



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

NEWSLETTER

THE USAID INDUSTRY-LED SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



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“To ensure human capital development in the country, there is a need to gradually improve current qualifications and standards and introduce new qualifications in particular fields. Sector Skills Organizations are designed to ensure maximum engagement of industry actors and stakeholders in this process.” - Skills Agency Georgia.

Sector Skills Organizations as New Strategic Actors in the Skills Ecosystem

The latest phase of TVET reform in Georgia entails development of a new system utilizing the sectoral expertise available in the private sector to contribute to improved educational quality and relevance to labor market needs. The new policy envisions the creation of Sector Skills Organizations (SSOs) as new strategic actors in the TVET system. By establishing SSOs in priority sectors of the economy, the Skills Agency, with support from the USAID Industry-led Skills Development Program, aims to catalyze sustainable engagement of the private sector, improvement of education and training resources, and the creation of new or improvement of existing professional standards. To this end, the Program has utilized its grants mechanism to select four organizations demonstrating a commitment and capacity to achieve formal recognition as SSOs as well as fulfill the functions

of SSOs as defined by the Government. In order to register as SSOs, each of the following associations formed an initiative group and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Agency:

- ✓ Georgian Heritage Crafts Association - Artisan Sector Skills Organization Initiative Group
- ✓ Infrastructure Construction Companies' Association – Engineering and Construction Sector Skills Organization Initiative Group
- ✓ Georgian Union of Nurses – Nursing Sector Skills Organization Initiative Group
- ✓ Georgian National Association of Sport, Fitness and Physical Education – Sports Sector Skills Organization Initiative Group

PRIORITIZED INTERVENTIONS

INCENTIVIZING PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The Program continues to support employers to participate in innovative practices of engagement in skills development. The Program also enhances partnership approaches between employers and education providers and facilitates the creation of direct linkages between skills training and high-value employment opportunities. These practices can be related to employers' participation in skills training program curricula development,



APPLICATIONS
SUBMITTED



PARTNERSHIPS LAUNCHED
TO ESTABLISH SEVEN
TRAINING PROGRAMS AND
TRAIN 390 STUDENTS



CO-INVESTMENT BY
USAID – \$311,111.98



PARTNER CONTRIBUTION
\$107,816.09

the delivery of skills training programs, the development and implementation of quality assurance and standards for skills training programs, and creating direct linkages between skills training programs and employment opportunities. In Round 2 of the Request for Applications - Incentivize Private Sector Engagement in Skills Development, the Program has launched partnerships with an additional four organizations to create innovative approaches and strengthen linkages between skills training and high-value employment opportunities.

DEVELOP SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMS DEMANDED BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The Program supports the creation and improvement of both short- and long-term skills training programs. The short-term skills training programs rapidly address skills mismatches that pose current constraints to the growth of high potential sectors. They are designed to provide the flexibility needed to meet employers' immediate needs and build customized trainings. The long-term skills training programs help to enhance skills that



APPLICATIONS
SUBMITTED



PARTNERSHIPS LAUNCHED TO
TRAIN OVER 2260 BENEFICIARIES
IN 31 TRAINING PROGRAMS



CO-INVESTMENT BY
USAID – \$1,985.545



PARTNER CONTRIBUTION
\$2,221.248

are currently in high demand or are anticipated to grow in the near future. Long-term programs must establish or significantly improve higher-level (levels III and higher as defined by the National Qualification Framework) skills development programs demanded by employers in sectors with high growth potential and additionally, address the skills required for regulated professions. The long-term training programs must either be internationally certified or be compatible with an internationally recognized certification scheme and provide graduates with qualifications defined by levels III-V of the National Qualification Framework.

INCREASE ACCESS TO TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL AND PRIORITY POPULATIONS

Program interventions under this Component are designed to expand access to industry-demanded high-quality skills training programs in rural areas and for the Program's priority populations. These short- and long-term skills training programs will increase the employability and incomes of priority populations, including women, youth, ethnic minorities, persons



APPLICATIONS
SUBMITTED



PARTNERSHIP LAUNCHED TO
ESTABLISH 18 TRAINING PROGRAMS
AND TRAIN 549 STUDENTS



CO-INVESTMENT BY
USAID – \$496,961



PARTNER CONTRIBUTION
\$723,020

with disabilities, and persons living in communities in proximity to the Administrative Boundary Lines. These skills development programs are industry-driven, engage the private sector in replication, adaptation, and delivery of skills training programs either independently or in partnership with a training provider, and establish sustainable systems for developing human capital. These skills development initiatives are designed to increase employment and income of the un- and under-employed rural population to enhance employers' productivity.

BUILDING SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE



LAUNCHING CYBER SECURITY TRAINING CENTER AT KUTAI SI INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY



With support from USAID, Kutaisi International University (KIU) and its partners launched a project to address the skills gap in and increased market demand for information and cyber security in Georgia. This efficient transition model from education to the cyber security labor market will ensure the engagement of at least 400 participants in three different short-term courses in cyber security: Fundamentals of Cyber Security (beginner's level); Certified Ethical Hacker (core course); and Ethical Hacker Practical Course (advanced/practical course). To ensure international certification of trainees, KIU has joined the U.S.-based International Council of Electronic Commerce Consultants (EC-Council), which is the world's largest cyber security technical certification body, operating in 145 countries around the globe.

INCREASING ACCESS TO TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE ELECTRICAL ENERGY SECTOR



As one of the leaders in Georgia's electricity field, LLC Retco will establish work to establish a new training center in Rustavi equipped with a long-term training course module focused on introducing EU standards to Georgia's energy field. The project has three international partners: Siemens, which will share best international practices and provide equipment to the training center; Latvian Association of Power Engineers and Energy Constructors, which will develop training modules and deliver trainings in compliance with EU standards; and the Personnel Certification Center of the Latvian Association of Power Engineers and Energy Constructors, which is a partner in project certification.

ENHANCEMENT OF VET PROGRAMS IN THE CIVIL AVIATION SECTOR



To reduce the shortage of highly skilled aviation personnel and support the development of the Georgian civil aviation sector, the Program is partnering with Georgian Aviation University (GAU) to support the modernization of the Georgian civil aviation sector through various activities, including preparation and training of qualified aviation staff with a main focus on aircraft maintenance and aerodrome design and operations. In addition, the Program will support the modernization of GAU's training facilities to improve the learning infrastructure and increase access to effective learning resources accessible by personnel in the civil aviation industry. Throughout program implementation, GAU will adhere to recommendations and guidelines developed by international industry organizations, such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA).

BUILDING SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE



ADVENTURE TOURISM SCHOOL'S WEST POINT TRAINING CENTER TO ADDRESS HIGH-VALUE EMPLOYMENT IN TOURISM



The Program is partnering with the Georgia Mountain Guides' Association to expand one of the country's most successful TVET Public-Private Partnerships – GMGA's East Point Adventure Tourism School (ATS) in Gudauri. The launch of the West Point ATS in Mestia will help to equip rural communities with industry-demanded skills and professions for high-value employment in tourism. The Center will provide access to 18 high-quality adventure tourism programs, including air, land, and water-based activities, to 800 students, including current and prospective adventure tourism guides, producing at least 400 successful trainees with improved employment opportunities. Courses will be delivered in 12 different locations across West Georgia, including Mestia, Oni, Lentekhi, Tsageri, Tskaltubo, Martvili, Tsalenjikha, Sackhere, Chiatura, Khulo, Akhaltsikhe, and Bakhmaro.

ADDRESSING THE SKILLS MISMATCH IN MEDICAL DIAGNOSTICS



CITO Medical Center is a privately-owned laboratory and outpatient clinic focused on the delivery of high-quality outpatient medical services. Through partnership with the Program, CITO and its partner company the European Business Association (EBA) will work on eliminating the existing skill gap in the medical laboratory sub-sector by introducing a pilot mechanism for long-term cooperation in the sector and the professional education system through a new program for the medical laboratory technician profession. CITO will pilot the training program and then hand it over to Georgian American University for its ongoing delivery.

STRENGTHENING NETWORK ENGAGEMENT IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT



With support from USAID, Journalism Resource Center (JRC) and its partner, the Georgian Alliance of Regional Broadcasters (GARB), will intensify media coverage on upskilling opportunities across all of Georgia's regions by engaging 20 regional television channels and six radio channels in the campaign. Jointly, they will design and conduct a nationwide communication campaign aimed at stimulating businesses to engage in skills development practices to develop solutions demanded by the market and new engagement models in the regions.

BUILDING SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE



CREATING A PIPELINE FOR EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT IN CONSTRUCTION



To respond to construction sector needs, the Program supported the Infrastructure Construction Companies' Association (ICCA) and Georgian American University to develop innovative short-term training and retraining programs in Construction Site Management, Construction Management, and Environmental Management, thus creating a pipeline for better and more effective employment in the sector. ICCA aims to authorize a Construction Site Management retraining program at the end of the project. As for The Construction Management and Environmental Management courses will be developed with the involvement of an international partner, the Spanish Confederation of Business Organizations.

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN INVENTORY MANAGEMENT AND LOGISTICS



Inventory management and logistics are key factors in increasing the competitiveness of companies involved in production and trade. Increased demand for quality logistics in Georgia has led to a significant shortage of qualified logistics personnel. To address the issue, the Program is supporting Nova Ltd., one of the leaders of Georgia's retail market for construction and home repair materials and supplies, and its partner Georgian Logistics Association to establish an in-house training center and build the capacity of staff in inventory management and logistics.

SUPPORTING INDUSTRY-LED HIGH-LEVEL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN THE IT SECTOR

re:invent Global demand for software developers is growing rapidly, which presents an opportunity for youth in Georgia to increase their earning potential. Remote work in software development can address issues of unemployment and brain drain from rural areas, as more individuals can participate in the growing global market for software development services. Through partnership with the Program, re:invent is creating a digital learning platform through which individuals can obtain knowledge in software development, enabling them to secure high-paying employment, both remotely or on-site.

BUILDING SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE



CREATING MEANINGFUL IMPACT IN THE FOOD AND VETERINARY INDUSTRIES IN GEORGIA



Through Program support, the Agricultural University of Georgia will establish or significantly improve programs that deliver meaningful impact on the food industry in Georgia through increased profitability and the creation high-value jobs and career advancement opportunities in the sector. New or improved programs in Food Safety Management, Cooking and Pastry, and Culinary and Restaurant Management will

support the successful implementation of HACCP in Georgia to ensure smooth operations of food service providers, and establish food safety and food quality sustainability standards.

In parallel, The program will help to upgrade the knowledge and skills of employees of various farms, veterinary clinics, and other entities in accordance with current labor market needs. The program will also be beneficial for state institutions, as graduates of this program will be eligible to take over the mandatory vaccination process, which requires a large countrywide pool of veterinary specialists.

PROMOTING UPSKILLING OPPORTUNITIES IN GEORGIA THROUGH BMG AND FORBES GEORGIA



The Program is expanding its partnership with Business Media Georgia Business Media Georgia to further to further intensify private sector engagement in the skills development ecosystem. BMG and Forbes Georgia will launch a platform that is dedicated to raising awareness among employers and employees, government agencies, and other key actors about both successes to date and additional opportunities for improving employment practices via investing in skills development initiatives.

BUILDING SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE



DEVELOPING NEED-BASED SKILLS PROGRAMS IN ICT SECTOR THROUGH TBC



TBC

Short-term skills development programs in ICT that will be established by the TBC IT Academy in partnership with Space International, Spectre, TBC Leasing, Tegeta Motors, TNET, and United Financial Corporation (UFC) are designed to increase and improve employability in various sectors of the economy, including finance and financial technologies, services, trade, media, information technologies, and others. These nine programs include: Information security certification program (basic and advanced levels); Learning methodology and pedagogical skills development for ICT; newly demanded skills training programs for emerging and/or high-demand programming directions – Python, Blockchain, React, and DevOps; and expansion of the existing program for IOS development, as well as establishment of a technical lab for the practical sessions.

LAUNCHING NEW, “DO IT IN GEORGIA”, ONLINE MARKETPLACE



The Program is partnering with Lemondo Business Ltd. and Georgia’s Innovation and Technology Agency (GITA) to design a Public-Private Partnership model through the development of an online education platform entitled “Do IT in Georgia,” which will combine information on all IT training programs offered in Georgia under one umbrella. The project will also create a Single Window System for Georgian citizens who would like to learn IT and/or develop advanced digital skills.

PPP FOR DEVELOPING TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR TV AND FILM PRODUCTION



Through Program support, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University Media and TV Art College, together with partners Georgian Public Broadcaster and Kikala Studio, are developing a Public-Private Partnership model designed to train professions for specific high-demand jobs that are not currently being addressed by other Georgian colleagues or universities are currently addressing. The new training programs will be offered for the Sound Operator, Lighting Technician, Commercial Photographer, and Content Creator professions.

EVENTS



SKILLS WEEK GEORGIA

IN partnership with the Skills Agency, the European Union, UNDP, and GIZ, the Program supported this year's Skills Week, which took place from April 24-30, 2023. After U.S. Ambassador Kelly Degnan delivered welcome remarks to help launch the event at its opening session, the Program provided organizational and financial support for Day 2 of the week's events, which focused on the role of the private sector in professional and vocational skills development. The day's sessions included private sector partners that the Program had partnered with on various specific skills development initiatives in order to inform and inspire other private sector representatives to also consider engaging in skills development, as well as an exhibition of posters providing an overview of the 30 grant projects that had already been signed by the Program.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH EBRD TO ENHANCE THE NURSING PROFESSION IN GEORGIA

IN March 2023, EBRD and USAID joined forces to establish a Public-Private Dialogue (PPD) platform for elaborating workable strategies for nursing professionals with a specific focus on advancing their skills, competencies, and career opportunities. This new partnership will advance Georgia's EU Association agenda and support government reforms aimed at harmonizing the nursing profession with the regulations and newly adopted Nursing Development Strategy.

"The partnership we launch today supports important reform efforts that the Government is undertaking to enhance the nursing profession in Georgia. It will open up new avenues of co-investment and entrepreneurship, improving the healthcare service sector for all Georgians."
- John A. Pennell, USAID Mission Director



TELLING OUR STORY



“You should train for a career in ICT if you have an interest in technology, enjoy solving problems, and like providing great customer service,” says Taso Motsonelidze, HR Business Partner at Redberry. “If you are driven to learn, you can build a rewarding, flexible, and fulfilling career in this sector.”

Guram Tsagareishvili is one of 30 trained interns who will have an opportunity to kickstart their career at Redberry and other partner ICT companies.

OPENING UP NEW HORIZONS FOR TECH WORKERS ACROSS GEORGIA

Founded by a group of friends in 2014 as a business venture to “breathe digital life” into brick-and-mortar businesses in Georgia, ICT company Redberry has expanded its operations into the international market. Currently, Redberry employs 172 highly skilled staff members and offers numerous services, including digital marketing, web and mobile development, product design, social media management, marketing, and development of creative ad campaigns. The ICT sector is one of the fastest growing in Georgia, although the number of qualified Georgian web developers has not kept up with the industry’s demand.

Careers in the industry have skyrocketed in the past ten years, and the field is only expected to continue growing. To respond to ICT market needs, the USAID Industry-led Skills Development Program partnered with Redberry in 2022 to facilitate the development of a result-oriented internship program to help motivated individuals to become junior full-stack developers. The process entailed complex student assessment and recruitment processes. Out of 756 applicants, Redberry selected 90 total participants for three bootcamps. Redberry selected 90 participants in total. Powered by their partnership with the Program, Redberry hosted three Laravel + Vue and React Bootcamps, each consisting of four-month intensive theoretical and practical trainings. Eventually, In the future, Redberry will select 30 trained interns who will have an opportunity to kickstart their career at Redberry and other partner companies.

Guram Tsagareishvili, a 25-year-old from Tbilisi has been interested in ICT since childhood. As he mentions, it provides an opportunity to minimize boring and monotonous work through simple applications or even artificial intelligence and increases the productivity of people through remote communication and helpful programs or robots. In order to further his studies, Guram took Program-supported courses in courses in the PHP, JavaScript, Laravel, and Vue programming languages at Redberry.

“I have been interested in the field of ICT since childhood. At first, I was engaged in creating and installing simple (modifications) for computer games. In addition, I used to pay attention to the development of this field, especially artificial intelligence and computer games. The most interesting thing for me is creating innovations.” Regarding his experience with the Program, Guram notes, “I first started learning programming to get a job in February 2022, because of the high demand in this sector worldwide. Today, every small program that I create on my own gives me a great sense of accomplishment. Through the courses I took at Redberry, I gained enough knowledge to start working as a Junior Developer. During the course, under the guidance of mentors, I created more than one project for which I used such frameworks as Tailwind CSS, Cypress, Pusher JS, and others. Despite the popularity of this field, there is still a shortage of personnel, which I think is primarily caused by the unstoppable increase in demand for this field. To solve the problem, I believe as many people as possible must learn about this field and how to enter it. ICT is an excellent choice for someone looking to start a new career because it has the right combination of potential and need,” says Guram.

TELLING OUR STORY



CONNECTING GEORGIA'S TALENT WITH THE WORLD'S LARGEST FILM INDUSTRIES

"The more mixing I do of POSTRED's work, the happier I get. You guys did a really stellar job," says Emmy-winning Supervising Sound Editor Zach Seivers about POSTRED, the Georgian company he has worked with on several well-received projects, such as "My Father's Dragon," "C'MON C'MON," and "Raymond & Ray."



IN 2022, the USAID Industry-led Skills Development Program supported Georgia's creative industries through partnership with POSTRED Ltd., which provides post-production for audio-visual and immersive media. The team creates sound and music for movies, commercials, and other television and interactive media. Over the past six years, the firm has collaborated with film industry giants including Paramount Pictures, HBO, Netflix, BBC, Hulu, A24, Apple TV+, and others. To address the 70% increase in demand for the studio's services over the past two years, POSTRED partnered with the Program to create a model that has resulted in the establishment of the POSTRED Academy training center, which offers training courses in Sound Design and Music for Film to young people across Georgia. The courses are complex and, along with theoretical knowledge, the students gain hands-on experience in fully equipped classrooms. Through support from USAID, the Academy's facility now features special computer equipment that is critical for training in various sound professions that are innovative for Georgia's labor market.

There are many young people across Georgia with a passion for filmmaking and that are eager to join the studio's creative team. Twenty-four-year-old Tina Gvaberidze, who is attending a sound design course at POSTRED Academy, is one of them. The course includes sound design, sound effects and dialogue editing, editing, and mixing, all of which are necessary skills for Foley artists, mixers, and editors, who create the desired sounds in post-production. In parallel, she is interning as a Foley editor at POSTRED and is eager to become a permanent part of the company's creative team. Eight students, including three young women, have already been employed by POSTRED as sound designers and specialists in adding music to films. One of them is Levan Tserediani, whose passion for filmmaking, as articulated in an interview with Business Media Georgia, inspired many young people in Georgia to apply to study at POSTRED Academy.

"Passion, patience, and perseverance are the three qualities one needs in order to work in filmmaking. This is easier said than done, but if you are passionate and have the knowledge and skills to make films, then you can surely choose it as a career," says Beso Kacharava, Founder and CEO of POSTRED and POSTRED Academy.

TELLING OUR STORY



“Once all your friends learn about your culinary talents, you become the most popular person in your circle. Everyone wants to come for dinner. And you’re glad—you can try out new flavors and experiment regularly. But while cooking for friends is rewarding, your ambitions don’t stop there. You want to become a chef and belong in a restaurant,” says Ana, who is now using her skills as a cook at Avocado.ge, a delivery-only restaurant in Tbilisi.

Ana Ishkhanova is just one of the 35 individuals that have benefited from USAID-supported skills training programs to address the needs of the growing gastronomy industry in Georgia.

CREATING NEW EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN GASTRONOMY THROUGH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Ana Ishkhanova, a 28-year-old from Tbilisi, has always had great interest in the culinary arts, but studying math at university. After her first year, she realized that she needed something that made her happy, and that was cooking. For that reason, she left university.

Soon after, she learned about a joint training program of Caucasus University (CU) and the Basque Culinary Center supported by the USAID Industry-led Skills Development Program. She embraced the opportunity to embark on a new career path. “I made tremendous professional growth, met very interesting people, became more self-confident,” says Ana. “Most importantly, I got even more excited about becoming a chef and dramatically changing my lifestyle.”

To meet the needs of the gastronomy industry, in 2022 the USAID Industry-led Skills Development Program partnered with Caucasus University, one of Georgia’s leading educational institutions, with 10 schools/faculties running 45 undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs. Together with the Basque Culinary Center of San Sebastian, Spain, and the Gastronomic Tourism Business Association of Georgia, Caucasus University created an innovative skills development certificate training program, which became the first vocational training program in gastronomy in Georgia designed in collaboration with international partners. The CU training program is aimed at upskilling students in avant-garde culinary techniques, creativity, plating, and gastronomic trends. In total, 35 students took the training course delivered by four trainers who had completed the first cycle of Trainings of Trainers organized by the Basque Culinary Center.

Caucasus University plans to further expand its engagement in skills development and establish an Academy of Gastronomy in Gurjaani, in Georgia’s Kakheti region, as a collaborative initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, Caucasus University, and the Basque Culinary Center.

Caucasus University offers students a high level of education, international programs, and practice-oriented teaching. The training of highly qualified specialists is provided by lecturers with international qualifications. The University has been cooperating with various universities around the world since its establishment and currently has 200 partner universities in 54 countries. This fact allows the university to receive foreign students and lecturers, have dual degree programs, as well as exchange programs for students, academic and administrative staff. Consequently, students are given the opportunity to participate in exchange programs.

TELLING OUR STORY



EQUIPPING GEORGIAN FARMERS WITH SWISS AGRICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

Sophiko Iremadze, a 28-year-old from Dmanisi went through a three-week intensive cheesemaking course in Switzerland where she learned theoretical knowledge and gained practical experience. Since then, she has worked at the SASC for a year and a half and has spent a lot of time with the students at its dairy.

“I was interested in improving my qualifications in milk and cheese production and took a three-week intensive training course in Switzerland. The practical work was engaging. At the training, I learned not only useful information about milk and cheese production, but also about microbiological and other threats that we in Georgia did not have information about. I came back to Georgia with deeper knowledge and skills. Now I know how to make butter, yogurt, semi-cool, and soft cheese,” says Sophiko.

To meet the needs of the agricultural industry, in 2022 the USAID Industry-led Skills Development Program partnered with SASC, a private, non-profit educational institution in the Georgian agricultural Vocational Education and Training system. The VET school, established in 2018 following Swiss standards, specializes in animal husbandry and milk processing and sets the highest VET standards in Georgia. In partnership with the Program, SASC aims to create opportunities for rural farmers and dairy processors to improve their employment and productivity by giving access to high-quality, practical skills programs in agriculture. To achieve this objective, the school will establish a modern practical training facility meeting the EU standards for quality training and equipped with modern practical training equipment.

The initiative developed by the SASC is based on the long-lasting collaborative effort of the applicant and its partner Plantahof, a Swiss agricultural knowledge and advisory center, and local industry partners. Six replicated training programs will enable more than 400 farmers to enhance their skills and expertise and obtain internationally recognized certification.



“After completing the training courses, I was selected to lead the practical training on dairy production at Swiss Agricultural Caucasus School.”
says Sophiko Iremadze.

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