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AZERBAIJAN

September 20, 2019

SPECIAL NOTICE: REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

Subject: Request for Information: For Azerbaijan Business and Professional Association Development

Issuance Date: September 20, 2019

Closing Date: October 1, 2019

Closing Time: 5pm in Baku

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to collect written information about the capabilities and interest of all public and private parties in participating in a potential co-creation¹ process to identify innovative solutions for fostering civil society organization (CSO)-private sector partnerships to support business and professional associations in Azerbaijan with the purpose of promoting economic growth in the non-oil sector. We will collaborate with the Government of Azerbaijan in the co-creation process to advance our enduring partnership with the government and with Azerbaijan's private sector and citizens, and to support the diversification of the economy. The information gathered through this RFI will be used to help make planning decisions for an upcoming USAID/Azerbaijan Industry Day in Baku, and for the potential co-creation process, at a later date.

USAID hosts industry days to expand our external consultations and provide an opportunity for a wide range of our stakeholders to network with us, with the host government, with one another, and gain insight into working with USAID.

USAID/Azerbaijan envisions its potential Baku Industry Day bringing together interested businesses, civil society organizations, international organizations, other donors, and Azerbaijani government representatives to meet one another, exchange ideas, and discuss partnerships that support locally led solutions for Azerbaijan's development.

¹ Co-creation is defined by USAID as a collaborative process that brings together people in a workshop session to create solutions to specific development challenges. When using co-creation, USAID teams work alongside partners, stakeholders, potential implementers, and end users to collaboratively define the problem, identify new and existing solutions, build consensus around areas for action, and/ or refine plans to move forward with programs and projects. As its name implies, co-creation relies on collaboration with a diverse set of actors, allowing for a more equitable distribution of both the responsibility and ownership of outputs across all partners.



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This is an RFI, not a Request for Proposals (RFP), and is not to be construed as a commitment by the U.S. Government to issue any solicitation or ultimately award an agreement on the basis of this RFI, nor to pay for any information submitted as a result of this request, nor does it commit the Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of any comments.

Any funding proposals submitted in response to this request will not be considered. Responses to this notice must be received no later than the due date and time stated below in this notice. All materials submitted will become the property of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and will not be returned. USAID reserves the right to use information provided by respondents for USAID's own purposes. While it is not the intention of USAID to make public any responses to this RFI, proprietary and sensitive information must not be sent.

2. Background

Oil rich Azerbaijan saw a precipitous decline in oil revenues in 2014. In 2016, the country experienced its first recession in 20 years due to low global energy prices and the impact from an economic crisis in neighboring Russia. By December 2015, citizens felt the effects of currency devaluations coupled with high inflation rates. In light of this, the government has announced a series of economic reforms to develop the non-oil sector with a particular focus on small and medium-sized businesses. Similarly, individuals are seeking increased income security, entrepreneurship opportunities, and engagement with the government on economic and social issues while private sector firms are likewise exploring ways to support Azerbaijan's social and economic development and independence.

3. The Concept

USAID/Azerbaijan has identified that strengthening business and professional associations through promoting partnership among civil society, the private sector, and the government of Azerbaijan would accelerate the improvement in the economic enabling environment, ultimately contributing to the diversification of the economy. Promoting a locally-driven development approach by building links between associations, government, and the private sector will foster greater sustainability and will reinforce the role of local actors. USAID seeks to incorporate feedback from a wide range of sources in order to 1) solicit feedback on this concept (bolded and italicized above) and 2) identify qualified Azerbaijani civil society and private sector organizations capable of implementing activities to support this concept or contribute to consortia that would implement activities in support of this concept.

Potential Areas for Activities:



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- Supporting business and professional associations across all sectors, to form and gain capacity as well as traction, to take actions addressing locally-articulated needs.
- Working collaboratively with government during the co-creation phase and afterward, to reinforce the role that civil society organizations can play in achieving joint development objectives.
- Linking Azerbaijani business and professional associations with networks of associations (local, national, or regional) and networks of service providers, that can support them with capacity building, training, as well as advocacy and technical expertise.
- Engaging women and youth in pursuit of the concept objective: to accelerate the improvement in the economic enabling environment and showcase the value that an engaged citizenry can play in Azerbaijan's development transition.
- Leveraging local and international private sector expertise, finance, and influence to further the objectives of the concept.

Throughout these types of activities, USAID is seeking to identify organizations – civil society and the private sector – who would suggest and test new ways of supporting Azerbaijani business and professional associations. Specifically, USAID will be looking for organizations with suggestions for using research as well as technical knowledge in the eventual design, development, testing, or evaluation of a potential new product, approach, or service (or of an improvement in an existing product, approach, or service) to support the development of robust and capacitated business and professional associations in Azerbaijan. USAID would also like to identify, support, and develop cutting-edge methods of intervention through stronger private sector-civil society-government of Azerbaijan joint investment and participation in solving Azerbaijan's development challenges.



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Attachment: Response Requirements

Responses should include the following:

1. **Cover page** not to exceed one (1) page including:

- a. Organization name and address
- b. Point of contact name, telephone number and email address
- c. A brief statement of interest that indicates the role the organization envisions playing in a potential USAID award to support Azerbaijani business and professional organizations. If a team, coalition, or consortium is envisioned, please provide the names and contact information of the potential partner organization(s) as well.

2. **Comments and questions on the concept to facilitate partnerships between civil society, the private sector, the government of Azerbaijan, and a burgeoning group of business and professional associations, to accelerate the improvement in the economic enabling environment and showcase the value that an engaged citizenry can play in Azerbaijan's development.** Not to exceed one (1) page.

USAID/Azerbaijan welcomes general comments on the above concept and its feasibility. Other questions and comments are also welcome. This is not a formal question period; therefore, USAID will not be providing responses. The USAID design team will review all comments and questions and use them to inform the development of the concept.

3. **Feedback on holding a USAID/Azerbaijan Industry Day.** USAID would be grateful for feedback from respondents on any or all of the below questions as we consider planning an Industry Day in Baku:

- a. What should the objectives of the Industry Day be?
- b. If you were to attend, what would you seek to gain from such an event?
- c. What private sector or civil society organizations do you recommend including or inviting to a USAID Industry Day?
- d. What lessons learned can you share, if any, from previous types of events would be useful to help shape this one?

No other documents or information are requested at this time. USAID asks respondents to not send any additional information other than what is requested above and to adhere to the page limits mentioned.



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USAID also welcomes recommendations regarding the best mode of implementation to maximize impact. This is not a Request for Applications. Please do not submit proposals or statements of qualifications in response to this request.

4. Additional Notes/Instructions

Submit responses to this RFI to Agreement Officer Mr. Robert Claussen at:

RFI_USAIDAzerbaijan@usaid.gov , no later than October 1, 2019 at 5pm in Baku.

It should be noted that responding to this RFI will not give any advantage to any organization in any subsequent procurement. Responses in English or Azerbaijani will be accepted.

Best Regards,

Robert Claussen

Agreement Officer, USAID/Caucasus