

Request for Proposals

Business Advisory/Consulting Services – Georgia

Issue Date:	March 15, 2023
Closing Date For Proposals:	April 3, 2023
Closing Time:	18:00 Tbilisi time
Project Title:	USAID Industry-led Skills Development Program
Offer Reference Number:	RFP-002-2023

1. Disclaimer

The information contained in this request for proposals (hereinafter referred to as RFP) document is provided to the Offeror by Improving Economies for Stronger Communities (IESC) for the USAID Industry-led Skills Development Program (the Program).

IESC desires to receive proposals from individuals (Offerors) who are interested in and capable to conduct research, draft a report, and deliver a presentation on Private Sector Engagement Models for Skills Development that have been supported by the Program to date.

The purpose of this RFP document is to provide potential Offerors with information to assist them in the preparation of their proposals for the services that IESC seeks to source. This RFP document does not claim to contain all the information each potential Offeror may require. Each Offeror should conduct their own assessment and should check the accuracy, reliability, and completeness of the information in this RFP document, and where necessary obtain independent advice from appropriate sources.

IESC plans to award a contract to an international consultant. (To assist the consultant with local logistics, research, interpretation and translation, IESC will separately engage a Georgian consultant to provide support during the duration of the proposed assignment.) IESC may cancel this RFP and is under no obligation to make an award as a result of this RFP, although IESC fully anticipates doing so. IESC may, at its own discretion, but without being under any obligation to do so, update, amend, or supplement the information in this RFP document. IESC, at its own discretion, may award a service provider to conduct only a part of the activities in this RFP. Any contract resulting from this RFP will be a Firm Fixed Price contract.

Note that the selected Offeror may be subject to the approval of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Any activities under a final award are subject to

and shall be carried out in accordance with the regulation promulgated by USAID, the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), and any other subsequently published rule or regulation governing USAID programs.

Interested offerors are responsible for all costs associated with the preparation and submission of proposals and will not be reimbursed by IESC.

2. Background

IESC is a leading U.S. nonprofit organization that fosters private sector development in the economically developing world. Since 1964, we have delivered lasting solutions that have resulted in more than 1.5 million jobs in 137 countries. We partner with businesses, cooperatives, entrepreneurs, jobseekers, and governments to sustainably build capacity, create jobs, and grow enterprises, sharing proven skills and experience that improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities around the world. Our major funders today are the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), among others.

IESC is implementing the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Industry-led Skills Development Program (the Program) in Georgia. The purpose of the Program is to develop industry-relevant human capacity that contributes to high-value employment opportunities and increased economic competitiveness in Georgia. The Program achieves this by systematically engaging employers to equip Georgians with the skills demanded in sectors with high growth potential and by creating direct linkages between training programs and employment opportunities. A key mechanism for incentivizing these programs and partnerships is a \$13 million skills development grant fund.

The Program is designed as a flexible and demand-driven mechanism to incentivize private sector investment in the critical skills that meet both the needs for business growth and increased employment. To accomplish this, the Program solicits, selects, and issues competitive, cost share grants with Georgian employers, educational institutions, and business associations. The cross-sectoral grants program has been underway for nearly one year with 19 current and 8 completed grant-funded skill development programs.

Through these grants, the Program prioritizes interventions under three Components:

Component 1: Incentivize private sector engagement in skills development.

Component 2: Establish skills training programs demanded by the private sector.

Component 3: Increase access to training opportunities for rural and priority populations.

3. Period of Performance

The anticipated period of performance will be from April 17, 2023, until June 5, 2023. However, because the consultant will be engaged under a Firm Fixed Price contract, it will be the sole responsibility of the consultant him/herself to determine the actual Level of Effort that they will need to complete the assignment and to price their offers accordingly. *(For more details, see Section 11. Cost Proposal Evaluation.)*

4. Scope Statement

IESC has been implementing the USAID Industry-led Skills Development Program in Georgia Since May 2021. Central to the Program's success is the intersection of two key approaches: private sector engagement and demand-driven skill development. With the program now approaching two years into implementation and the first round of private sector-led and demand-driven skill development programs underway, programmatic lessons are emerging. These lessons are initially indicating success in using demand-side approaches to address skill and employment constraints in Georgia. Better understanding how these mechanisms unlock skills-based growth is especially critical now as COVID-related reshuffling in the employment market, changing recruitment and hiring methods, and evolving working arrangements have left supply-side skills development programs struggling to keep up with the rapid pace of change in post-COVID labor markets.

The Program seeks a qualified international consultant to analyze and document lessons learned regarding the Program's approach to private sector engagement in skills development, identify ways in which these private sector engagement models can be applied in future skills development programming, and recommend areas of intervention or adjustment.

The final product will be a publicly available white paper, as well as an overview presentation, on the effectiveness and replicability of the program's demand-driven approach to private sector-led skills development utilized through the Program's initial round of grant-supported interventions.

All quotations must be valid for one hundred and twenty (120) days.

5. Statement Of Work

5.1. Schedule of Authorities

The selected Offeror will report to the Program's Private Sector Engagement Team Lead.

5.2. Activities

The overarching objective of the proposed assignment is to review and analyze the Program's efforts to engage the private sector to invest in skills development, the types and design of the partnerships developed, and the prospects for the resulting activities to build a durable foundation for advancing lasting improvements in Georgia's skills development ecosystem, as well as potentially serving as a model that could achieve similar goals elsewhere. Questions that the assignment is meant to address include:

- *How has the Program's demand-driven design enabled it to be adaptable and flexible in a dynamic environment?*
- *How have ongoing impacts from COVID, and sudden and significant migration flows affected Program implementation and private sector behavior?*
- *Which efforts did the Program undertake to engage the private sector in discussions about its skills needs and those of its specific industry sectors, and what lessons were learned from this process in terms of effectiveness and efficiency?*
- *Of the Program's various co-investment and organizational resources, including both the various grant mechanisms and the Business Leaders' Council platform, which have elicited the greatest interest from the private sector and why?*
- *How willing were private sector representatives to invest their own time, in-kind, and financial resources in skills development, and how could these findings inform future program design?*
- *How willing were private sector players to partner, whether with other businesses, educational institutions, or other stakeholders, in order to advance skills development? What were their motivations for doing so? Was their preference to support formal or non-formal education, and to what degree were they willing to engage in public-private partnerships? What role, if any, was the Program able to play in facilitating the formation or effective functioning of such partnerships?*
- *What types of partnerships emerged from the Program's efforts to facilitate private sector engagement in skills development, and can any preliminary conclusions be drawn as to the effectiveness and sustainability of various partnership models?*
- *How do the ability and willingness of the Georgian private sector to engage in skills development compare to those of one or more other countries in a similar stage of economic and political development? Is there anything in the Georgian context that is either unique or noteworthy regarding facilitating private sector engagement?*

Specific anticipated tasks for the assignment include the following:

1. For the purpose of establishing context, acquaint oneself with basic information on Georgian economic performance and trends, with a focus on employment and workforce development systems (both formal and informal), labor market dynamics, and private sector engagement in the skills development system.
2. Conduct desk research on the Program and how it is working to catalyze the development of demand-driven skills development, with a particular emphasis on private sector engagement.
3. Design a robust research framework in conjunction with Program and USAID/Georgia.
4. Create questionnaires and conduct interviews with Program stakeholders, including current and former partners and grantees, skill development program trainees/beneficiaries, USAID/Georgia representatives, Program staff, and relevant Government of Georgia agencies. Due to the Program's early implementation stage, the research will be primarily focused on up to 20 projects funded by the Program, primarily but not exclusively under its Component 1 "Incentivize private sector engagement in skills development" grant mechanism.¹ In particular, focus should be made on how the private sector can be effectively engaged to co-invest in skills development, how this engagement can be utilized to maximize impact, and the relative strengths and weaknesses of various partnership engagement models utilized to date. Where relevant, a brief analysis of the Program's use of performance-based funding mechanisms should be included as well.
5. Based on findings from the desk research and interviews, engage with Program staff and USAID/Georgia to develop a white paper that contains lessons learned on the effectiveness and replicability of private sector engagement mechanisms created through the Program, best practices/recommendations for future interventions based on desk and in-person research, and any other relevant findings.
6. Develop a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the key findings and conclusions of the conducted research and present it to Program stakeholders to solicit their questions, comments, and other feedback; and
7. Revise the report based on feedback received from IESC, USAID, and other stakeholders on both the white paper and the presentation.

¹ By the time of the anticipated research, most of these projects will be recently completed, though a few will still be undergoing implementation. As a practical matter, therefore, the focus of the research is not intended to be a comprehensive evaluation of the ultimate outcomes of the supported programs on trainees, but rather a preliminary examination of the mechanisms and motivations by which stakeholders decided to design, invest in, and/or participate in skills development, their initial impressions of the value of the process, lessons learned to date, and preliminary results and expected longer-term outcomes.

6. Contract Type and Deliverables

The contract is anticipated to be Firm Fixed Price. The list of deliverables for use in preparing proposals can be found below; costs per each deliverable in the table below shall be proposed by the Offeror. Payment will be made based on the achievement/completion of each deliverable.

Deliverable	Anticipated Due Date	Payment %
1. Proposed Methodology for conducting both desk and field research under this assignment, including a projected timeline for deliverables 2-4 below and a list of proposed interviewees and anticipated interview questions, to be submitted to and approved by the Program and USAID before initiating further activities.	April 24, 2023	
2. White Paper presenting lessons learned on the effectiveness and replicability of private sector engagement mechanisms created through the Program, best practices/recommendations for future interventions based on desk and in-person research, and any other relevant findings. Wherever possible, the report should utilize tables, charts, and other graphics to visually demonstrate key findings, conclusions, and recommendations regarding private-sector engagement as a key aspect of the Program's design, implementation, impact to date, as well as future projected impact.	May 19, 2023	
3. Final White Paper	May 29, 2023	
4. PowerPoint Presentation summarizing the key findings and conclusions of the conducted research and including recommendations on lessons learned that could inform the design and implementation of future programming both within and beyond Georgia and the wider South Caucasus region.	June 5, 2023	

7. Instructions to Offerors

7.1. Submission

- 1) Offers received after the closing date may not be considered.
- 2) Offers must be in U.S. Dollars.
- 3) Technical and cost proposals must be submitted as two separate documents. Cost information must not be included in the technical proposal.

Offerors must submit their proposals by the closing date and time, as listed on page one, via the following email: skills@iesc.org

7.2. Clarification and Amendments

Offerors may request clarifications via the following email: skills@iesc.org, no later than **18:00 Tbilisi time on March 22, 2023**. IESC will provide answers to these questions and requests for clarification asked by all Offerors simultaneously via email and posted on the IESC website with the RFP before the close of business on/or before **18:00 Tbilisi time on April 3, 2023**. IESC may not answer questions before the proposal submission deadline outside of the allotted response period for clarifications. No questions will be answered over the phone or in person.

7.3. Cover Page and Markings

In addition to the required proposal documents listed in sections 10 and 11 below, please include a cover page with your submission for the technical and the cost proposals (separate cover pages). The cover page should be on Offeror letterhead and should contain the following information:

- 1) Project or Title (from the front page of this RFP document)
- 2) Offer Reference Number (from the front page of this RFP document)
- 3) Offeror Name
- 4) Offeror Address
- 5) Name of Offeror's authorized representative
- 6) Contact person if different than Offeror's representative
- 7) Telephone #, Cellular/Mobile Phone #, Email address
- 8) Duration of Validity of proposal
- 9) Payment terms
- 10) Total Proposed Price (**cover page of cost proposal only**)
- 11) Signature, date, and time

7.4. Chronological List of Proposal Events

The following calendar summarizes important dates in the solicitation process. Offerors must strictly follow these deadlines.

Activity	Due Date
RFP published	March 15, 2022
Deadline for written questions	March 22, 2023, 18:00 Tbilisi
Answers provided to questions/clarifications	March 25, 2023, 18:00 Tbilisi
Proposal Due Date	April 3, 2023, 18:00 Tbilisi
Estimated Start Date of the Contract	April 17, 2023

The dates above may be modified at the sole discretion of IESC. Any changes will be published in an amendment to this RFP.

8. Eligibility Requirements

The program is seeking an international consultant with relevant experience to conduct the proposed research. The desired qualifications are as follows:

- The international consultant must have extensive experience providing evaluations and/or analyses of international development programs, with particular emphasis on economic development and/or professional and vocational education and training.
- The international consultant must demonstrate the ability to carry out research and analytical work.
- The international consultant must demonstrate experience in quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.
- The international consultant must demonstrate experience in conducting and delivering high-quality evaluations, analytical, or research reports for USAID or other donors, NGOs, governments, or private sector clients.
- It is desirable that the international consultant demonstrate experience in assignments relating to Private Sector Engagement and skills development.
- The international consultant must demonstrate strong research design and coordination experience, as well as a proven track record of producing high-quality deliverables in a timely manner.

Award may be contingent upon USAID final approval.

9. Basis for Award

IESC anticipates that the award will be based on best-value principles. Accordingly, the award will be made to the technically acceptable Offerors whose proposals provide the greatest overall value to IESC and the USAID Industry-led Skills Development Program,

price, and other factors considered. The winning proposal must conform to all solicitation requirements.

To determine best value, proposals will be evaluated by a selection committee on the criteria below. The number of points assigned, totaling 100 points, indicates the relative importance of each individual criterion. Offerors should note that these criteria serve to: (a) identify the significant factors that Offerors should address in their proposals; and (b) set the standard against which all proposals will be evaluated.

10. Technical Proposal Evaluation

Please read carefully, the following are instructions for preparing proposals. Proposals must be organized into sections corresponding to the sections presented in **10.1 Technical Evaluation Criteria** and numbered accordingly. Please stay within the page limits given below. Only include the requested information and avoid submitting extra content. Any text or pages exceeding the page limitation for each section of the proposal may be redacted and not evaluated.

Proposals shall be written in English with each page numbered consecutively. Cover pages, dividers, and tables of contents are not subject to the page limit.

10.1. Technical Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria. Points will also reflect the overall presentation of the proposal, which should be clear, complete, well organized, and well written. Most importantly, proposals should address all the requirements listed in this RFP.

[1] Technical and management approach: 4-page limit – 40 possible points

Proposals will be scored on the demonstration of technical and management approach for conducting activities and delivering the deliverables as outlined in **Section 5.2 Activities** and **Section 6. Contract Type and Deliverables** and will be reviewed based on outline of the action plan and methodology for conducting the respective research.

[2] Offeror's past performance and references: 3-page limit (not including samples of previous work, which may be attachments and/or references) - 40 possible points

The proposal must provide a detailed account of the Offeror's record in implementing similar activities to those outlined in the tasks and activities, which will help the committee to evaluate technical expertise and capabilities of the offeror. The technical proposal shall include a summary of past performance. Offerors should provide experience in general, and

specifically include experience in conducting research and the ability to carry out analytical work.

This section should include sufficient information to demonstrate the Offeror's performance for the above tasks and activities and include how the overall approach, including analytical work, is based on extensive prior experience in conducting the research.

Offerors should provide a minimum of three (3) references for past and present projects and include the contact information of three prior or current clients for which the Offeror has completed a similar task. References must include contact information.

[3] Offeror's Personnel Experience and Capacities: 3-page limit (not including resumes or CVs, which are attachments) - 20 possible points

The technical proposal must include a description (biographical sketch acceptable) of the individual who would directly work on the activities in the contract. Resumes or CVs must be submitted as attachments for individuals submitted in this section and do not count within the page limitations of this section.

This section will be marked on the extent to which the Offeror or its personnel have experience in conducting the required research and analytical work.

11. Cost Proposal Evaluation

The Offeror shall submit a separate cost proposal that includes the cost of performing the activities as described above. These costs should be broken down to show the separate cost elements of each deliverable and the **total estimated cost for all deliverables listed in Section 6. Contract Type and Deliverables**. As noted above, IESC will pay a fixed price per approved completion of each deliverable listed in Section 6. Contract Type and Deliverables.

Because the consultant will be engaged under a Firm Fixed Price contract, it will be the sole responsibility of Offerors to determine the actual Level of Effort that they will need to complete the assignment and to price their offers accordingly. The estimated value for each contract is \$20,000 to \$25,000.

All proposed costs must be in accordance with the U.S. Government Cost Principles under FAR Part 31.

The cost proposals must include:

1. A spreadsheet that lists each deliverable per **Section 6. Contract Type and Deliverables** and the proposed payment price for each deliverable.

2. The Offeror must provide either a detailed budget showing major line items such as salaries, allowances, travel cost, other direct costs, or an activity budget. The budget must show unit prices, quantities, and total price.
3. The cost proposal shall also include a budget narrative that explains the basis for the estimation of each cost element or line item. Supporting information must be provided in sufficient detail and include unit cost information to allow for a complete analysis of each cost element or item. IESC shall request additional cost information if the Evaluation committee has concerns of the reasonableness, necessity, and realism of an Offeror's proposed cost.
4. If it is an offeror's regular practice to budget an indirect rate for overhead costs, the Offeror must explain the rate and the rate's base of application in the budget narrative. IESC reserves the right to request additional information to substantiate an Offeror's indirect rate.

Cost proposals are not assigned points, but for overall evaluation purposes of this RFP, technical evaluation factors other than cost, when combined, are considered approximately equal to cost factors. If technical scores are determined to be equal or nearly equal, cost will become the determining factor.

12. Source of Funding, Authorized Geographic Code, and Source and Origin

Any subcontract resulting from this RFP will be financed with USAID funding and will be subject to U.S. Government and USAID regulations.

All goods and services offered in response to this RFP or supplied under any resulting award must meet USAID Geographic Code 937 in accordance with the United States Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), 22 CFR §228, available at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2012-title22-vol1/pdf/CFR-2012-title22-vol1-part228.pdf>.

The cooperating country for this RFP is Georgia.

Offerors must not offer or supply any products, commodities or related services that are manufactured or assembled in, shipped from, transported through, or otherwise involving any of the following countries: Cuba, Iran, North Korea, (North) Sudan, Syria. Related services include incidental services pertaining to any/all aspects of this work to be performed under a resulting contract (including transportation, fuel, lodging, meals, and communications expenses). Offerors also must not offer, or supply telecommunications equipment or services prohibited by Section 889 of the U.S. Government's National Defense

Authorization Act (NDAA). The list of prohibited companies as defined by the U.S. Government under Section 889 is as follows:

- Huawei Technologies Company
- ZTE Corporation
- Hytera Communications Corporation
- Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company
- Dahua Technology Company

and associated subsidiaries or affiliates.

13. Deviations

IESC reserves the right to waive any deviations by offerors from the requirements of this solicitation that in IESC's opinion are considered not to be material defects requiring rejection or disqualification; or where such a waiver will promote increased competition.

14. Discrepancies

Please read the instructions carefully before submitting your proposal. Any discrepancy in following the instructions or contract provisions may disqualify your proposal without recourse or an appeal for reconsideration at any stage.

15. Conflict of Interest Declaration

The following steps outline IESC's contract selection process and should be understood by all Offerors to ensure the transparency of awards and avoid conflict of interest.

- 1) Request for Proposals (RFPs) are posted on IESC's website. The offer is open to all qualified offerors;
- 2) Clarifications will be emailed to all offerors submitting questions, as well as posted on IESC's website, simultaneously;
- 3) Once the proposals are received, an evaluation committee scores them;
- 4) Cost proposals are evaluated for reasonableness, accuracy, and completeness;
- 5) The best value proposal is selected based on a combination of the technical score and the cost;
- 6) No activity can be started until both IESC and the awardee have signed a formal contract; and

- 7) IESC policy against fraud and code of business ethics exists throughout the life of the subcontract and beyond. Even if the contract is closed, if any party is found guilty of fraud, IESC will make a full report to the USAID Office of Inspector General, which may choose to investigate and prosecute guilty parties to the fullest extent of the law.

Any contracts awarded will be required to comply with all administrative standards and provisions required by the Award made from USAID.

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