using Standard Forms 424, 424A and 424B which are available at Grants.gov under the “Forms” tab).
- Detailed budget and financial plan with major line items, identification of funding source (*if applicable, partners*) for each, and a narrative description of what the resources will be used for;
- Cost-share (*if applicable*): A proposed amount of leverage from prospective partners, both cash as well as in-kind.

Annexes (not counted towards the 15 page limit)

- Letter of intent from each partner organization (*if applicable*);
- Institutional capacity building plans for partner organizations (*if applicable*);
- Curricula vitae of key staff; and
- Branding & Marking Plan.
- Eligibility documentation per Section II.B: State registration certificate; Organization’s By-laws; Composition of Governing Body (indicating the citizenship of members); Organization’s budget from 2012 and 2013, including funding sources; List of activities implemented by the organization in past two years related to the proposed activities.

All applications must be in English and submitted electronically via email.

SECTION IV – APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR CONCEPT PAPERS

USAID’s review of concept papers will first determine whether the proposed activities meet the basic criteria below. USAID will evaluate all concept papers and make the determination whether the concept paper meets the basic criteria or not.

Relevance and soundness of the problem statement: The Mission will assess the extent to which the applicant’s problem analysis is rigorous, credible, and realistic.

Effectiveness of the applicant’s technical approach: The Mission will assess the extent to which the application (a) advances the objectives and priorities of this APS (including the expected results); and (b) offers a credible hypothesis of change and plan to address the identified problem effectively.

Performance management: The Mission will assess the extent to which the application includes performance indicators and targets that are measurable and that will demonstrate achievement of results through both outputs and outcomes.

Commensurate past experience and institutional capacity to implement proposed activities successfully: The Mission will assess the extent to which the applicant’s and its partners’ past experience and institutional capacity pave the way for a successful implementation of the stated objectives.

Budget: The Mission will assess the extent to which the budget reflects reasonable costs, includes all major line items, and aligns with the proposed technical approach.

The Mission will review the concept papers within 45 calendar days after receipt. USAID will notify unsuccessful applicants and will invite successful applicants to submit a full application.

B. EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR FULL APPLICATIONS (2ND STAGE ONLY AFTER APPROVAL OF CONCEPT PAPER)

The Technical Application will be evaluated in accordance with the following Evaluation Criteria:

Technical Approach	50 points
Management Plan	35 points
Past Performance	15 points
	<i>100 points</i>

Technical Approach (50 points) (see 4.1-4.4 on page 18 above)

- The problem analysis is sound, rigorous and applicable to the areas outlined in the APS.

- A clear hypothesis of change that identifies the problem and solution. A concise outline of risks and how to mitigate them. Demonstrated knowledge of other stakeholders' programs in this field of activity and how proposed efforts will not duplicate other stakeholders' efforts.
- The technical approach and connections between the goal of the project and expected results and activities are clearly explained. The intended impact on the target population and geographical area is clearly defined and contributes to USAID/Caucasus in Georgia's Development Objective 1.
- Proposed activities have the prospects for sustainability as indicated in a clear analysis. If applicable, a sound assessment of how negative environmental impacts will be reduced and monitored for the duration of the entire activity.
- The design of the application is informed by gender and minority considerations.

Management Plan (35 points) (see 4.5-4.7 on page 19 above)

- The application has a well-designed plan for performance management, monitoring and evaluation, and learning.
- The implementation schedule is realistic in terms of achieving the expected results of this APS.
- Commensurate institutional capacity to achieve the objectives of the application.
- Qualified and experienced key personnel; and a clear description of the organizational structure of the project team with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Past Performance (15 points)

- Commensurate past performance to achieve the objectives of the application.
- (If applicable) An approach to developing institutional capacity for partner organizations.

C. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Budget Negotiations

The budget will not be assigned points but will be evaluated on the extent to which it reflects reasonable costs, includes all major line items, are allowable expenses, sufficiently detailed, and aligns with the proposed technical approach. Applications that maximize direct activity costs including cost sharing and that minimize administrative costs are encouraged.

While there is no page limit for the cost application, applicants are encouraged to be as concise as possible

Successful applicants will be required to submit SF 424, signed certifications, Branding and Marking Plans.

Following an application review by the technical committee, applicants will be advised if budget-related discussions are to be initiated, additional information is required, or if a decision has been reached not to fund the application.

Type of Award(s) / Substantial Involvement

The number of awards under this APS is subject to the availability of funds. USAID may make a single award, multiple awards, or no awards at all under this APS, and reserves the right to close this program at any point up to the closing date. Awards are one-time only and are generally not renewable. USAID reserves the right, in consultation with applicants, to reduce, revise or increase budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements and substantial involvement by the Mission as applicable.

While many types of organizations are eligible (see below for eligibility criteria for partners), it is USAID policy not to award profit under grants and cooperative agreements. Consequently, no fee or profit will be paid to the grant or cooperative agreement recipient. Foregone profits do not count toward partner contributions. However, all reasonable, allocable, and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect, which are related to the grant program and are in accordance with applicable cost standards, may be covered by the grant.

This program is authorized in accordance with the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. Awards shall be made in accordance with ADS-303. For Non U.S. Governmental Organizations, the ADS -303 Standard Provisions for Non-U.S., Non-Governmental Recipients will apply.

Applicants can find copies of these documents by referring to the USAID Homepage at the following links:

<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/cfr.html#22>; and
<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/omb.html>;

Following favorable negotiations with the Mission, USAID may award a grant, cooperative agreement, or a collaboration agreement to the institution proposing the partnership or to a third entity that was proposed to implement a jointly funded partnership.

Depending on the evaluations and award determinations from Final Applications, USAID may decide to be “substantially involved” in the implementation of the program, and therefore award a cooperative agreement(s), a specific type of grant. Cooperative agreements are identical to grants except that USAID may be substantially involved in one or more of the following areas:

1. USAID approval of the recipient’s implementation plans (limited to not more frequently than annually);
2. USAID approval of specified key personnel (limited to 5 positions or 5 percent of the recipient’s total team size, whichever is greater);
3. USAID and recipient collaboration or joint participation, which includes one or more of the following:

- a. Collaborative involvement of selection of advisory committee members (USAID may also choose to become a member), if applicable;
- b. USAID concurrence on the selection of sub-award recipients and/or the substantive technical/programmatic provisions of sub-awards;
- c. USAID approval of a program monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan (to the extent that such information is not included in the application);
- d. USAID monitoring to permit direction and redirection because of interrelationships with other projects; and
- e. USAID authority to immediately halt a construction activity, if applicable.

For more details refer to USAID ADS 303.3.11 at <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303.pdf>.

Reporting

The requirements for reporting on the program activities will be determined in a collaborative manner, and will be included in the final award. USAID and the implementing partner will also agree on an annual performance monitoring plan, using established baseline data and specific, measurable targets and indicators; the final award will include that requirement.

Marking and Branding

Effective January 2, 2006, all USAID-sponsored assistance awards are required to adhere to branding policies and revised marking requirements for grants and cooperative agreements in accordance with ADS 320. This includes visibly displaying the USAID Standard Graphic Identity that clearly communicates assistance is, “From the American people” on all programs, projects, activities, publications, public communications, and commodities provided or supported through USAID assistance awards. ADS 320 requires that, after the evaluation of the applications, the USAID Agreement Officer will request the Apparently Successful Applicant to submit a Branding Strategy and Marking Plan that describes how the program, project, or activity is named and positioned, how it is promoted and communicated to beneficiaries and cooperating country citizens, and identifies all donors and explains how they will be acknowledged. The Branding Strategy will be negotiated and finalized as part of assistance award. ADS 320 may be found at the following website: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/320.pdf>

Specific communications and promotion measures shall be described in the “Branding Strategy” and “Branding Implementation Plan” and specific marking will be described in the “Marking Plan” for this award(s).

Initial Environmental Examination (IEE)

An Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) describing the successful activity's purpose, location, duration and intensity, and considers alternatives and assesses impacts, including cumulative impacts, in light of existing and known proposed activities will be pre-pared 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.

Prohibition against Discrimination (October 2011)

No U.S. citizen or legal resident shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex under any program or activity funded by this award when work under the grant is performed in the U.S. or when employees are recruited from the U.S.

Additionally, USAID is committed to achieving and maintaining a diverse and representative workforce and a workplace free of discrimination. Based on law, Executive Order, and Agency policy, USAID prohibits discrimination, including harassment, in its own workplace on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, disability, age, veteran's status, sexual orientation, genetic information, marital status, parental status, political affiliation, and any other conduct that does not adversely affect the performance of the employee. Recipients must comply with the requirements of the first paragraph of this provision and in addition, the Agency strongly encourages its recipients and their sub-recipients and vendors (at all tiers), performing both in the U.S. and overseas, to develop and enforce comprehensive nondiscrimination policies for their workplaces that include protection for all their employees on these expanded bases.