



Request for Applications (RFA)

USAID Industry-led Skills Development Program

Request for Applications (RFA) Number 016-CI-004-2024

Incentivizing Private Sector Engagement in Skills Development

Announcement Type:	Request for Applications (RFA)
Funding Opportunity Number:	016-CI-004-2024
Funding Opportunity Title:	Incentivizing Private Sector Engagement in Skills Development
Issuance Date:	December 19, 2024
Full Application Submission Due Date:	January 29, 2025

Dear Applicant:

The USAID Industry-led Skills Development Program (the Program) is seeking applications from eligible organizations for innovative approaches to private sector engagement in skills development to strengthen linkages between skills training and high-value employment opportunities, either independently or as a partnership between private-sector employer(s) and private training provider institution(s) or organization(s). You are invited to submit an application to the Program's Incentivizing Private Sector Engagement in Skills Development initiative in accordance with the terms of references contained herein.

Details on the Program and application process can be found in this application package. To make information on grants accessible to all interested stakeholders across Georgia, the Program plans to hold information sessions in accordance with the following schedule:

Location	Date
Group 1 – Tbilisi (In person, venue TBD)	January 16, 2025
Group 2 (Online)	January 17, 2025

The sessions will give eligible and interested applicants the chance to ask questions about the RFA process and receive guidance on how to submit an application. Interested applicants who meet the eligibility requirements as defined in Section E below and would like to attend this session must confirm their attendance by sending the participant's name and the organization's name via e-mail to skillsgrants@iesc.org no later than **3 working days prior to the desired session**.

Applicants can also send questions about the application process to skillsgrants@iesc.org until 18:00 Georgia Standard Time (UTC/GMT +4) on January 20, 2025. All answers to questions asked at the pre-application session and/or through the e-mail will be posted to the Program's Facebook page no later than 18:00 Georgia Standard Time (UTC/GMT +4) on January 22, 2025.

The full application, respective annexes, and supporting documentation should be submitted in electronic format to skillsgrants@iesc.org. All applications should reference RFA No. 016-CI-004-2024 and must be submitted in English. Full applications are due no later than 18:00 Georgia Standard Time (UTC/GMT +4) on **January 29, 2025**. Late or unresponsive submissions will not be considered. Key dates are as follows:

Activity	Due Date
Pre-submission Information Sessions	January 16 and 17, 2025
Submission of Applications	January 29, 2025
Estimated Start Date of the Grant	March 1, 2025

The grants will be awarded and implemented in accordance with USAID and United States (U.S.) Government regulations governing grants and grants under contract (GUCs) as deemed applicable by USAID, Prime USAID Contractor IESC, and the Program’s grant management policies.

The Program and IESC employees may not ask for, and applicants are prohibited from offering any money, fee, commission, credit, gift, gratuity, a thing of value, or compensation to obtain or reward improper favorable treatment regarding this solicitation. Any improper request from an IESC or Program employee should be reported to the Program’s Chief of Party or ethics@iesc.org.

The following annexes are included with this RFA:

- Annex 1 – Full Application Form
- Annex 2 – M&E Plan
- Annex 3 – Grant Application Budget Forms
- Annex 4 – Pre-Award Risk Questionnaire
- Annex 5 – Grant Activity Gantt Chart

SECTION I. INDUSTRY-LED SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM GRANT ACTIVITIES

A. INDUSTRY-LED SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Program is headquartered in Tbilisi with Program activities operating throughout Georgia. To ensure national coverage, the Program engages with networks of employers, business associations, private education and training providers, and development partners. Through this collaboration, the Program is effectively engaging private-sector employers, undertaking outreach and marketing, delivering tailored and demand-driven grants, and creating a network of employer-led skills development initiatives and partnerships across Georgia.

The purpose of the Program is to develop industry-relevant human capital that will contribute to high-value employment opportunities and increased economic competitiveness in Georgia. The Program is achieving this by systematically engaging employers to equip Georgians with skills demanded in sectors with high growth potential and create direct linkages between training programs and high-value employment opportunities. The Program gives a leading role to the private sector to catalyze demand-driven skills development throughout Georgia.

The Program has three components. Under **Component I**, the Program pilots initiatives that incentivize employers, business associations, industry groups, and other private-sector bodies to participate in innovative practices/models independently or in cooperation with private skills training providers, strengthening linkages between skills training and high value employment opportunities. Innovative

practices/models may also include already-existing practices/models that are new to the grantee, economic sector, or geographical location. Under **Component 2**, the Program scales and establishes private sector-demanded training programs demonstrated independently or through partnership and support of private skills training providers. Under **Component 3**, the Program aims to increase the employability and incomes of un- and under-employed populations in the regions and increase employers' productivity by expanding access to existing, high-quality skills training programs to rural and priority populations in ways that contribute to high-value employment opportunities.

This RFA is for grant activities under **Component I**. The Georgian private sector's skills needs are dynamic and diverse, and employers in the country struggle to access the required individuals and skills that their businesses need to thrive and grow. Under this RFA, the Program is not prescribing sectors or regions for grants or activities beyond excluding those that are prohibited by U.S. law and regulations. By keeping the regions and sectors flexible, the Program aims to retain the ability to respond rapidly to emerging opportunities for growth.

B. COMPONENT I GRANTS DESCRIPTION

B.1. Objective

The objective of this RFA is to solicit applications for innovative approaches/models of private sector employers' engagement in skills development to strengthen linkages between skills training and high-value employment opportunities, either independently or as a partnership between the private sector employer(s) and the private training provider institution(s) or organization(s).

Proposed grant activities must be designed to enhance the applicant's participation in these approaches a) either independently or in partnership with private training provider(s) and b) in close partnership with employers.

Private sector engagement models may be related to an employer's participation in designing, delivering or assessing the quality of innovative educational services. Illustrative examples are given below in section B.2.

The grant activities funded under this RFA will be new private sector-led solutions piloted by the Program and the applicant that could be later scaled or replicated once they demonstrate success. These grant activities are appropriate for smaller companies who have good ideas but cannot afford to test these ideas on their own, or for larger companies who want to use these grants for piloting a new, unproven practice/model. Grant activities should provide an opportunity for the Applicant/Partner's business to ensure a highly qualified labor force and be more productive, competitive, and able to grow.

B.2. Scope Of Component I Grant Activities

The private sector typically undertakes skills development initiatives through one of two different modalities: (1) *Independent Engagement*, where the private sector, individual company or business association, develops and implements solutions to skills development internally and independently, without partnership with education and training provider institutions; and (2) *Partnership*, where the private sector collaborates with private education and training providers to collaboratively address skill development issues.

As such, applications may be submitted by the (i) private sector (represented by an individual company, group of companies, or business association), (ii) private sector in partnership with private training provider institution(s) or organization(s), or (iii) private training provider institution(s) or organization(s) in partnership with the private sector (represented by an individual company, group of companies, or

business association(s)). All applications must present practices/models of sustainable private sector engagement in the workforce development system utilizing already demonstrated or innovative forms of engagement.

Skills development practices/models offered by the applications are not subject to any sectoral or geographical limitations within Georgia. Practices/models presented in the grant applications may be considered for further upscaling to provide greater impact if they are successfully piloted under the given grants scheme. Grants applications should include outreach activities to share the results of these pilot practices/models to sector representatives. These activities must be considered in the grant application budget.

Potential topics for grant applications under Component I include, but are not limited to:

- Piloting various mechanisms for employers (represented by a company or business association), industry groups, and other private sector bodies to provide input into skills training program curricula development, including vocational/entrepreneurial/green/sustainable skills development;
- Digitalization of training programs;
- Development of training centers and delivery of skills training programs, including the use of work-based learning/apprenticeship methodology;
- Equipping training center facility(ies);
- Design of innovative learning platforms/approaches; development and implementation of quality assurances and standards for skills training programs independently by the employers or through the development of a partnership between private training provider(s) and employer(s);
- Incentivizing employers, (company(ies) or business associations), industry groups, and other private-sector bodies to improve the quality of educational services, including human, institutional or programmatic capacity;
- Formalization of non-formal certification courses through state authorization to achieve the sustainable integration of programs in the national qualifications system;
- Developing partnerships with internationally certified education providers or employers to maximize the internationalization of qualifications or other learning practices;
- Outreach about and promotion of TVET education, including upskilling opportunities for high-value jobs;
- Increasing employer participation in career guidance and promotion of upskilling opportunities;
- Development of education-to-employment bridge programs creating direct linkages between skills training programs and employment opportunities;
- Introduction of mechanisms for the recognition of prior learning.

B.3. Funding

The maximum award ceiling amount is **US \$30,000** per recipient and the maximum grant duration is **11 months**. The grant funding amounts in the grant agreements will be fixed in U.S. Dollars (USD). Disbursements will be made in the local currency, the Georgian lari (GEL), according to the disbursement schedule established in the grant agreement and utilizing the official exchange rate established by the National Bank of Georgia on the day of payment. Payments will either be made on a reimbursement basis

in tranches corresponding to the achievement of agreed upon milestones¹ or in exceptional cases on a cost-reimbursable basis. The payment method will be determined by the Program as part of an analysis of the applicant's organizational capability to manage grant funds.

All costs funded by the grant must be allowable, allocable, and reasonable. Further details about cost allowability are included below in Section E.4 "Ineligible Activities and Unallowable Costs." Resources that a grant recipient contributes to the total cost of a grant activity may be financial or in-kind. The total value of the applicant's contribution to this activity must be a minimum of **20%** of the requested amount. The applicant's cash contribution must equal or exceed **10%** of the amount funded by the Program. However, greater contributions committed to by the grantee and/or its partners will be viewed positively in the application evaluation process.

In-kind contributions may include goods, services, works, studies, equipment, materials, land, and leased property provided by the applicant. The value of in-kind contributions should be estimated during the selection process based on the expected value of the goods, works or services provided, assessed for reasonableness, and related explicitly to the Program. The recorded value for any in-kind contribution will be the fair market value.

Applications must be supported by a budget as described in Section C "Instructions to Applicants" below.

B.4. Gender and Social Inclusion

The limited opportunities for women to participate in economic activities are a major development challenge for Georgia. Applicants must consider how their proposed grant activity addresses constraints to women's participation in high-value economic activities, especially regarding gender stereotyping for certain occupations, and ensures equitable participation of women. Applicants must also consider how their proposed grant activity ensures inclusiveness for ethnic minorities and students with disabilities and propose methods to ensure these groups are informed about the possibilities and advantages of skills development programs and provide equitable access supporting them to overcome language, financial, social, or other types of constraints.

B.5. Environmental, Health, and Safety Compliance

The applicant must consider the impact of their proposed grant activity on the environment and include environmental sustainability as a central consideration when designing and implementing the grant activity. In accordance with U.S. Government Federal Regulations (Title 22 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 216) and USAID's Automated Directives System (Parts 201.5.10g and 204), the applicant must identify the potential environmental impacts of the proposed grant activity. The Program will review these prior to a final decision to proceed and the applicant will adopt appropriate environmental safeguards as necessary. In addition, if funded, the applicant must conduct the grant activity in a manner which safeguards the rights, health, and welfare of all individuals who take part in the grant activity.

Prior to an initiating a grant activity that has the potential to result in significant adverse environmental, health, and/or safety impacts, the Program will work with the applicant to prepare an Environmental Review Checklist (ERC) and an Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (EMMP) and submit these to USAID for approval prior to final approval of this grant activity. After the grant activity is completed, the applicant and the Program must sign a Record of Compliance with the ERC/EMMP certifying that the

¹ A milestone is the planned completion of a significant event in the project. A milestone is not the completion of every task in the project. A project might have several milestones to achieve desired results and consist of diverse activities/deliverables.

applicant met all applicable ERC/EMMP conditions and submit it to USAID for approval. While the environmental analysis will only be required in subsequent stages of the application process, applicants should consider all the potential costs related to environmental, health, and safety impact mitigation in the estimated activity cost.

C. INSTRUCTIONS TO APPLICANTS

The applicants will propose their own strategies/methodologies for the implementation of the scope of program activities described above, introducing innovative practices/models that are appropriate to their organizational strengths. Each applicant should carefully read the instructions that follow and complete all relevant forms.

C.1. Applicant Assessment

All applicants are subject to a pre-award responsibility determination by the Program, to ascertain whether the organization has the minimum management capabilities required to handle U.S. Government funds. The Pre-Award Risk Questionnaire form in **Annex 4** of this package is a required first step in the responsibility determination process. This questionnaire must be completed and submitted with the applicant's grant application.

C.2. Application Form

Templates for presentation of both the technical and budget aspects of the application are provided in **Annexes I-5**. Applicants must present their proposals using these templates.

Please consider that the length of the completed Application Form should not exceed 15 (fifteen) pages.

The application elements and guidelines are summarized below:

C.2.a. Full Application Form

- **Section I (Basic Information).** The applicant provides the legal name, Tax ID, and form of organization, specifies if the applicant represents a private company, business or professional association, or education provider; identifies the economic sector the grant project is targeting; includes contact information for the person in charge; provides a very brief description of the applicant's (partners' if applicable) scope: the title of the grant project, and a brief summary of the proposed grant activity, location, expected results, and duration of the project (in months).
- **Section II (Grant Description).** The applicant describes overarching grant elements, such as:
 - a) The problem statement;
 - b) Objective of the grant through the lens of the Program's objectives and sectoral outlook, in addition to the country context;
 - c) Activities required to pilot a new model of engagement;
 - d) Description of the grant activity's target group(s): employers, students/trainees/trainers, Program priority population, and others who will benefit from the grant activity;
 - e) Implementation methodology based on grant objectives, including all processes, tools, approaches, and methods suggested to implement proposed interventions;
 - f) Specific anticipated results and indicators for measuring results;
 - g) Sustainability (financial, programmatic, institutional) and scalability of the project results; and
 - h) Organizational capacity and past or current experience of implementing similar activities in terms of scope and/or scale.

The applicant should list all partners (legal entities engaging and contributing to the proposed grant activity implementation and achievement of the set results-if applicable), describing the partnership model, role, and rationale for each partner organization(s).

For each proposed activity, the applicant will be required to track specific indicators that are determined in consultation with the Program. The Program has developed a list of suggested indicators that is included as **Annex 2 – M&E Plan**. The applicant should select indicators from the list in **Annex 2** that are applicable to their proposed grant activity. The applicant may also propose other indicators or methods for measuring the success or impact of their grant activity.

The applicant should elaborate a strategy for gender and social inclusion. If applicable, describe how the proposed grant activity ensures affordability and equitable access and promote participation of the Program’s priority population, in particular women, youth, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and persons living in communities in close proximity to the administrative boundary lines (ABLs). Cost of the activities related to the gender and social inclusion of the Program priority population, including any technical assistance required, should be considered and reflected in the grant activity budget.

- **Section III (Grant Implementation Plan).** The applicant provides information regarding grant implementation, including proposed personnel and descriptions of each activity. Proposed tasks should reflect and be in line with the information provided in **Annex 5 – Grant Activity Gantt Chart**. Each task must be:
 - Complete and practical.
 - Integrated and scheduled with dependent tasks.
 - Assigned to a responsible party.
 - Defined in terms of resources required.
 - Concluded with a viable milestone of achievement — milestones must be linked to results.

The activities listed must show a logical, thoughtful approach to the overall implementation plan. They should describe actions and be logically sequenced. Each task must contribute to the achievement of the grant objective. Environmental impact mitigation (if applicable) and gender and social inclusion approaches should be reflected in the overall implementation plan.

The implementation plans must be supported by a description of main tasks that lists all identified actions and the start and end dates of each task, over the duration of the activity.

The applicant should describe locations of the proposed grant activity and its target groups. Particular implementation areas should be specified, including region(s), municipality(s), city(s), town(s), and community(s).

The management plan should outline roles and responsibilities of key personnel who will be involved in implementing this grant activity.

- **Section IV (Experience and Capacity).** The applicant should describe previous or ongoing experience implementing similar/related activities, or activities of similar size and complexity. This is an important factor in assessing the capacity of the applicant to implement the activity. The applicant should also provide contact information of references that can speak to the applicant’s past performance and capabilities.

- **Section V (Cost and Sustainability).**

Cost - This is a summary of the information provided in **Annex 3 – Grant Application Budget Form**, which includes the total grant funding request disaggregated per budget category, and the applicant's cash or in-kind contributions and/or contributions from other sources for the activity.

Applicants should include costs of activities related to the environmental impact mitigation (if applicable) and gender and social inclusion of the Program priority population.

Sustainability – The applicant should discuss strategies for ensuring the sustainability of the proposed activity and organization, including expected program income generation (if any), and third-party leveraging of funds (if any). Explain how the grant activity will be made sustainable after completion of the grant funding. This may include necessary follow-up activities, built-in strategies, ownership, and communication plans. Please be sure to distinguish between three types of sustainability: Financial, Programmatic and Institutional Sustainability.

C.2.b. Grant Application Budget Form

Each technical application must be supported by detailed budget forms. Applicants must submit their budget in accordance with **Annex 3 Grant Application Budget Forms**. While there is no page limit for this portion, applicants should be as concise as possible, but still provide the necessary details. Proposed costs must represent cost efficiency and be reasonable and allowable per the federal cost principles provided under 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 200, the full text of which can be found at <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200>; further information on the federal cost principles is included in Section F “Authority and Governing Regulations” of this RFA. When properly completed, reviewed, and approved, this budget template serves as the mutually agreed-upon “roadmap” for activity financial management. All activity costs must be identified. Cost data must be accurate and proposed amounts should be realistic.

It is important that the budget clearly indicates where specific grant activity funds are to come from (from USAID via the Program, contributed by the applicant, and/or by third-party resources). Contributions from third-party resources can be included as grantee contributions if they come from a non-U.S. government source. Furthermore, any contributions by the applicant must not be included in any other U.S. government-assisted grant program. The Program will require full disclosure by all involved parties and will maintain contact with affiliated third parties to verify their contributions.

Applicants must submit supplemental budget notes and must provide an accompanying narrative, by line item, which explains in detail the basis for how the applicant derived the individual line-item cost. The budget notes must be sufficient to ensure that the Program can determine the purpose of every cost item proposed, as well as understand the basis for the cost estimate (i.e., quotes, timesheets, salary notice for personnel, or daily rates of experts that support proposed cost and are necessary for cost analysis).

At the time of application submission, the applicant must provide to the Program backup/justifications for costs, such as quotes from vendors, rate verifications for staff, and so on.

All grant activity costs must be within the normal operating practices of the applicant and in accordance with its written policies and procedures.

C.2.c. Additional Application Instructions

The Application Form and Grant Application Budget Forms must be signed by an authorized agent of the applicant. Applications must be submitted in English. Applications should be submitted in electronic form to skillsgrants@iesc.org.

In addition to the application forms and annexes, applicants must include a copy of the organization's valid legal registration, organizational charter, corporate by-laws, and a copy of their latest audited financial statements, if applicable. The application, respective annexes, and supporting documentation must be submitted by no later than **January 29, 2025, 18:00** Georgia Standard Time (UTC/GMT +4). Applications received after the closing date and time will not be considered.

To assist applicants in preparation of the application, the following checklist summarizes the documentation to include in a submission in response to this RFA:

- Full Application Form (Annex 1)
- M&E Plan (Annex 2)
- Grant Application Budget Forms (Annex 3) and cost supporting documents
- Pre-Award Risk Questionnaire (Annex 4)
- Grant Activity Gantt Chart (Annex 5)
- Valid legal registration in Georgia, organizational charter, corporate by-laws, and policies/procedures (i.e., fixed asset management, procurement, HR, financial management procedures)
- Latest audited financial statements
- Unique Entity ID (UEI) Number from SAM.gov if the grantee currently has a UEI (**Note: a UEI is required prior to grant award, so applicants are encouraged to apply for a UEI as soon as possible if they do not currently have one**).

Note: Please refer to and follow the detailed instructions presented in each Annex.

D. MERIT REVIEW EVALUATION

The information that you provide in the application will enable the Program to decide if you are a suitable candidate for partnership. If your application corresponds with the objectives of the Program, and meets the eligibility criteria listed in this RFA, IESC staff will submit the application to the grant's evaluation committee for evaluation against the merit review criteria outlined below in this section. Based on this review, the grants evaluation committee will either approve, request further clarification or revisions, or reject the application. The recommendation or approval of an application by the evaluation committee in accordance with the established procedures does not guarantee an award. All applicants must demonstrate that they possess the necessary management competence to practice mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided.

While some applications will be rejected outright, for other applications presenting a valuable or desirable concept but lacking sufficient information for award, the applicant may be asked to provide additional information. In addition, the Program will analyze all the potential impacts, cost, and benefits of the submitted full applications and information, which the applicants are requested to provide relating to all major inputs described such as private sector engagement models, training program(s), number of people trained, equipment supply, infrastructural improvements, and other expected incremental costs.

As noted above, the evaluation process, negotiation, USAID approval, and finalization take an estimated minimum of 70 working days from the day the RFA is closed. However, this is a notional timeline and may be subject to change. Consequently, plan your activity accordingly.

Scoring criteria for applications is available below. If the application's total average score is less than 70% of the maximum points, the Grants Evaluation Committee will automatically reject the application.

Merit Review Category	Maximum Points Possible
Feasibility and efficiency of design and approach	35
Scale of impact on sector/target group	25
Sustainability/financial self-reliance	25
Organizational capacity	15
Overall Rating (out of 100 points)	100

These merit review criteria elements are described below.

A. Feasibility and Efficiency of Design and Approach: The quality and feasibility of the application and proposed approach for achieving desired results in terms of the appropriateness of the proposed methodology, innovativeness and replicability of the concept, and the work plan for achieving the Program's objectives to offer significant impacts. Demonstrated interest and long-term engagement of the private sector in skills training system supported by the Grant's program. Proposed mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation with objectively measurable indicators will also be appraised. The degree to which budgeting is clear and reasonable and reflects the best use of organizational and grant resources. In addition, reasonableness of the budget justification will also be considered. Commitment of the applicant to finance part of the activities. Please note that proposed cash contributions exceeding the minimum required will be evaluated more favorably.

B. Scale of Impact on Sector/Target Group: The extent to which the proposed activity corresponds to the needs of the employers and beneficiaries and will directly benefit them, feasibility of proposed targets. Value of employment opportunities for which the new model is designed. Feasibility of proposed

improvements in employment and productivity of graduates. Appropriateness of the proposed methodology to impact the target sector, Program priority population and relevance of the interventions to address specific constraints associated with the Program priority population engagement is skills training and high-value employment. Potential of proposed activity to benefit the sector. Demonstrated industry need for the private sector engagement model to meet the labor market demands and improve employability. How the proposed model will improve skills and knowledge of target group and advance their employment opportunities.

C. *Sustainability/Financial Self-Reliance*. The extent to which the funded activity will result in building and strengthening the capacity of grantee(s) and target groups. Whether the partnerships developed, new model created, training programs established, institutional capacity improved and financial self-reliance mechanisms proposed through this grant activity are sustainable or will become sustainable by completion of the given grant project. Solid evidence of sustainability must be presented reflecting three dimensions as requested in the Application Form: Financial, Programmatic and Institutional Sustainability.

D. *Organizational Capacity*. Previous or ongoing experience implementing similar activities in terms of scope and/or scale, work experience and positioning in the sector. This examines an Applicant's track record, which is an important factor in assessing the capacity of the Applicant to implement the activity. Extent of current and/or future high-value employment opportunities for which skills training is designed.

E. ELIGIBILITY

E.1. Recipients

Applicants must be registered in Georgia, formally constituted, recognized by, and in good standing with appropriate Georgian authorities, and compliant with all applicable civil and fiscal regulations. Eligible grant recipients include private companies, business associations, private vocational education training centers/colleges and private higher education institutes, professional associations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) registered in Georgia. Such applicants may indicate partnerships in their proposed implementation team, but only a single organization (the "Applicant") will serve as the Applicant and have a direct contractual relationship with the Program for the purposes of each grant. The following eligibility criteria also apply to all applicants:

- Applicants may only submit one application under this RFA, where the applicant is the leading organization; however, the applicant may be represented on other application as a partnered service provider.
- All applicants must have established linkages to the beneficiary group(s) identified in the scope of work, which is reflected by the incorporation of local views in the proposal.
- Faith-based and community groups will receive equal opportunity for funding in accordance with the mandated guidelines laid out in this RFA, except for faith-based organizations whose objectives are for discriminatory and religious purposes, and whose main objective of the grant is of a religious nature.
- Applicants must be able to demonstrate strong capacity and interest for sustainable engagement or successful past performance in implementation of integrated development programs related to the Program's goals and objectives as described in this RFA.
- Applicants must display sound management in the form of financial, administrative, and technical policies and procedures and present a system of internal controls that safeguard assets, protect against fraud, waste, and abuse, and support the achievement of the Program's goals and objectives. The Program will assess this capability prior to awarding a grant.
- Applicants must sign the following required certifications prior to receiving a grant. The Program will provide the certifications once application is selected for a grant and review them with applicants.

- Prohibition on Assistance to Drug Traffickers for Covered Countries and Individuals
- Certification Regarding Terrorist Financing
- Recipient Certification of Compliance
- Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants (Completion of survey is voluntary)
- For any grant(s) resulting from this solicitation that is other than in-kind and equivalent to US \$25,000 or more, grantees will be required to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier, or UEI. If the applicant already has a UEI, it should be included in their application. Otherwise, applicants will be expected to obtain a UEI (SAM) before an award is made. DUNS numbers can be obtained online at <https://sam.gov/content/home>.
- Eligible organizations must not appear on the following exclusionary and security lists:
 - The Excluded Parties List at <https://sam.gov/content/home>
 - The U.S. Treasury “Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons” at <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/SDN-List/Pages/default.aspx>
 - The United Nations Security Designation List at <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/un-sc-consolidated-list>
- Successful applicants will follow the Branding Strategy & Marking Plan of the Program, which will be annexed to the grant agreement.
- All grant applications must ensure environmental soundness and compliance in design and implementation as required by 22 CFR 216.

E.2. Eligible Activities

Grant activities funded under Component I must meet the following general criteria:

- Grants supported by the Program must promote its objectives. The proposed activities may be the sole or primary work of an organization, or an existing or new dimension or function of an organization largely dedicated to other projects.
- Applicants should demonstrate sustainable engagement of the private sector in, propose effective approaches to ensure affordability and equitable access to the industry-demanded skills training and employment opportunities, incorporate outreach activities to share the results for upscale and replication and include activities for promoting vocational education in general.
- **Eligible grant expenditures include, but are not limited to:**
 - Improving teaching infrastructure – tools and equipment required to deliver the particular training(s) to the relevant number of students.
 - Technical assistance and other costs related to the skills training program development, improvement, or replication (short-term formal/non-formal) and authorization process (if considered) – local and foreign Short-Term Technical Assistance (STTA) costs, written translation costs; authorization fee (initial), registration of patents and/or intellectual property rights (initial registration fees), or purchase of rights for use of others’ intellectual property (initial fees).
 - Cost related to acquiring and maintaining international certifications – initial franchise and/or license fees; franchise and/or license maintaining fees for a certain period of time (subject to discussion and agreement with the Program), local and foreign STTA costs for the implementation period, translation, editing and adaptation of the training materials, registration/authorization fees, or initial legal costs.
 - Training of instructors – any costs related to training-of-trainers/instructors at the start-up phase and during implementation (including costs related to international expert fees and international travel for the purpose of increasing the qualifications of the trainers), except of those costs qualified as non-eligible. Costs related to the salaries of the trainers/instructors during the delivery of the training programs are *not* eligible.
 - Establishment of various systems/methods of education delivery including digitalization through online platforms – any costs qualified as eligible under this RFA.

- Establishment of new/improved methods of students' assessment – local and foreign STTA costs and other eligible costs required for the development and initial implementation of monitoring models and systems.
- Access and inclusion approaches– any eligible costs related to the adoption and implementation of access and inclusion approaches, including local STTA costs.
- Activities related to attracting students – any eligible costs relate to drawing students to the proposed training program(s).
- Establishment of students' career counseling – any eligible costs related to the introduction and implementation of new approaches, including local STTA costs.
- Expenditures related to publicity – communication to the public and press of developments or achievements of the concept.
- Grants will cover only necessary and allowable costs linked to the execution of the activity such as staff salaries, consultant fees, training, meetings and seminars, publications, purchase and/or rental of equipment, translation and adaptation of materials, office and travel expenses, and other direct costs. The specific costs to be funded under the Program must conform to the USAID guidelines for funding activities; allowable cost information may be found here: [eCFR: 2 CFR Part 200 -- Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#).
- Should it be deemed necessary by the Environmental Review Checklist (ERC), grants will also cover costs associated with mitigating the environmental impact of activities. These mitigation measures should clearly outline associated resource needs.
- Activities can only begin upon signature of the agreement between the applicant and IESC. Costs incurred before execution of the agreement (including signed certifications and assurances) will not be reimbursed unless agreed upon in writing.

E.3. Leverage Contribution Eligibility

To be eligible for a grant award, the applicants must contribute through matching contributions. The total value of the matching contributions to this activity by the applicant must be **at least 20% of the requested grant amount, and the applicant's cash contribution must be at a minimum 10% of the amount requested from the Program.**

All contributions by the applicant (both financial and in-kind) must meet all the following criteria:

- Be verifiable in the applicant records.
- Be necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient accomplishment of grant activity objectives.
- Be allowable under the applicable USAID regulations.
- Must not be included as matching contributions for any other U.S. Government–assisted program.
- Must not be paid by the U.S. Government under another grant or agreement.
- Are provided for in the estimated activity cost and in the approved budget, if selected.

E.4. Ineligible Activities and Unallowable Costs

All grant costs must be reasonable, allowable, and directly related to the grant award. Grant funds cannot be used for the following:

- **Construction activities (without prior approval by the Program).**
- **Any operational costs related to the training programs delivery, including salaries of the trainers/instructors. The applicant can count these costs toward their cost matching contribution. Training-of-trainers costs or those related to program development are allowable.**
- Any lease/rental fee. The Applicant can count these costs toward their cost matching contribution if it is directly attributable to grant performance (not general operational leases/rental fees for the company).

- Private ceremonies, parties, celebrations, or "representation" expenses.
- Purchases of restricted goods, such as certain agricultural commodities, motor vehicles (including motorcycles), pharmaceuticals and contraceptive items, pesticides, used equipment, U.S. Government excess property and fertilizers without the prior approval by the USAID Contracting Officer (CO).
- Prohibited goods under USAID regulations, including but not limited to military and surveillance equipment, police or law enforcement equipment, abortion equipment and services, weather modification equipment, luxury goods, and gambling equipment.
- Purchases of goods or services restricted or prohibited under the prevailing USAID source/nationality regulations and relevant Standard Provisions; or from countries or suppliers as may be identified by USAID's consolidated list of debarred, suspended, or ineligible subcontractors at <https://sam.gov/content/home>.
- Any purchases or activities deemed unnecessary to accomplish grant purposes as determined by IESC.
- Previous obligations, interest owed, and/or bad debts.
- Fines and/or penalties.
- Creation of endowments.
- Taxes and VAT on the purchase of supplies/services.
- Currency exchange losses.
- Purchase of land or buildings.
- Costs of project preparatory studies or other preparatory activities.
- Miscellaneous and/or contingency costs.
- Activities unlawful under the Georgian law.
- Other costs unallowable under USAID and/or federal regulations, such as alcoholic beverages.

F. AUTHORITY/GOVERNING REGULATIONS

Program grants to non-U.S. organizations adhere to federal guidance provided under 2 CFR 200 “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards” as detailed in the USAID Mandatory and Standard Provisions.

The full text of this regulation can be found at <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200>. The Program is required to ensure that all organizations receiving USAID grant funds comply with the guidance found in these circulars, as applicable to the respective terms and conditions of their grant awards.

Issuance of this RFA and assistance with full application development do not constitute an award or commitment on the part of the Program, nor does it commit the Program to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. Further, the Program reserves the right to accept or reject any or all submissions received.

During the application review and implementation process of grants, the Program reserves the right to investigate a submission or ongoing grant due to any real or perceived conflict of interest. In the event that the Program determines that a conflict of interest exists, the Program may disqualify a submission or terminate a grant.

ANNEXES

- Annex 1 – Full Application Form
- Annex 2 – M&E Plan
- Annex 3 – Grant Application Budget Forms
- Annex 4 – Pre-Award Risk Questionnaire

- Annex 5 – Grant Activity Gantt Chart