REGIONAL OFFICE OF ACQUISITION & ASSISTANCE

Issue Date:	April 21, 2022
Closing Date:	October 20, 2022
Subject:	USAID/Ecuador – New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative - Notice of Funding Opportunity/Annual Program Statement Number 72051822APS00001
Program Title:	Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative

The United States Agency for International Development in Ecuador (USAID/Ecuador) seeks applications from qualified entities, non- and for-profit organizations, to participate in USAID/Ecuador's New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative - Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)/ Annual Program Statement (APS).

The Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative seeks to engage the private and civil sectors in priority areas, as defined by the Government of Ecuador (GOE) and the United States Government (USG). The Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative is designed to increase the sustainability and impact of solutions in the following areas: seascape conservation, illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUUF), ocean plastic pollution, sustainable forests management, forest carbon sequestration and economic reactivation as outlined in Sections H - Other Information, 1 - Program Funding Areas. USAID/Ecuador is interested in providing both financial and non-financial support in these areas (see Section C.2 Leveraging.)

This NOFO/APS requires a 2-page Concept Note and matching funds. It is desirable that there be at least a 1:1 match of the activity's overall cost. For every $1 of USAID money, there should be a match of $1 of outside funding (it can be in kind but cash matches are preferred). Matches of less than 1:1 (See section C.2.) will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

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/APS, subject to a risk assessment. Eligible parties interested in submitting an application are encouraged to read this NOFO/APS thoroughly to understand the type of program sought, application submission requirements, and the selection process.

To be eligible for an award, the applicant must provide all information as required in this NOFO/APS and meet eligibility standards in Section C. 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 NOFO and to ensure that the NOFO/APS has been received from the internet in its entirety. USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes. If you have difficulty registering on www.grants.gov or accessing the NOFO/APS, please contact the Grants.gov Helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or via email at support@grants.gov for technical assistance.

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has properly registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) requirements detailed in Section D.6.b.

Questions about this NOFO/APS can be submitted by email to: limasolicitations@usaid.gov*.* Questions will be responded to at least two (2) weeks before each submission and review window dates found in Section D*.2.* All responses to questions will be posted as an amendment to this NOFO/APS. Depending on the response, USAID/Ecuador may make multiple or no awards.

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 comments/suggestions or an application. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

This is an exciting opportunity to make a difference, and I sincerely thank you for your interest in the Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative*.* We look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by
G. Michael Junge
Signed By: Mike Junge
Signing Time: 4/21/2022 2:51:37 PM EDT
O: U.S. Government, OU: USAID
C: US
Issuer: Entrust NFI Medium Assurance SSP CA
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G. Michael Junge
Regional Agreement Officer
USAID/Peru

Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative

72051822APS00001

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SECTION A: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)/Annual Program Statement (APS) is authorized in accordance with the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and is intended to increase the sustainability and impact of USAID/Ecuador's development assistance through the private sector and related partnerships in the areas listed below:

Area No 1: Strengthening Galapagos Seascapes Governance and Ensuring the Sustainable Management of Shark and Ray Populations

1. Protected marine areas in the Galapagos are sustainably and equitably managed with effective public participation
2. The necessary conditions for the long-term viability of shark and ray populations are realized, including the substantial elimination of the illegal harvest of sharks and rays and the trade in shark and ray parts

Area No. 2: Strengthening Solid Waste Management in the Galapagos and Coastal Mainland Ecuador

1. The Galapagos benefits from an ecologically and fiscally sustainable waste management system
2. Landfill management capacity in coastal mainland Ecuador is strengthened in order to reduce plastic waste runoff and significantly increase the quantity of recyclable materials collected, while improving work and economic conditions for informal waste collectors

Area No. 3: Sustainable Forest Management and Carbon Sequestration in the Amazon

1. Key indigenous organizations and local communities have the technical and financial capacity, along with the will, to manage their territories in a way that produces sustainable and equitable environmental and economic benefits
2. Amazonian protected areas are democratically, collaboratively, and sustainably managed, addressing environmental and economic needs
3. Ecuador achieves its Nationally Determined Contributions goals for forests and land use management

Area No. 4: Economic Reactivation with Women-Led and -Owned Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises

1. Ecuadorian women-led and -owned businesses (particularly those led by women from Indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian, and other historically marginalized groups) have support to access capital and market linkages, the skills to grow their businesses from micro to small and medium enterprises, and are recognized as successful investment opportunities for financial institutions and society.

These areas are further elaborated in Section H - Other Information, 1 - Program Funding Areas.

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.

1. **Background**

USAID/Ecuador is committed to supporting Ecuadorian leadership by prioritizing programs that strengthen country capacity, and mobilize domestic resources. "External development aid is more likely to catalyze sustained development processes when they reinforce a country's internally determined development priorities (country ownership) and arrangements (local systems) (*Source*: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/LocalSystemsFramework.pdf).

This frames the need for Local Ownership. For sustainable results, there is a need to engage the local system as a whole - government, civil society, and the private sector - focusing on local actors, their interrelationship, and the incentives that guide them (*Ibid*., p. 4). Local ownership and local systems are the foundation for sustainable development and hence, self-reliance.

To advance innovative models of bilateral engagement, and align with the private, public, and civil society sector's interests and opportunities, USAID/Ecuador has launched the Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative. Experience has shown that engaging the private, public, and civil society sectors can be a force multiplier for transformational change. These sectors bring expertise, markets, assets, and innovation. Local actors can help solve critical environmental problems and promote effective, sustainable development through market-led solutions or public pathways. The Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative seeks to create robust links between the private sector and development partners that will result in continued innovation and problem-solving once USAID funding ends. Recognizing and capitalizing on these opportunities, the Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative will catalyze, facilitate, and support such collaboration.

This Initiative provides a non-traditional approach for achieving these objectives. Within this context, USAID/Ecuador will prioritize private and civil society sector-driven solutions, multi-stakeholder partnerships for shared value, and innovation. USAID/Ecuador encourages forging partnerships that promote collaboration with the private sector and civil society in the joint definition of development challenges; identification of the most promising, impactful solutions; and mutual contribution of resources. Focus is placed on local solutions that bring multiple stakeholders to the table to collaborate and systemically change how assistance is transacted, and results are achieved to build a sustainable model that will hopefully continue well into the future. Ideally, solutions will involve collaborating with the Government of Ecuador (GOE), as well as local and provincial governments, so that these entities will be more sustainably managed and better equipped to tackle development problems as they arise.

USAID defines innovations as those interventions that introduce novel business or organizational models, operational or production processes; financing; or products or services that lead to dramatic improvements (not incremental) in addressing development challenges. Innovation may incorporate science and technology, but this integration is not required. Innovation should help produce significant development outcomes more effectively and sustainably to reach more beneficiaries in a shorter period of time. As appropriate, the Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative may focus on identifying, testing, sharing, and scaling such game-changing interventions.

2. An Invitation for Co-Creation and Impact

This initiative is USAID/Ecuador's invitation to prospective **Implementing Partners** (e.g., NGOs, private sector concerns, and others) to engage and work with Resource Partners (e.g., corporations, local businesses, foundations, and others). USAID/Ecuador is specifically seeking implementing organizations (for-profit and not-for-profit) and non-traditional development partners to reach out to Resource Partners and explore ways in which collaboration with USAID/Ecuador might help each partner – private sector, NGO, and public sector contributors – to more effectively address key issues, advance shared development goals, and achieve exceptional development results and impacts in Ecuador.

By inviting private and civil sector resource partners, prospective implementers, and public sector contributors to identify ways we can collaborate, USAID/Ecuador seeks to foster a diverse array of high-impact partnerships to obtain significant results.

Many successful partnerships are grounded at the intersection between core business and shared interests and one or more of USAID/Ecuador's development objectives. To determine the intersection of business and philanthropic interests with USAID's development goals, USAID encourages prospective partners to study information available online about USAID's development objectives, including USAID/Ecuador's Strategic Framework (English version), (Spanish version). USAID encourages extensive communications with prospective partners during the full design phase once a Concept Note has received a positive response from USAID.

3. Getting Started

The most promising partnerships emerge from a solid understanding of GOE priorities, private sector interests, civil society considerations, and USAID's development objectives.

Partnerships developed under this Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative must contribute to achieving one or more of USAID/Ecuador's core development objectives (see Section H – Other Information, Section 1. Program Funding Areas.)

Implementing Partner: USAID/Ecuador is seeking Local Entities, Locally Established Entities, New Partners, and Underutilized Partners as Implementing Partners.

a) **Local Entity**: Local entity means an individual, a corporation, a nonprofit organization, or another body of persons that—
(1) is legally organized under the laws of;
(2) has as its principal place of business or operations in;
(3) is majority owned by individuals who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of; and
(4) is managed by a governing body, the majority of who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of a country receiving assistance from funds appropriated under title III of this Act.

"Majority-owned' and "managed by" include, without limitation, beneficiary interests and 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.

b) **Locally Established Partner (LEP):** A U.S. or international organization that works through locally-led operations and programming models. LEPs:

● Have maintained continuous operations in-country for at least five years and materially demonstrate a long-term presence in a country through adherence or alignment to the following: - Local staff should comprise at least 50 percent of office personnel, - Maintenance of a dedicated local office, - Registration with the appropriate local authorities, - A local bank account, and - A portfolio of locally-implemented programs.

● Have demonstrated links to the local community, including: - If the organization has a governing body or board of directors, then it must include a majority of local citizens; - A letter of support from a local organization to attest to its work; and - Other criteria that an organization proposes to demonstrate its local roots.

c) **New Partners (NPs):** An individual or organization that has not received any funding from USAID as a prime partner over the last five years.

d) **Underutilized Partners (NUPs):** Organizations that have received less than $25 million in direct or indirect awards from USAID over the past five years.

What is the new Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative:

This initiative is a public-private sector collaboration designed to create sustained, measurable improvements in development outcomes. USAID/Ecuador welcomes innovative and creative ideas that can be rigorously tested, shared, and potentially scaled in Ecuador. Partnerships may include non-Ecuadorian entities that have expertise not available in Ecuador to support the implementer. Through this initiative, USAID/Ecuador is open to considering a wide range of approaches to achieve its development objectives. It is understood that all partners will share risks and responsibilities.

Awards under the Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative may be structured in various ways.

In what areas is USAID/Ecuador seeking to form partnerships?

Partnerships developed under this initiative must contribute to achieving one or more of USAID/Ecuador's core development objectives (see Section H - Other Information, 1 - Program Funding Areas):

What are the basic requirements of a Strategic Alliance?

The Strategic Alliance must engage the civil or private sector, aligning interests and opportunities and bringing ideas, innovations, experience, or expertise to realize solutions. While not required, strategic partnerships will ideally bring at least a 1:1 ratio of private sector resources with a minimum of 50 percent of the private sector resources in cash (lower ratios are possible but might not be as competitive).

Accordingly, an ideal partnership will:

- Ally a range of actors, with, as relevant, a backbone organization, around one of the focus areas (Section H - Other Information, 1 - Program Funding Areas);
- Define a measurable development impact;
- Ideally include leverage of at least a 1:1 contribution of new, non-USG resources;
- Have an initial period of performance of no more than 60 months (Areas 1-3) or 24 months (Area 4); and
- If focused on innovation, follow venture financing stages with proof of concept, commercialization, and scale grounded in evidence-based monitoring and evaluation.

4. **<u>Funding Priorities</u>**

Please see Section H - Other Information, 1 - Program Funding Areas.

5. **<u>Evaluation Process</u>**

Section D of the Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative APS outlines the process for submission, evaluation, development, and selection of Concept Notes.

[END OF SECTION A]

SECTION B: FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Contemplated

The total amount of funding to be awarded will depend on the variety and quality of the concepts USAID/Ecuador receives but is estimated at approximately $50 million U.S. Dollars with about 4-6 individual awards. USAID/Ecuador reserves the right to fund any, or none, of the Concept Notes submitted.

Please note that certain areas have limited funding. As funding may be limited, we have tried to reduce submission requirements to a bare minimum (i.e., a two-page Concept Note). Please keep this in mind when deciding whether you would like to submit under this NOFO/APS. Concept Notes submitted early have a better chance of funding.

2. Start Date and Period of Performance for Federal Awards

Applications must state a period of performance. The period of performance must be 60 months or less for Areas 1-3 and 24 months or less for Area 4.

3. Type of Award

Subject to funding availability, USAID/Ecuador may make multiple awards. Various assistance award types are possible (Cooperative Agreements, Grants). Award type will be discussed once the Concept Note is accepted. Assistance awards cannot include profit. Due to the nature of the collaboration implicit in the Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative, USAID/Ecuador expects that under Assistance, we will primarily use fixed amount awards and/or cooperative agreements. Cooperative Agreements include substantial involvement such as approval of Implementation Plans, Key Personnel, and Agency and Recipient Collaboration or Joint Participation. The actual award type or engagement will depend upon the most appropriate mechanism or approach for the intended results.

[END OF SECTION B]

SECTION C: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

Implementing Partners are non-governmental or private sector entities (for-and non-profit). Implementing Partners may provide leverage themselves (which cannot include USG funding from other sources). The preference is that implementing partners secure outside funding from a Resource Partner for the projects they propose to implement.

USAID/Ecuador, in particular, is interested in working with Implementing and Resource Partners from the private sector and civil society that will mobilize domestic resources for development. This includes non-traditional development partners such as private businesses, business and trade associations, foundations, financial institutions, non-profit NGOs and for-profit development firms, and private educational institutions.

Concept Notes must follow all instructions in this NOFO/APS and should address the Merit Review criteria in Section E.

2. Leveraging

USAID/Ecuador looks to develop strategic Partnerships where the relationship between business interests and development objectives provides a promising opportunity for:

- the civil and private sector to leverage USAID's objectives, assets, and expertise to address key challenges and opportunities; and
- USAID to leverage private sector interests, assets, expertise, innovative financing, and markets in a manner that fosters or accelerates sustainable and transformational development impact.

Under the Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative, the **preference** is that there be a 1:1 match (for every dollar that USAID provides, the implementer finds a matching dollar) with 50 percent of that in cash. We will accept lower matches, but the evaluation criteria considers the strength of the match.

[END OF SECTION C]

SECTION D: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Agency Point of Contact

Mr. G. Michael Junge, Agreement Officer via e-mail at gjunge@usaid.gov (only for specific concerns about this solicitation - not for general questions).

For questions regarding the Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative, please send via email to limasolicitations@usaid.gov. The subject line must state "Questions Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative and this NOFO/APS number 72051822APS00001." Questions can be submitted at any time during which the Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative is active, but responses will be provided as an amendment to this NOFO/APS only when there are a sufficient number of questions, or a question is particularly important to understanding the NOFO/APS.

Concept Note submissions must also be submitted to limasolicitations@usaid.gov during the submission windows found in Section 2 – Application Process. In the subject line, you must include the NOFO/APS number 72051822APS00001, the name of the organization requesting funding, and which of USAID/Ecuador's Development Objective (s) you will be addressing (you can just state the area number):

Area No. 1: Strengthening Galapagos Seascapes Governance and Ensuring the Sustainable Management of Shark and Ray Populations

1. Protected marine areas in the Galapagos are sustainably and equitably managed with effective public participation.
2. The necessary conditions for the long-term viability of shark and ray populations are realized, including the substantial elimination of the illegal harvest of sharks and rays and the trade in shark and ray parts.

Area No. 2: Strengthening Solid Waste Management in the Galapagos and Coastal Mainland Ecuador

1. The Galapagos benefits from an ecologically and fiscally sustainable waste management system.
2. Landfill management capacity in coastal mainland Ecuador is strengthened in order to reduce plastic waste runoff and significantly increase the quantity of recyclable materials collected, while improving work and economic conditions for informal waste collectors.

Area No. 3: Sustainable Forest Management and Carbon Sequestration in the Amazon

1. Key indigenous organizations and local communities have the technical and financial capacity, along with the will, to manage their territories in a way that produces sustainable and equitable environmental and economic benefits.

2. Amazonian protected areas are democratically, collaboratively, and sustainably managed, addressing environmental and economic needs.
3. Ecuador achieves its Nationally Determined Contributions goals for forests and land use management.

Area No. 4: Economic Reactivation with Women-Led and -Owned Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises

1. Ecuadorian women-led and -owned businesses (particularly those led by women from Indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian, and other traditionally marginalized groups) have support to access capital and market linkages, the skills to grow their businesses from micro to small and medium enterprises, and are recognized as successful investment opportunities for financial institutions and society.

2. Application Process For Implementers Seeking Funding

USAID/Ecuador will use the following process:

Phase 1: Concept Notes submission.

A Concept Note is a short (2 pages maximum) document wherein the Applicant provides an overview of their idea. USAID/Ecuador has provided a Concept Note Outline in item 3, *Concept Note Application Content* below.

When a Resource Partner is proposed, the Concept Note must be accompanied by a letter(s) of support from the potential Resource Partner(s) (not included in the 2 page limit), including a description of the resource partner's interest and role in the alliance and the contributions (monetary or in-kind) each resource partner will make to the activity.

All applicants must submit their Concept Note during the following submission and review window dates

1st Window	June 20 - 24, 2022
2nd Window	August 22 -26, 2022
3rd Window	October 17 - 20, 2022

USAID/Ecuador will neither respond to nor consider any Concept Notes submitted outside of the submission windows.

Please note that each of the areas covered by this NOFO/APS have different funding sources. In very limited circumstances, if there is a particular Concept Note, USAID/Ecuador could try to advocate for additional funds.

USAID/Ecuador will review Concept Notes against the merit review criteria – see Section E.

USAID/Ecuador anticipates two possible results from the Concept Notes review process:

1. Conditional Acceptance whereby competition requirements have been met.

   Invitation for Co-Design: Concept Note meets Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative objectives and receives sufficient ratings against the merit review criteria. By means of a letter, USAID/Ecuador invites the Applicant to engage in co-design to address any uncertainties identified by USAID/Ecuador. More detailed instructions on how to proceed will be provided at this time.

2. A decision to not proceed with further consideration of the alliance proposed in the Concept Note.

   The Concept Note received a low rating or did not meet the Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative objectives.

Phase 2: Co-Design of Activity

Upon receipt of the Invitation for co-design letter, competition has been met, and the Applicant will continue the design process working with USAID's guidance. During this phase, Applicants will work with USAID design teams to develop a clearer understanding of the activity. During this co-design process, USAID staff will also help ensure that USAID activity requirements such as environmental compliance and gender integration, are considered. The co-design process will end for an Applicant, if at any point of the process it is determined to be unsuccessful.

Reasons why an Applicant may be unsuccessful at the co-design/full application phase could be:

- After discussions, the detailed program does not satisfy the criteria of the Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative;
- A Resource Partner drops out or does not materialize and there is no longer as strong of a resource match;
- The Applicant cannot provide evidence that it is a legal entity capable of operating in Ecuador; or
- USAID/Ecuador has other concerns after conducting due diligence or pre-award surveys.

USAID/Ecuador reserves the right not to make an award at any stage of the process.

3. Concept Note Application Content

Concept Notes can be in English or Spanish. They must be submitted electronically via e-mail in Word. Concept Notes must not exceed **two (2) pages**, using standard page margins with a 12pt Arial font. Applicants must follow the format below. Clarity and specificity are important, as is ensuring that the Concept Note narrative addresses the points USAID/Ecuador will use to review the Concept Note (see Section E Merit Review

Criteria). USAID/Ecuador will reject Concept Notes that are vague or merely restate the Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative language. Where applicable, applicants should include letters of support from potential Resource Partners which demonstrate the Resource Partner's interest in the activity as annexes.

Sample Concept Note Outline

Section 1: Program and Contact Information (information for Section 1 can be a cover page which does not count towards the two-page limit)

- USAID/Ecuador's Development Objective to be addressed (chose from one of the eight categories)
- Applicant's Organization Name and Address
- Applicant's Organization Contact Person (name, title, email, telephone number of the person who can legally sign the award)
- Type of Organization (*e.g.*, local entity, locally established partner, new partner, underutilized partner, US organization, non-US, multilateral, governmental, private, for-profit, non-profit, date of incorporation, *etc*.)
- Name(s) and Contact Information of possible Partner(s). Applicants that are Implementing Partners will name Resource Partner(s) here, and Resource Partners will list Implementing Partner(s) (if any) here
- Estimated total amount - specify USAID request funding versus what the Resource Partner will contribute (differentiate between cash and in-kind contributions)
- Estimated start and end dates (awards cannot exceed 60 months in duration)
- Organization's Unique Identifier Number (UIE) Number
- Confirmation that the organization is registered in SAM or SAM registration is in process
- Include type of organization – Local Entity, Locally Established Partner, New or Underutilized Partners or Resource Partner

Section 2: Development Problem to Be Addressed (This section should be no more than three-quarters of a page to one page)

- The **Development Problem** to be addressed: A **ONE** sentence statement of the development problem. An example would be "The Government of Ecuador does not have the ability to track legal versus illegal logging." This must be a problem that you will be able to say that you have solved when your award is finished.
- **Theory of Change** (https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/theories-change)**:** This is limited to one sentence and is in the format – **IF** (A, B, or C happens), **THEN** (X, Y, or Z will happen). For the "IF" statement, restate the development problem as if you have solved it. For the "then" statement, tell us what you expect will then happen once you have solved the problem.
- **Magnitude of Change:** Tell us what you will expect to be able to achieve for the money that you are asking, i.e., "For the amount of $X, we will achieve the

following (state what you will achieve with the money - not details but the big picture).

- **<u>Top Level Indicators</u>**: Provide 5-10 indicators of the things you will be tracking to ensure that the award achieves its goals. For example, the number of people trained, the number of hectares of forest preserved, etc. You should include a mix of both output (what project provides) and outcome (what project achieves) indicators.
- **<u>Executive Summary of Gender</u>:** Only a few sentences. Provide an executive summary of how you plan to incorporate gender within your award. Gender is not just about an equal distribution of assistance to men and women, your concept should address how your activity will affect men differently from women, and how you will address these differences.
- **<u>Executive Summary of Climate Change/Environmental Impact</u>:** Only a few sentences. How will your activity affect climate change or the environment? Second, consider how climate change might impact your activities. Consider, for example, natural disasters caused by climate change (wildfires, floods, etc.).

Section 3: Description: Purpose, Research that you have done, who else is working in this field, why you have chosen this particular Development Problem, or why you think you can solve it? (This section should be the majority of the two pages)

- Describe what it is that you hope to accomplish with this award. You should include what the relationship to the Resource partner is and why they are interested.
- Recent/relevant history of the problem and any attempts to solve it. Only provide background information relevant to the specific problem you are trying to address and not a general background of the problem's entire history.
- Who else is trying to solve the problem now? Who "owns" the problem? Why should USAID be involved? Why are you best positioned to solve the problem?

In summary - the two pages of the Concept Note must have the following elements:

1. **Development Problem** - one sentence
2. **Theory of Change** - one sentence
3. **Magnitude of Change** - what do you hope to do with the money
4. **Top indicators** - 5-10 indicators
5. **Executive summary Gender** - a few sentences
6. **Executive summary Climate Change/Environment** - a few sentences
7. **Background** - relevant background - what is the relationship to the resource partner?

Section 4: Preliminary Budget Estimate (not included as part of the two-page limit)

- Budget: This Budget Estimate is not included as part of the 2-page limit. At a minimum, the budget must state an estimate of U.S. funds being requested and how the resource partner will contribute to the project.

Section 5: Leverage Partners (not included as part of the two-page limit)

Please provide letters of commitment from the Resource Partners. These do not have to be in final form but should indicate that the Resource Partner has stated that they will be willing to commit cash or in-kind contributions should the implementer receive an award. Each commitment letter must also have a supplemental memo not to exceed one page for each commitment (not included in the two-page limit) with the following information:

a) Potential partner Name (include the point of contact);
b) Interest of the Partner (why are they interested in investing in this activity);
c) Interest of USAID (what is the development impact);
d) Leverage Type (in-kind, expertise, cash, etc.);
e) Level of Contribution (quantifiable amount); and
f) Description of Partnership.

Section 6: Additional Requirements (not included as part of the two-page limit)

a) Organizational Structure

Applicants must submit a list of the names and positions of all members of the Board of Directors and shareholders in their entity.

b) System for Award Management Registration

Applicants are required to:

(i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application;
(ii) Provide a valid Unique Entity Identification (UEI) a (12-character alphanumeric ID) in its application; and
(iii) 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.

No awards will be made until the applicant has complied with all applicableSAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Federal awarding agency is ready to make a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

[END OF SECTION D]

SECTION E: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. Merit Review Criteria

USAID/Ecuador will review all Concept Notes applications that comply with these NOFO/APS instructions. USAID/Ecuador will use the following merit review elements, which are of equal importance.

	Merit Review Element	Definition
USAID/Ecuador will review each Concept Note and evaluate it to the degree it meets the criteria at the right - the definitions are not specific factors but provide a better understanding of what is being evaluated:	**Development Approach**	Technical strength and innovation of the proposal, including a clear articulation of how marginalized groups (which may include, but is not limited to, women, youth, Afro-Ecuadorians, indigenous persons, and persons with disabilities) will be impacted by the activity.
	Partnerships	Strength of the proposed partnerships, including the degree of local partner integration and the ability to maintain the activity after the award ends.

[END OF SECTION E]

SECTION F: FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Federal Award Notices: USAID/Ecuador cannot make awards under this NOFO/APS until it has appropriated, allocated, and committed funds through internal USAID procedures. While USAID/Ecuador anticipates successfully completing these procedures, potential Applicants are notified of these requirements and conditions. The Agreement Officer (AO) is the only individual who can legally commit USAID to the expenditure of public funds. Applicants are prohibited from charging or incurring costs to the proposed award prior to receiving either a fully executed award or a specific, written authorization from the AO.

B. Due to the nature of the collaboration implicit in the Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative awards, USAID/Ecuador believes that Fixed Amount Awards (whereby USAID provides a specific level of support for which the Agency does not base payment upon the actual cost incurred by the recipient, but rather performance and result) and/or Cooperative Agreements (in which substantial involvement will include approval of Implementation Plans, Key Personnel, and Agency and Recipient Collaboration or Joint Participation) will likely be the primary vehicles for this initiative. Still, the actual award type or engagement will depend upon the most appropriate mechanism or approach for the intended results. Each award will be individually negotiated.

C. Awards will include all USG regulatory requirements, including Mandatory and any As Applicable provisions (https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/303mab.pdf). New applicants will require a Non-U.S. Organization Pre-Award Survey and results may require Specific Conditions placed on the award

https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303sam.pdf

Each award will be individually negotiated.

[END OF SECTION F]

SECTION G: FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

The Agreement Officer for this APS is:

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[END OF SECTION G]

SECTION H: OTHER INFORMATION

1. PROGRAM FUNDING AREAS

Area No. 1:Strengthening Galapagos Seascapes Governance and Ensuring the Sustainable Management of Shark and Ray Populations

Problem Statement: A lack of effective management capacity and financial and technical resources, as well as inadequate engagement between local communities, civil society, the GOE, and the private sector inhibit efforts to conserve managed seascapes in the Galapagos and decrease illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing of sharks and rays.

Theory of Change: If local communities, civil society, the GOE, and private sector partners collaborate to improve managed seascape conservation and the sustainable management of sharks and rays, then marine and coastal areas will be better able to contribute to Ecuador's economic development and the well-being of coastal communities will improve.

Purpose Statement: USAID will leverage private sector resources to improve marine habitat conservation and sustainable fisheries outcomes. This will be accomplished by strengthening engagement with coastal communities and from establishing additional partnerships that are centered around building the management capacity of entities engaged in marine conservation and sustainable fisheries activities, along with public engagement and outreach. These actions will create a more robust and environmentally-friendly foundation for economic development in Ecuador's coastal provinces and the Galapagos.

Over the life of this activity, USAID would like to achieve the following development objectives:

1. Protected marine areas in the Galapagos are sustainably and equitably managed with effective public participation
2. The necessary conditions for the long-term viability of shark and ray populations are realized, including the substantial elimination of the illegal harvest of sharks and rays and the trade in shark and ray parts

Background: Ecuador's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Pacific Ocean is nearly five times the country's landmass. Due to size and geographic location, Ecuadorian maritime domains include iconic seascapes with extremely high numbers of endemic species, including the Galapagos archipelago. The Galapagos boasts two protected marine areas of global significance, the Galapagos Marine Reserve, and the new Hermandad Marine Reserve. The viability of sustainable fisheries and the conservation of coastal and marine managed areas are strongly linked to effective marine planning, combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and enforcing comprehensive fisheries regulations. However, high levels of IUU fishing present a reputational risk and threaten the sustainability of Ecuador’s marine products industries. The illegal harvest of, and trade in, sharks and rays is a major conservation crime that, left unchecked, could lead to the decimation of these populations. Additionally, there is a lack of technical and logistical resources to effectively oversee existing marine managed areas and to facilitate planning and development for new managed areas.

USAID seeks to form partnerships that connect key stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society, the GOE, and local communities to improve governance of marine managed areas in the Galapagos, as well as to strengthen the sustainability of the fisheries and marine resources sector by creating the conditions necessary for the long-term viability of shark and ray populations. There is a strong need to create sustainable, robust frameworks for managing the harvest of fish and marine resources, including improving the quality and quantity of data available to key stakeholders about current resource conditions. Additionally, developing new or expanding existing innovative financial mechanisms for supporting marine conservation is likely to be required in order to ensure adequate resources are available to protect managed marine areas.

Possible Indicators include:

- EG.10.2-2: Number of hectares of biologically significant areas under improved natural resource management as a result of USG assistance
- EG.10.2-3: Number of people with improved economic benefits derived from sustainable natural resource management and/or biodiversity conservation as a result of USG assistance
- EG.10.2-4: Number of people trained in sustainable natural resources management and/or biodiversity conservation as a result of USG assistance
- EG.10.2-5: Number of laws, policies, or regulations that address biodiversity conservation and/or other environmental themes officially proposed, adopted, or implemented as a result of USG assistance
- EG. 5.2-2 Number of private sector firms that have improved management practices or technologies as a result of USG assistance
- Number of vessels suspected of IUU fishing in Ecuadorian waters
- Number of fishers using more sustainable gear types
- Number of marine products businesses that adopt more sustainable harvesting practices

Geographic Scope: Provinces of Guayas, Santa Elena, Manabi, and Galapagos Islands

Area 2. Strengthening Solid Waste Management in the Galapagos and Coastal Mainland Ecuador

Problem Statement: Substantial volumes of plastic waste are being discharged into Ecuador's waterways, eventually reaching the ocean.

Theory of Change: If the private sector, civil society, and government agencies collaborate to implement better solid waste management, then the amount of plastics reaching the ocean and adversely impacting fisheries, coastal communities, and the tourism sector will decrease, having a positive effect on economic development and public and environmental health.

Purpose Statement: When effective partnerships are formed around solid waste management, this will improve capacity and coordination among key actors, creating the enabling environment necessary to reduce the overall volume of plastic waste entering the ocean and increase the volume being recycled. Such efforts are likely to result in entrepreneurial opportunities, as well as a more active civil society that is engaged around plastic waste. Reduced plastic waste in the ocean will improve wildlife and ecosystem health, leading to better environmental and human health outcomes.

Over the life of this activity, USAID would like to achieve the following development objectives:

1. The Galapagos benefits from an ecologically and fiscally sustainable waste management system
2. Landfill management capacity in coastal mainland Ecuador is strengthened in order to reduce plastic waste runoff and significantly increase the quantity of recyclable materials collected, while improving work and economic conditions for informal waste collectors

Background: Substantial volumes of plastic waste are being discharged into Ecuador's waterways, eventually reaching the ocean, which has adverse economic and environmental consequences for the country. Plastics production globally has reached more than 8.3 billion metric tons, much of which is immediately discarded after use. Preliminary data from the Eastern South Pacific suggests that Peru and Ecuador are the countries with the largest contribution of coastal solid waste to the ocean, together representing more than 50 percent of the total between Panama and Chile. In the Galapagos archipelago, plastic accumulation is facilitated by marine currents that bring debris from mainland Peru and Ecuador, as well as international fleets fishing around the Galapagos exclusive economic zone. The majority of ocean debris in the Galapagos comes from outside the archipelago: approximately 43 percent from Peru, 33 percent from mainland Ecuador, and over 15 percent from distant water fishing fleets.

Exports of marine products represent the second largest income generator for Ecuador, after oil and before bananas. Ocean plastics proliferation poses a threat to key economic sectors, including tourism and fisheries, as well as the local communities that rely on these industries. Plastic waste also serves as a major environmental problem, as vulnerable species are often susceptible to ingesting plastic particles. Efficient systems for collecting, aggregating and sorting plastic waste are a prerequisite for maximizing investment in recycling facilities and sanitary landfills.

USAID seeks innovative strategies for reducing plastic waste volumes and improving waste management practices, including through generating increased public awareness of the problem, developing public-private partnerships and building civil society capacity, particularly at the local and regional levels. In many countries, women have been integral to developing more sustainable waste management systems, and USAID is particularly interested in approaches that advance women's entrepreneurship and leadership in the waste management sector. While solid waste management is a challenge throughout Ecuador, given limited available resources, USAID seeks proposals that are geographically focused on the Galapagos and/or coastal mainland Ecuador.

Possible Indicators include:

- Number of events or engagements centered on waste management
- Number of entities with increased capacity to manage plastic waste
- Metric tons of waste and recyclables aggregated
- Number of microenterprises developed related to solid waste management
- Number of municipalities that have adopted waste management systems less likely to result in plastic discharge
- Number of entities with increased capacity to assess or address solid waste management
- Number of people trained in solid waste management supported by USG assistance
- EG. 5.2-2 Number of private sector firms that have improved management practices or technologies as a result of USG assistance
- Reduction of municipal solid waste, including plastic pollution (in Metric Tons) entering the environment as a result of USG assistance

Geographic Scope: Provinces of El Oro, Guayas, Santa Elena, Manabi, Esmeraldas, and Galapagos Islands

Area 3. Sustainable Forest Management and Carbon Sequestration in the Amazon

Problem Statement: Local communities and indigenous peoples are unable to effectively deter illegal extractive activities on protected lands and there is a lack of adequate sustainable livelihoods opportunities for local peoples in the Amazon

Theory of Change: If indigenous peoples, local communities, and the private sector are able to participate in transparent decision making pertaining to developments in the Amazon, and the enabling conditions for environmentally sustainable livelihoods and resource management practices are improved, then Ecuador will avoid further forest conversion, reforest degraded and/or deforested lands, and improve natural forest management in the Amazon region, therefore strengthening livelihoods, conserving critical biodiversity, and reducing and/or sequestering greenhouse gasses.

Purpose Statement: The purpose of this activity is to improve forest and biodiversity conservation and assist Ecuador in meeting its Nationally Determined Contributions by avoiding forest conversion (deforestation and degradation), reforesting degraded and/or deforested lands, and improving natural forest management in the Ecuadorian Amazon, while fostering more sustainable Amazonian livelihoods that are inclusive of indigenous peoples and local communities, particularly women and youth.

Over the life of this activity, USAID would like to achieve the following development objectives:

1. Key indigenous organizations and local communities have the technical and financial capacity, along with the will, to manage their territories in a way that produces sustainable and equitable environmental and economic benefits
2. Amazonian protected areas are democratically, collaboratively, and sustainably managed, addressing environmental and economic needs
3. Ecuador achieves its Nationally Determined Contributions goals for forests and land use management

Background: Ecuador's Amazon is a critical ecosystem with global importance for climate change and biodiversity. There is a rich diversity of fauna and flora and Amazonian plants and trees play critical roles in regulating the global climate, sustaining the local water cycle, and providing food and livelihood benefits to local communities. Amazonian forests in Ecuador store an estimated 591 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per hectare–higher than any other part of the country.

However, the Amazon has undergone major changes due to deforestation and forest degradation, and there is a threat of further forest loss. The primary drivers of deforestation have been agricultural expansion for cattle grazing and African oil palm including from smallholder farmers. In addition, the combination of agricultural burning and drier conditions due to climate change have led to a significant increase in the risk of uncontrolled wildfires. Increasing natural resource extraction poses additional challenges to the region. The GOE has plans to expand formal mining operations, including for gold, silver, copper, and molybdenum. At the same time, there is a widespread and growing problem with illegal artisanal mining throughout much of the Ecuadorian Amazon. Increasing oil extraction exacerbates threats from infrastructure expansion, particularly roads, which not only are used to service new oil wells, but can also facilitate natural resource harvesting and agricultural expansion into new areas. Among all Amazonian countries, Ecuador has by far the highest density of roads in this biome. Lastly, illegal timber extraction is widespread in Ecuador, with inadequate tools to incentivize sustainable forest practices, particularly among smallholders.

Ecuador continues to advance the development of an institutional framework for forest conservation, with a large area of the country covered by protected areas and the wide-reaching Socio Bosque program that provides payments to landholders in exchange for forest conservation. As of 2020, over 82 percent of the Ecuadorian Amazon is under protected area status or belongs to an indigenous territory, though many of these areas are at risk of forest clearing or degradation due to unsustainable resource use. The Amazon region is also home to many of Ecuador's indigenous peoples, who are essential allies in USAID's work. However, there is a lack of representation and inclusion of indigenous peoples and local communities in policy making decisions, as well as limited opportunities for them to earn better livelihoods without harvesting the Amazon's rich natural capital at unsustainable rates.

USAID is interested in fostering innovative partnerships with the private sector, civil society, and historically marginalized groups, including women, youth, and indigenous communities, in order to improve natural resource management and forest management practices. Indigenous peoples and local communities should be empowered to sustainably manage their resources in a manner that promotes long-term economic and social development while maintaining traditional cultural practices and values.

USAID is particularly interested in supporting activities that will have the greatest overall impact on mitigating greenhouse gas emissions from the agriculture, land use, and forestry sectors in the Amazon, either by reducing deforestation rates and/or increasing carbon sequestration. In Ecuador, land-based mitigation opportunities are found primarily in the forest sector, with avoided forest conversion representing most of the total potential, while reforestation and forest restoration and improved natural forest management represent the second and third most important opportunities. Developing new and/or expanding existing financial mechanisms to incentivize carbon mitigation is likely to be a critical pathway in order to achieve climate change objectives. Additionally, such objectives are unlikely to be achieved without closely engaging private sector actors to reduce the harmful impacts of extractive industries on forest conditions and local communities.

Possible Indicators include:

- EG.10.2-3 Number of people with improved economic benefits derived from sustainable natural resource management and/or biodiversity conservation as a result of USG assistance

- EG.13-4 Amount of investment mobilized (in USD) for sustainable landscapes as supported by USG assistance
- EG.13-6 Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, estimated in metric tons of CO2 equivalent, reduced, sequestered, or avoided through sustainable landscapes activities supported by USG assistance
- EG 13.8 Number of hectares under improved management expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as a result of USG assistance
- YOUTH-3 Percentage of participants who are youth (15-29) in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources

Geographic Scope: Provinces of Morona Santiago, Napo, Pastaza, Sucumbíos and Zamora Chinchipe

Area 4. Economic Reactivation with Women-Led and -Owned Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises

Problem Statement: Ecuadorian women-led and -owned businesses lack meaningful networks and mentorship opportunities to secure capital and market linkages to further business opportunities.

Theory of Change: If Ecuadorian women-led and -owned businesses have meaningful networks, mentorships, and bundled advisory services to access capital and markets, then women-led and -owned businesses will be more sustainable and recognized as successful investment opportunities.

Purpose Statement:
The purpose of this activity is to strengthen the capacity of Ecuadorian women-led and -owned businesses to sustainably prosper and provide benefits for entrepreneurs and their families and communities.

Over the life of this activity, USAID would like to achieve the following development objectives:

- Ecuadorian women-led and -owned businesses (particularly those led by women from Indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian, and other traditionally marginalized groups) have support to access capital and market linkages, the skills to grow their businesses from micro to small and medium enterprises, and are recognized as successful investment opportunities for financial institutions and society.

Background:

This access to finance activity ensures that women-led small and medium-sized enterprises have meaningful networks and mentorships, in order for women-owned businesses to be more sustainable and recognized as successful investment opportunities for financial institutions over the mid-term. In addition, the activity increases financial inclusion and access to finance for women-led SMEs through technical assistance and business advisory services, in particular digital marketing skills, to overcome demand-side constraints. This partnership will also take into account businesses that have been affected by the sanctions against Russia. For example, indigenous women in the flower export sector who are currently affected by export and currency control sanctions imposed against Russia, a major trading partner. This is especially acute in light of the current decrease in sales experienced by the banana, shrimp, flower, and textile industries due to the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine and the disruption it has brought to global markets.

According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report of 2017, Ecuador had one of the highest indices of Total Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) in the Latin American and Caribbean region. In fact, TEA for women was 52.1 percent compared to 47.9 percent for men. Moreover, the proportion of women with new and necessity-motivated entrepreneurships was higher than that of men. Conversely, men had a greater rate of opportunity-motivated entrepreneurships. A study of the "Women Entrepreneurs" community-linked project between ESPOL Polytechnic University in Guayaquil and Children International emerged as a solution for unemployment, gender pay gap, and scarce opportunities for accessing a decent standard of living. Findings included the empowerment of 31 women entrepreneurs, the presentation of 17 business plans, the completion of 160 internship hours in community-linked projects for each volunteer, and the cooperation between a public higher education institution and a non-profit organization.[1]

According to a recent article en El Comercio, the set of women who demand credit the most are between 35 to 49 years old and that Equifax Ecuador[2] recommends this segment be targeted for financial education. In Ecuador, only 31 percent of women make personal financial decisions for the home, compared to 49 percent of men. Only 65 percent of women have access to financial products relative to 72 percent of men. The same studies also show women make more loyal customers for financial institutions, therefore lowering a financial institution's risk.[3]

Social distancing measures to contain the pandemic have affected small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and startups through decreased demand for goods and services and the reduced availability of inputs and labor. The pandemic has led to a large-scale economic contraction in Latin America and the Caribbean. SMEs have also been severely affected by the crisis, which is even more serious given that they account for almost two-thirds of the region's employment. The post-COVID era will give rise to the low touch economy, one that is characterized by new habits and norms based on more limited close-contact interactions and tighter travel and hygiene restrictions. Digitalization has become a requirement for business survival, yet SMEs have low levels of digitalization, which limits their potential to break into alternate markets should they face external shocks such as the sanctions on Russia that have now decreased export sales in key industries.

Ecuador is experiencing an economic blow from Russia's war in Ukraine and related sanctions. Delays in payments to exporters, loss of merchandise, and higher prices for exports are a few of the difficulties Ecuadorian companies are confronting. Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union are key markets for Ecuadorian exports. Ecuador exports a greater share of non-oil products to Russia (7 percent of non-oil exports) than any other Latin American country. Ecuadorian analysts estimate Russia's war puts at risk $1.2 billion in Ecuadorian exports to Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. In 2021, Russia was Ecuador's fourth largest export

[1] https://library.iated.org/view/ARMIJOS2019WOM

[2] https://www.equifax.ec/acerca-de-equifax/perfil-de-la-empresa

[3] https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/negocios/mujeres-creditos-ecuador-edad-consejos.html

market and third largest export market for non-oil exports, totaling nearly $1 billion a year. Per the Ecuadorian government's 2020 export figures, Russia is the largest purchaser of Ecuadorian bananas (18 percent of total) and coffee (28 percent of total), second largest purchaser of cut flowers (14 percent of total), fourth largest purchaser of tuna (five percent of total), and sixth largest purchaser of shrimp (two percent of total). Preliminary trade statistics indicate Ecuadorian shrimp exports to Russia doubled in 2021 and now make up 14 percent of all Ecuadorian exports to Russia. Potentially, hundreds of thousands of jobs in the banana sector and thousands of jobs in the flower sector are threatened.

On the other hand, the social and economic disruptions caused by COVID-19 have created opportunities for a more inclusive, regenerative, and resilient economy. The reconstruction will require a high level of adaptability, digitalization, and resilience for SMEs, startups, and the environment in which they develop (the ecosystem that supports them).[4]

While there are many training programs funded by other donors and USAID, this program will focus on sustaining the skills gained in training by coupling promising entrepreneurs with a bundle of services that could include such expertise as a network of successful mentors in their field, digital marketing training, and access to DFC-backed loans. These examples are not exclusive or exhaustive; the offeror should propose the best package of bundled services to meet the program objectives.

Offerors should familiarize themselves with existing mentoring networks and donor-led projects in order to leverage and not duplicate these efforts. The successful applicant will demonstrate a clear understanding of existing efforts and how to leverage them.

Possible Indicators include:

1. Sales volumes (**Target**: 10 percent increase by at least 50 percent of participants after training)
2. Number of new jobs created (**Target**: 500 new jobs across activity)
3. Amount of capital approved and disbursed to participating entrepreneurs (**Target**: At least USD $1 million by Year 2)
4. Percentage of sales shifted from recently closed markets to other markets (**Target**: 25 percent of sales successfully shifted)
5. Percentage engagement with and use of financial resources including banking, savings account, and digital services (**Target**: 20 percent increase by at least 50 percent of participants by Year 2)

Geographic Scope: Nationwide, with a particular focus on Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities of Ecuador, as well as other marginalized groups such as Afro-Ecuadorians and *montubios*. Sectors and geographic focus will be suggested by

[4] https://idbdocs.iadb.org/wsdocs/getdocument.aspx?docnum=EZSHARE-1838940285-3

applicants, but shall not focus primarily on businesses in Quito and Guayaquil, in order to expand USAID's reach outside of the political and financial capitals.

2. **<u>Frequently Asked Questions</u>**

Question: ***Can an organization submit more than one Concept Note in response to this solicitation?***

Answer: Yes, but we would prefer Applicants to apply for the area where they see the most significant potential for an impactful alliance.

Question: ***Can one organization submit more than one Concept Note in response to the NFO/APS? Our organization is preparing three Concept Notes with different teams and different objectives.***

Answer: Yes, multiple Concept Notes can be submitted.

Question: ***Can my organization apply to 1 objective, or can it apply to various?***

Answer: The Concept notes are reviewed by panels that have expertise in each of those subject areas, so your Concept note will have a greater likelihood of success if you submit it to the panel that has the most expertise. That said, if you believe your Concept note meets multiple areas, you can list those areas, and then we will make the determination of which panel is most appropriate to review the concept.

Question: ***Could the required matching funds come from a foundation or government, or do they have to come from the private sector?***

Answer: USAID/Ecuador, in particular, is interested in working with Resource Partners from the private sector and civil society that will mobilize domestic resources for development. This includes non-traditional development partners such as private businesses, business and trade associations, foundations, financial institutions, non-profit NGOs and for-profit development firms, and private education institutions. While host country government funds are possible, it must be demonstrated that those funds are funds that the host government would not have committed if it had not been for this USAID award.

Question: ***Can we use our potential anchor investor as the Resource Partner? They confirmed they would support this process. Are there any qualifications for the Resource Partner?***

Answer: Your resource partner sounds great. The only disqualification is if the funding includes USG funds from any source (i.e., another governmental agency); otherwise, funding or resources that will increase the potential USAID funding is highly encouraged.

Question: ***Do Resource Partner funds go through USAID then to be passed on to the Implementing Partner through an agreement with USAID, or is the***

Implementing Partner expected to have a separate agreement with the Resource Partner to receive funding from them?

Answer: This will be cost leverage whereby the funds do not need to go through USAID. The implementing partner needs to demonstrate that if it were not for USAID/Ecuador's funding, those resources would not have gone in resolving the problem.

Question: ***Can an organization submit a Concept Note before matching funds have been officially committed, or is a letter of support or some other kind of confirmation of matching funds required before Concept Note submission?***

Answer: Under D. Concept Note Application Content: "Applicants must include letters of support from potential Resource Partners which demonstrate the Resource Partner's interest in the activity as annexes."

Question: ***Does a contribution from the Government of Ecuador (GOE)/public sector count towards the leverage provided by the Resource Partner in the project?***

Answer: The Ecuador New Environmental and Economic Reactivation Partnerships Initiative contains a desired 1:1 civil/private sector match. Public sector resources are also encouraged to realize sustainability, but they are not considered leverage. Exceeding the minimum match, with any resources, may make your application more appealing.

Question: ***What are the Basic Requirements of a Strategic Alliance? Would USAID clarify if loan capital counts toward cost share requirements?***

Answer: If it can be demonstrated that the loan capital can be considered cost leverage (not cost share) i.e. it is something of value that is added to the funds which USAID is providing, it can be included.

Question: ***Does the Applicant have to finalize the alliance before submitting a Concept Note?***

Answer: Civil/private sector resource commitments must be clear as to the assistance that they will provide. While the Applicant does not have to finalize the alliance between non-USAID partners prior to submitting a Concept Note, USAID/Ecuador will evaluate the level of partner engagement and commitment as part of the merit review criteria. Letters of support, intent or commitment from prospective Resource Partners are valuable indicators of such commitment as are draft MOUs that describe the roles, responsibilities, and contributions of each of the alliance partners as well as their interest in the alliance.

Question: ***The APS mentions that a total of 4 to 6 awards will be made. Can USAID clarify if it envisions a maximum dollar threshold for grants?***

Answer: The maximum value of this APS is $50 million, and USAID/Ecuador envisions that 3-5 awards will be made for Areas 1-3. Up to one award will be made for Area 4.

[END OF SECTION H]