



CALL FOR GRANT CONCEPT PAPERS
USAID MIDDLE CORRIDOR TRANSPORTATION AND LOGISTICS
PROGRAM
PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS IN TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS
RFA# MCTLP-2024-002

A USAID FUNDED PROGRAM

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1. Grant Background and Scope of Work

A. Solicitation Summary

The Road Cargo Transport Survey of 124 large, medium and small road transport companies and freight forwarders recently concluded by the Program confirms the concerns reflected in the National Transportation and Logistics Strategy 2023-2030 and noted by all of Georgia's transport and logistics associations. The priority challenge of road freight transport and logistics operators is the lack of trained workers, particularly drivers.

This lack of skills undercuts Georgia's competence and competitiveness in the transport and logistics (T&L) industry in local and international markets. The lack of accessibility to high-quality training is even more pronounced for women and youth, leading to the underrepresentation of these demographics in the sector. The Program will commence a comprehensive analysis of private sector demand for T&L competencies and the available supply of relevant training at the academic, vocational and short-term level.

This solicitation requests applications to provide the most urgent short-term training needs identified by the Survey and conversations with T&L-related associations in Georgia. The Program believes these trainings can be delivered sustainably and at relatively low cost within existing institutional arrangements. The training will be suitable for managers, supervisors, fieldworkers and front-line staff across all company functions and modes. The training needs analysis described above will review and recommend necessary reform of medium and long-term academic and vocational training arrangements.

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, improving cargo transportation, and addressing the climate impact of Georgia's transportation 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 increased cargo flow.

One of the biggest concerns for the transport and logistics stakeholders is the lack of professional training in various transport and logistics directions. More training based on current market demands is crucial. The Program identified several training needs that should be addressed, which reflect the demand from the private sector. Every training direction applies to every transport mode available to Georgia.

A significant portion of the cargo transported on the railways consists of **oversized cargo**. The ability to carry out such transportation, especially for super oversized cargo, is one of the key competitive advantages of rail transport. Transporting oversized cargo requires specific competencies (special technical and procedures) and there is a shortage of qualified personnel.

In line with the harmonization of the 2008/68/EC directive in Georgian legislation, changes were made to the Georgian Railway Code effective January 1, 2025, classifying **hazardous cargo**. These changes establish general rules for the safe transportation of hazardous cargo by rail, which include the existence of consistent safety measures in accordance with the Regulation

concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Rail (RID) and consignment CIM/SMGS ¹ note as well as a definition of responsibilities per safety standards.

Freight Forwarding is a set of complex activities that involve various transportation modes, cargo types, international markets, and other factors requiring a broad knowledge of the transportation and logistics industry. As Georgia strives to be a regional transportation and logistics hub, it needs more professionals to cope with the increasing demand for quality services. One of the tools to tackle this challenge is to increase accessibility to internationally recognized training in the freight forwarding business. Specifically designed training courses for **air freight** will be essential to improving competence in the market and promoting e-commerce and trade. It is also worth highlighting that there is currently no center in Georgia providing IATA certified air freight training.

There is also a high demand for cargo transportation in **refrigerated** vehicles and containers, both in summer and winter, and perishable goods transportation/warehousing is not taught within existing trainings available in Georgia. Export products such as wine, nuts, mineral water and fruit seasonally require refrigerated and/or temperature-controlled transportation. All products have a desired temperature regime, and appropriate knowledge is necessary when transporting them. Also, temperature-controlled transportation is required when importing/exporting or transiting food and pharmaceutical products in Georgia or through Georgia to Middle Corridor countries.

A number of companies interviewed by the Program highlighted the importance of accessibility of professional training courses for **forklift** operators who are employed in warehouses and terminals. **Occupational safety** training in the transportation and logistics industry is also a crucial direction for training as national standards are getting stringent.

C. Objective

The objective of this activity is to develop and deliver short-term training courses (equivalent to less than two-weeks full-time duration) for essential T&L industry competencies. The intention is for these courses, after their initial development, to be offered on a recurring basis, at least once per year, to meet ongoing industry workforce competency requirements. Little or no training courses are currently provided in Georgia for at least seven specific transport and logistics topics identified by the Program (listed in Section D below).

Grantees may propose to develop and deliver training courses for one or more of these topics, or topics of their own choice, provided at least 15 students per year shall be trained in each of the topics selected by the grantee. Grantees will make best efforts to ensure at least 40 percent of students are women and/or youth (under the age of 29). At least 50 percent of students shall be residents of areas outside of Tbilisi.

D. Scope of Work and Specific Tasks

Under this scope of work, the grantees shall perform, but will not be limited to, the tasks specified under the following categories:

¹ Uniform Rules concerning the Contract of International Carriage of Goods by Rail (CIM)/ Agreement on International Freight Traffic by Rail (SMGS)

Task 1: Consult with relevant association and industry representatives to determine the specific competencies required by the T&L industry under each of the training directions.

Task 2: Identify organizations, if any, that can certify the training provider, the training courses or the competency of the students after their training to meet a minimum internationally recognized industry standard of competency, e.g. FIATA, IATA, IRU, etc.

Task 3: Prepare a business plan to sustainably provide the necessary training to achieve internationally recognized industry competency in one or more of the training directions listed in Task 5 below. The minimum number of participants per training is fifteen (15) per training direction per course and 50 students per year. It is encouraged that at least 40% of training participants be young (up to the age of 29) and/or female. The grantee may train fewer students per course or per year if able to demonstrate that the length and/or complexity of their course(s) restricts the potential number of students able to be trained.

Task 4: Prepare the training curricula and training materials necessary for students to achieve the competencies set out in Task 3 above.

Task 5: Provide students with the training and certification, if available, in the topics (the applicant may propose other topics not listed here) listed below:

1. Freight forwarding
2. Airfreight (IATA or comparative international standards)
3. Forklift operators
4. Dangerous/Hazardous and perishable goods
5. Oversized cargo
6. Warehouse management
7. Occupational safety for transportation and logistics Sector

Important Notes:

- (I) An applicant can apply for one or more training topics listed under Task 5.
- (II) If an applicant proposes training topics not listed here, they must provide proof of demand from the market. The proof could take the form of a market assessment, request for training from organizations, introduction of new local or international regulations, etc.
- (III) The applicant must ensure that the majority of trainees are not its own employees.
- (IV) If the applicant or other organization(s) are already providing training in the above topics/directions, then the applicant shall reasonably distinguish their proposed training from the current training course(s).
- (V) There is no restriction on the geography or method of training delivery. Training courses may be in person or online. However, if training is in-person the Program places a priority on students located outside of Tbilisi.

E. Funding Opportunity and Duration

The Program intends to award a maximum of seven (7) Small (Simplified) Grants under this Call for Concept Papers. The maximum funding for each grant is US \$30,000 equivalent in local currency.

The Program expects to contribute not more than US \$15,000 per training direction. However, this amount can be increased if the applicant demonstrates that a particular training requires more funding.

The approximate performance period for grant activities under this Call is from January 31, 2025 until September 30, 2025. Each grant award must not exceed a six (6) months period of performance.

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 the 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 two (2) years of experience in technical areas relevant to the scope of work or grant focus.
- 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 in a sustainable manner.
- 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, which may include third party contributions.

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. **Concept papers will be accepted on a continued basis throughout the whole period starting from December 23, 2024 and ending on April 22, 2025. Concepts will be evaluated on a rolling (first come, first served) monthly basis, and grants will be awarded accordingly.** 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	Starting from December 23, 2024
Informational Session Due	January 30, 2025
Questions from Applicants Due	Ending on March 31, 2025
Answers Due	Ending on April 4, 2025

Concept Papers Due	Ending on April 22, 2025 (18:00 Tbilisi Time)
Concept Papers Review	2-3 weeks from the concept submission
Applicants make oral presentations to Grant Committee to clarify concepts (optional)	2-3 weeks from the concept submission
Final Selection	2-3 weeks from the concept 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 **January 30, 2025, from 16:00 to 17:30 Tbilisi time.**

For registration, please contact us at grants@mctlp.ge email no later than January 28, 2025. 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 March 31, 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 on a biweekly or monthly basis. In addition, all responses will be available at Grants Portal Fluxx for all interested applicants.