



CALL FOR GRANT CONCEPT PAPERS
USAID MIDDLE CORRIDOR TRANSPORTATION AND LOGISTICS
PROGRAM
DIGITALIZATION HELPDESK
RFA# MCTLP-2024-001

A USAID FUNDED PROGRAM

NOVEMBER 22, 2024

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1. Grant Background and Scope of Work

A. Solicitation Summary

Freight forwarding is crucial in the Transport and Logistics (T&L) industry for coordinating shipments locally and internationally, requiring complex management of transportation modes, compliance, and customs. However, many Georgian companies face digitalization challenges, relying on outdated, manual processes that increase operational costs and inefficiencies. Despite the availability of advanced technologies like automation, AI, and blockchain, these solutions often introduce complexities that require specialized support. The proposed software development Helpdesk (the Helpdesk) will offer targeted support to T&L companies, helping optimize workflows, reduce downtime, and improve digital readiness. This support will enhance competitiveness within the Georgian T&L sector and contribute to the broader digital transformation of the Middle Corridor.

B. Background and Specific Challenges to be Addressed by this Grant Activity

The USAID Middle Corridor Transportation and Logistics Program (the Program) aims to enhance Georgia's economic prosperity by strengthening the Middle Corridor and addressing the climate impact of Georgia's transport and logistics industry. The Program seeks to transform Georgia into a globally competitive hub for transport and logistics, creating high-value jobs and boosting income from new trade activity generated by the increase in cargo flow.

In the Transport and Logistics (T&L) industry, freight forwarding plays a critical role by coordinating the shipment of goods from one location to another, locally or internationally. This process involves customer interaction, intricate planning, precise execution, and real-time management of multiple variables such as transportation modes, regulatory compliance, customs clearance, cargo security and so on. The complexity of these operations necessitates the use of sophisticated, tailored software systems to manage and streamline workflows efficiently.

Despite the availability of advanced software in the market, transport and freight forwarding companies often face unique challenges that generic support services cannot adequately address. These challenges include the need for ready-made or customized software solutions such as ERP, WMS, CRM, TOS, TMS and others, that align with specific business processes, integration issues between disparate systems, improvement of efficiency and effectiveness, and the rapid resolution of technical problems that could disrupt operations.

According to the National Transport and Logistics Strategy 2030, the digitalization level in Georgia's freight forwarding and logistics business is relatively low compared to global trends. Many companies in this sector still rely on manual processes and outdated systems, leading to inefficiencies and increased operational costs.

As the digital transformation accelerates, the reliance on technology in freight forwarding is becoming more pronounced. Companies are adopting advanced technologies such as automation, artificial intelligence and blockchain to enhance their operations. However, this increased technological adoption also introduces complexities that require specialized technical expertise.

C. Objective

This Call aims to identify potential grantees capable of providing consulting services on digital solutions to transportation and logistics companies, such as freight forwarders, terminals, warehouses, carriers, etc. Potential grantees should explore digital solutions available in the market to improve operational efficiency, productivity and decision-making process for T&L companies.

With this initiative, the potential grantee will provide individual consulting services to T&L companies in adopting digital tools that improve efficiency, cargo tracking, and competitiveness in general.

The minimum expected number of T&L companies (hereafter Helpdesk Beneficiaries) supported under each grant award is twenty (20).

D. Scope of Work and Specific Tasks

Under this Call, the applicant is expected to submit a concept note laying out their vision for operationalizing a digitalization helpdesk, including their approach to implementing one or multiple illustrative tasks described in this Section D, or other tasks as deemed pertinent by the applicant.

The proposed digitalization helpdesk development project may include, but is not limited to, the following **Digital Tools**:

- Fleet Management
- Warehouse Management System (WMS)
- Warehouse Layout and Design Software
- Route Optimization
- Transportation Management Systems (TMS)
- Electronic Documentation Management
- Customer Relationship Management Systems (CRM)
- Enterprise Resource Planning Systems (ERP)
- Human Resource Management (HR) Systems
- Billing and Accounting
- Data Analytics and Reporting
- Terminal Operation System (TOS)
- B2B Networking Platforms
- Digital Marketing

Illustrative Tasks to be performed under the grant activity:

Identification of beneficiaries and recommendations on digitalization

Tasks to be performed by the potential grantee may involve: (i) Elaboration of Helpdesk Beneficiary selection criteria; (ii) Assessment of business processes, workflow and IT systems to identify gaps in digitalization and provide recommendations for improvement where applicable; (iii) Provide recommendations on digital solutions including comparative analysis; (iv) provide feasible implementation plan for identified solutions.

A potential grantee may need to present to Helpdesk Beneficiary a shortlist of optimal software solutions, along with recommendations for off-the-shelf, custom, or hybrid platforms.

Digitalization roadmap for transport and logistics companies

Successful grantees will be expected to develop a digitalization roadmap for T&L companies. The roadmap will serve as a guide for digitalization path for interested T&L companies.

Organizing workshops/training

A potential grantee is expected to organize or co-organize at least one workshop or training. Applicants may also conduct promotional activities to highlight benefits of digitalization based on theoretical and real-life cases.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

The Applicant may choose to apply for consulting service(s) to be provided on one or multiple **Digital Tools** described above. The same applies to **Illustrative Tasks** as well.

Applicants should provide a realistic, reasonable, complete, and justifiable budget necessary to implement the proposed tasks. Along with the budget, the applicant must provide a separate document – a “rate card” indicating a price range of how much the execution of each of the proposed tasks would cost per Helpdesk Beneficiary.

Please note that the proposed budgets may change during the negotiations with successful applicants.

E. Funding Opportunity and Duration

The Program intends to award a maximum of five (5) Standard Grants under this Call for Concept Papers. The maximum funding for each grant is US \$120,000 equivalent in local currency.

The approximate performance period for each grant activity is from February 1, 2025 until July 31, 2026 for a total of eighteen (18) months.

2. Eligibility

General eligibility criteria:

To be eligible to apply for and receive funding under the USAID Middle Corridor Transportation and Logistics Program, the Applicant must meet the following criteria:

A non-U.S. non-governmental organization, for-profit or nonprofit, registered in Georgia (e.g., NGOs, Professional organizations, Research institutions, Commercial organizations);

- Should not appear on the "List of Parties Excluded from Federal Procurement and Non-Procurement Programs";
- Should not be an individual, political party, governmental entity or official, whether at national or municipal level;
- Should not be affiliated with the Program or any of its directors, officers or employees.

Organizations whose objectives are not consistent with the broad objectives of the USAID Middle Corridor Transportation and Logistics Program are also ineligible.

Additional Eligibility Criteria:

- The organization and/or proposed staff must have demonstrated at least three (3) years of experience in technical areas relevant to the scope of work or grant focus. This may include the successful implementation of digitalization projects in transport and logistics, focusing on challenges, solutions provided, and outcomes (e.g., improved operational efficiency, cost reductions, and enhanced customer experience).
- The organization must currently be implementing activities in the geographic or technical area for which it is applying.
- The organization has a Board of Directors/ Board of Trustees and full-time staff (including program management, finance/administrative, and monitoring and evaluation staff).
- The organization has minimum absorptive capacity and demonstrates the potential to acquire sufficient capacity to manage programs sustainably.
- The organization has a functional financial system.

The organization's other relationships, associations, activities, and interests do not create a conflict of interest or an appearance of conflict of interest that could prevent complete impartiality in implementing the grant activities. For example, the organization may not be a subcontractor to Deloitte for the project implementation.

Foreign or domestic grant award recipients with amounts above \$25,000 are required to obtain SAM registration and a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) Number.

Cost-Share eligibility:

To be eligible for a grant award the Applicants are required to provide a minimum of 1:1 matching (this includes third party contributions) to the grant award price.

All costs shared by the Applicant (both financial and in-kind) must meet all the following criteria:

- Be verifiable in the Applicant records
- Necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient accomplishment of grant activity objectives
- Allowable under the applicable USAID regulations
- Must not be included as cost share contributions for any other U.S. Government–assisted program
- Must not be paid by the U.S. Government under another grant or agreement.

Description of Functions for Cost-Share:

Cost share contribution may be financial, in-kind or combination of both and include any of the following:

- Labor to carry out grant activities
- Payment of non-labor costs associated with grant activities
- Leveraged funds from other sources (Non-U.S. Government)
- Equipment and facilities
- In-kind donations (include labor, volunteer labor, office space, conference space etc.).

3. Grant Application Process

The application process is in three stages.

Applicants are first to submit a concept paper. Concept papers will be reviewed for compatibility with Program objectives. From the group of concept papers submitted, the Program Staff may invite applicants that received scores higher than 70 points to present their concepts to the Program Grant Evaluation Committee. After these oral presentations, a set of Applicants will be asked to submit final grant applications. After a final review, these formal applications will be submitted to USAID for final approval.

Stage 1: Submission of a concept paper

Prior to developing a full grant application, potential grantees are to submit a concept paper for review and feedback. Developing a concept paper provides potential grantees with the opportunity to define and refine their thinking about the proposed project or activity and provides the Program review team with an opportunity to see how well the concept aligns with the Program's key objectives and goals.

Concepts should be submitted through the Grants Portal (<https://dgrants.fluxx.io/>)

Applicants will be required to register for an account and, upon approval, will receive an email notification with the necessary log-in credentials to access the portal.

The portal details submission instructions for completing a web-based application form and contains all required document and budget attachments to be included with the concept.

If the Grants Portal is unavailable, and the error could not be resolved with Helpdesk support, the concept package may be sent electronically to the email address listed below:

grants@mctlp.ge

Attn. Grants Manager, The USAID Middle Corridor Transportation and Logistics Program.

All electronic file names should include the organization's name and the title of the document. Applicants should retain copies of their records, as all concepts received will not be returned.

A concept paper should be short – not more than 5 pages (if not submitted through Grants Portal). Ideas should be clear, concise, to the point and provide an overview of what is planned, who will benefit, the results expected, and a notional estimate of the proposed budget linked to the components of the activities planned.

Sections described below and specific guidance are available on the Fluxx Grants Portal. In general, they include:

1. Cover Page/Introduction:

- Name and address of organization;
- Type of organization (e.g., non-profit, profit, professional association, etc.);
- Contact point (lead contact name; relevant telephone and e-mail information);
- Names of other organizations (federal and non-federal as well as any other USAID offices) to whom you are/have submitted the application and/or are funding the proposed activity; and
- Signature of authorized representative of the Applicant.

2. Technical Information:

- Concise title and objective of proposed activity;
- Discussion of the objectives, the method of approach, the amount of effort to be employed, the anticipated results, and how the work will help accomplish the Program's specific strategic results; and
- Type of support the Applicant requests from USAID (e.g., funds, facilities, equipment, materials, personnel resources, etc.).

3. Supporting Information:

- Proposed estimated cost;
- Detailed cost breakdown (e.g., salaries, travel, etc.);
- Proposed amount of the Applicant's financial as well as in-kind participation;
- Proposed amount of prospective or existing partner(s) financial as well as in-kind participation;
- Proposed duration of the activity; and
- Brief description of Applicant's, as well as prospective or existing partner(s') previous work and experience.

Stage 2: Oral Presentation (optional)

Those organizations whose concept papers receive scores at a higher 70 points may be invited to make a presentation about their concept.

Stage 3: Grant Application

At the conclusion of the presentation process, successful Applicants will be asked to submit a Full Grant Application and Budget for evaluation and approval by USAID Middle Corridor Transportation and Logistics Program and USAID.

4. Technical Selection of Concept Paper

The Program Grant Evaluation Committee will evaluate each concept paper based upon the review criteria set forth below. A concept paper can be categorized as unacceptable when it is incomplete, does not respond to the scope, does not comply with the format requirements or is submitted after the deadline.

The technical criteria below are presented by major category, in relative order of importance, so that Applicants will know which areas require emphasis in the preparation of their concept papers.

Technical Strategies (approach)	50%
Organizational Capacity (past performance)	35%
Budget, Budget Notes and Cost Reasonableness	15%

Any such concept papers shall be reviewed by the relevant Program Grants Evaluation Committee for consistency with Program objectives. If a concept paper evidences that a proposed project concept is consistent with the objectives of the Program, the Grants Manager will invite the organization to submit a Full Grant Application. If a concept paper evidences that a proposed project concept is not consistent with Program objectives the Grants Manager will communicate with the submitting organization regarding the non-approval of a concept paper.

5. Timetable

The following is an illustrative timetable for the grant process:

ACTIVITY	ILLUSTRATIVE TIMETABLE
Request for Concept Papers Issued	November 29, 2024
Informational Session Due	December 23, 2024
Questions from Applicants Due	January 10, 2025
Answers Due	January 15, 2025
Concept Papers Due	January 24, 2025
Concept Papers Review	1-2 weeks from the application submission
Applicants make oral presentations to Grant Committee to clarify concepts (optional)	1-2 weeks from the application submission
Final Selection	2-3 weeks from the application submission
Grants applications received from finalists	1-2 weeks from final selection
Presentation to USAID (optional)	1-2 weeks from grant applications received
USAID Approval and Grant Awarded	1-2 weeks from submission for approval

Informational Session:

USAID Middle Corridor Transportation and Logistics Program will conduct an informational session regarding this grant initiative for all interested parties that will be held at the Program's office at 8a, Petre Melikishvili Avenue Tbilisi AND online, via Microsoft Teams on **December 23, 2024, from 16:00 to 17:30 Tbilisi time.**

For registration, please contact us at grants@mctlp.ge email no later than December 19, 2024. We will send out the invitations and instructions immediately. Please provide the following information:

Participant Name
 Participant Title
 Email Address & Telephone Number
 Organization Name
 Preference for Attendance (in person OR online)

Questions from Applicants:

- **Method:** Only written questions and requests for clarification will receive a response. Send questions about this CCP by email to grants@mctlp.ge

- **Date for receipt:** All questions and requests for clarification must be received before January 10, 2025 at the email address noted above. Only questions received by this date will receive a response.
- **Responses:** All interested parties will receive responses via email no later than January 15, 2025. In addition, responses will be available at Grants Portal Fluxx for all interested applicants.