**CALL FOR APPLICATIONS (CFA)**

**Incubation Program**

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| Name of the Project | USAID Employment and Enterprise Development Activity (EEDA) |
| Call for Application (CFA) No. | EEDA CFA-2024-01 |
| Date of Issue | December 18, 2024 |
| Closing Date and Time for Receipt of Applications  ***(Late applications will not be considered.)*** | January 17, 2025, 17:00 Dushanbe time |
| Questions on this solicitation should be submitted to the e-mail address provided no later than the date indicated. | [eedagrants@acdivoca-tj.org](mailto:eedagrants@acdivoca-tj.org) |

1. **Background**

The USAID Employment and Enterprise Development Activity is a five-year initiative will build on USAID and other donor investments to facilitate systemic change by empowering market actors in Tajikistan to lead localized initiatives that spur job creation and catalyze a local entrepreneurship ecosystem, strengthening value-added exports in the textile, food processing, and IT sectors. By the completion of the five-year activity, EEDA will generate at least $60 million in sales, create 5,000 full-time jobs, and leverage $10 million in private sector resources.

The Activity has three intended outcomes:

Outcome 1: Increased capacities and productivity of textiles, food processing, and IT sectors.

Outcome 2: Enhance workforce skills to meet the demand of the private sector.

Outcome 3: Support MSMEs with technical and financial resources to develop their businesses and create opportunities for self and wage employment.

EEDA aims to enhance the capacity of business incubators, accelerators, and other platforms to effectively support early-stage startups and entrepreneurs in Tajikistan. This initiative is designed to address the significant challenges faced by aspiring entrepreneurs in accessing business skills, funding, mentorship, and a supportive network necessary to launch and sustain startups in the country.

To overcome these barriers and build a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem, the EEDA Challenge Fund will focus on one of the three key stages - Incubation.

1. **Objectives of the CFA**

The Business Incubation Program will aim to identify and support early-stage startups with high growth potential by providing essential business skills, mentorship, and small funding, the program seeks to assist startups in developing their Minimum Viable Products (MVPs), testing their business hypotheses, and refining their business models.

**Objectives of the program**

* To equip early-stage startups with the necessary business skills to thrive.
* To support startups in composing and rehearsing their initial pitches.
* To facilitate the development of Minimum Viable Product (MVP) for participating startups.
* To assist startups in testing their hypotheses and determining viable business models
* Support Green Innovations initiatives
* Help ideation stage startups and small-scale entrepreneurs to transit from Not registered to Registered status

The selected implementing organization will be responsible for:

* Program Design and Implementation: Develop a comprehensive curriculum that covers essential business skills, pitch preparation, MVP development, and hypothesis testing.
* Cohort Management: Organize and manage 1 to 8 cohorts (including “green cohort”) one per each identified geo side, each consisting of 25-30 startups, ensuring a structured approach to learning and development. Green cohort must be designed to address innovative green ideas and solutions tailored to the textile and food processing sectors, including integration of ICT and digital tools.
* Mentorship: Provide access to experienced mentors who can guide startups through the incubation process.
* Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish metrics for assessing the program's effectiveness, including tracking the progress of startups and measuring outcomes.
* Establish Evaluation Committee to select the best promising Startups, including EEDA responsible technical point of contact as voting and non-voting members in the evaluation committee meetings
* Preparing the full grant application per EEDA requirements (grant application, business registration documents, project description, budget, technical specifications with offers or terms of reference and qualifications, commercial offers for equipment or technical assistance and other templates will be provided)
* Distribution of awards between selected Startups

**Expected Outcomes**

* Cohorts: 8 cohorts of 25-30 startups each will successfully complete the program.
* Business Skills Acquisition: 200-240 startups (100% of participants) will gain essential business skills through workshops and mentorships
* Investment Readiness: At least 48 startups (25% of participants) will get access to EEDA MPF support (max. $5,000) to further develop their businesses.
* Ensure 50% of women at program participation

**Target Participants**

* Early-stage Startups, Individuals of any age, women and youth 15-29 y.o. with high growth potential across various sectors are encouraged
* Could be not officially registered as a business at the moment of starting the program but has to register if applicant will apply final documents for grant award.
* Startups that demonstrate a clear need for business skills, mentorship, and funding.
* Applicant should target startups from Kulob, Bokhtar, Shahritus, Khorugh, Rasht, Tursunzoda, Istaravshan zones and one Green Cohort (all country).

**Implementation Timeline**

The program is expected to run over a specified period, with each cohort lasting

approximately 3 months. The timeline should include:

* Recruitment of startups
* Curriculum development
* Program delivery
* Distribution of awards
* Monitoring and evaluation

**Qualifications of implementing organization and other requirements**

The organization must have:

* proven experience in managing business incubation or acceleration programs;
* a track record of supporting startups in developing business skills and securing funding;
* a network of mentors and industry experts to guide participants;
* being registered as LLC, public or non-commercial organization, state-owned enterprise, union or associations, universities, educational institutions and IT Parks.

Applicant should implement the program in one, several or all EEDA target areas below and nearby districts.

(Kulob – 30 participants, Bokhtar – 30 participants, Shahritus – 25 participants, Khorugh – 25 participants, Rasht – 25 participants, Tursunzoda – 30 participants, Istaravshan – 30 participants) and One Green cohort (20 participants)

Green Program - The content of such a program should be aimed at attracting proposals and ideas that aim to reduce the negative impact on the environment by using green and innovative technologies in the textile and food industries, including the use of information and communication technologies in business activities.

The implementing organization will be required to provide, regular progress reports detailing cohort activities, participant engagement, and outcomes achieved, a final report summarizing the overall impact of the program including lessons learned and recommendations for future iterations.

Interested organizations should submit an application and proposal that includes proposed approach to program design and implementation, overview of relevant experience and qualification, detailed budget breakdown, a detailed budget should be provided, outlining all costs associated with the program, including personnel, materials, mentorship fees.

**Applications can be submitted for running one, two, or all eight incubation cohorts, including green cohort.**

1. **CFA Information Meetings for potential Applicants**

To ensure that potential applicants have a clear understanding of the CFA requirements and answer applicants questions the EEDA team will organize an online and in-person information sessions.

Online and in-person information meeting will be held on December 25, 2024, at 15:00 Dushanbe time

Online information meeting:

**Join Zoom Meeting thorough link:** Join Zoom Meeting **[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87477322012?pwd=1co82tFbPc6bGz9majbpurid3bFBJN.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87477322012?pwd=1co82tFbPc6bGz9majbpurid3bFBJN.1" \t "_blank" \o "https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87477322012?pwd=1co82tfbpc6bgz9majbpurid3bfbjn.1)**

**Meeting ID:** **874 7732 2012**

**Passcode:** **665675**

In-person information meeting: at EEDA office Dushanbe (address: 48 Ani Street, BC Sozidanie, 4th flour (after January 1 on the 2d flour), EEDA Office, Dushanbe)

Inquiries and requests for information regarding this Call for Application can be submitted by email to [EEDAGrants@acdivoca-tj.org](mailto:EEDAGrants@acdivoca-tj.org) or by phone calls to

+992 93 770001573,

+992 93 770001758**.**

1. **Eligibility Criteria for applicant**

* Registered as a business LLC, public or non-commercial organization, state-owned enterprise, union or associations, universities and educational institutions, IT Parks.
* Activity proposed is aligned with and contributes to the objectives of USAID Employment and Enterprise Development Activity
* Proponent (business or person/s) proven experience in managing business incubation or acceleration programs, has track record of successful performance (> 3 years) in developing business skills, securing funding, and supporting startups
* Activity implementation is in Tajikistan. Applicant could implement the program in one, several or all target areas, or nearby districts mentioned in CFA
* If former grant beneficiary, must show successful utilization of the grant
* Willingness of proponent to submit regular progress reports to the USAID Employment and Enterprise Development Activity
* Possess sound managerial, technical, and institutional capacities to achieve project results.
* Are in good standing with all civil and fiscal authorities.
* Possess financial accountability and maintain detailed records of all expenses.
* Do not have a negative determination on the SAM, UN 1267, or OFAC Blocked Persons Lists.
* Are willing to sign applicable assurances and certifications prior to award; and
* Can leverage their own resources to achieve project objectives.

**Ineligible organizations**

* Political parties, groupings, or institutions or their subsidiaries and affiliates.
* Organizations promoting anti-democratic policies or illegal activities.
* Faith-based organizations whose main deliverables for the activity is of a religious nature.

The EEDA Grants Manager will review each application to ensure it meets the minimum eligibility requirements before proceeding to evlution. The initial screening requirements include:

* Applicant has submitted Application using the template (Annex A).
* Applicant provided information about enterprise/company portfolio describing coverage area, districts.
* Applicant meets the eligibility criteria listed in section 4; and
* Applicant is not found with a negative determination in the SAM, OFAC, or UN 1267 lists

1. **Evalution Criteria**

All Application will be evaluated by EEDA Evaluation Committee based on the following evaluation criteria:

1. Proposed Technical Approach: (30 scores). This criterion evaluates the overall technical approach and methodology outlined in the applicant’s proposal. The focus is on how effectively the applicant plans to design, implement, and manage the incubation program. How well does the applicant’s technical approach align with the goals of the USAID Employment and Enterprise Development Activity (EEDA).
2. Technical, management and operational capacity: (20 scores). This criterion assesses the applicant’s organizational capability to manage the proposed program. It evaluates the experience, qualifications, and resources that the applicant has to ensure successful program delivery, as well as the ability to meet the donor’s requirements and manage the grant effectively.
3. Cost effectiveness and budget: (20 scores). This criterion evaluates whether the proposed budget is reasonable, realistic, and aligned with the proposed activities. It assesses whether the budget makes the best use of available resources to achieve program goals and deliverables. Are the costs clearly broken down and justified? Does the applicant explain how the funds will be allocated to achieve the program objectives?
4. Past performance and experience: (20 scores). This criterion assesses the applicant’s past experience in managing similar programs, particularly those involving business incubation, startup support, or donor-funded initiatives. The focus is on the organization’s track record in achieving results and managing similar projects effectively.

**4.Application submission and Grant awarding timelines**

Applications will be accepted starting from the day of the release of this CFA till close date. Screening and evaluation will be done during 60 days after publication of the CFA.

Please submit an electronic copy of the application in Tajik or English to the USAID Employment and Enterprise Development Activity representative at email: [eedagrants@acdivoca-tj.org](mailto:eedagrants@acdivoca-tj.org), with subject of the message “EEDA-CFA-01-24”.

Notice to disqualified applications will be sent no later than two weeks after determination of ineligibility or disqualification.

Application that will obtain highest score will be notified about successful selection of application for further final negotiations of program description, expected results, budget and timelines. Applicants which are obtained lowest scores will be notified within 30 days after completion of evalution.

EEDA will conduct a thorough cost analysis of the proposed budget to ensure all costs are reasonable, allowable, and allocable in accordance with USAIDs cost principles and complete final negotiations of the budget and project desctibtion with selected applicant. EEDA will also conduct a pre-award risk assessment withing due diligence process and applicants will be asked to provide additional documents be not limited to signed copy the Certifications. Written notification about grant award to applicant will be send only after USAID review of grant documents and approval of grant award.

1. **Grant implementation timeline**

The earliest timing for financial support activities to begin is on February 2024. Grant Agreements will be for a maximum of one or two years. If required, grant agreements will be supported by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that may be effective until February, 2026. Interested parties are encouraged to get in touch with the USAID Employment and Enterprise Development Activity representative for any question.

**Condition: Issuance of this call for application in no way constitutes a commitment by the USAID** Employment and Enterprise Development Activity **or by USAID to execute any agreement or to pay any costs incurred by any applicant in submitting an application.**

Please note that the USAID Employment and Enterprise Development Activity **will fully respect the confidentiality** of all organizations involved in the programme. If selected, USAID Employment and Enterprise Development Activity will develop a grant agreement with the Organization that describes the objective of collaboration and that clearly defines each party’s respective responsibilities, roles, and obligations. Successful applicants must be willing to share information with USAID Employment and Enterprise Development Activity regarding their activities and results. USAID Employment and Enterprise Development Activity will conduct interviews with beneficiaries to gather information on impact and to monitor progress.

Inquiries and requests for information regarding this Call for Applications can be submitted by email at: [eedagrants@acdivoca-tj.org](mailto:eedagrants@acdivoca-tj.org).

1. **Award Administration**

A grant award will be administered in accordance with applicable regulations stipulated in grant agreement and with reference to:

* For non-U.S. organizations, 2 CFR 200, [ADS 303mab, Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations](http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mab) will apply.

**Annex 1. Application Template**

**USAID Employment and Enterprise Development Activity**

**GRANT APPLICATION TEMPLATE**

1. **GENERAL INFORMATION**

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| Date of submission: |  |
| Name of applicant: |  |
| Name of the enterprise/organization |  |
| Address of the organization/enterprise |  |
| Owner of the enterprise | Name: |
| ☐ Male ☐ Female |
| ☐ Age more than 29 ☐ Age 15- 29 |
| Manager  (if different from the owner) | Name: |
| ☐ Male ☐ Female |
| ☐ Age more than 29 ☐ Age 15- 29 |
| Sector of the enterprise |  |
| Contact information | Address, email, phone: |

1. **ELIGIBILITY CHECK**

*Please check all applicable boxes and provide details as requested*

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| **☐** Registered as a business (patent or legal entity)  *Date of registration:* |
| **☐** Proponent (business or person/s) has track record of successful business performance (> 2 years)  *Please provide brief description of your organization from establishment to date.*  List contact information for three (3) references from previous donors, clients or organizations (U.S. and other) that your organization has collaborated with in the last two years:   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Clients, Donor Agency or Organization | Nature of Relationship or  Title of Project, Location | Start & End Dates of Collaboration | Contact Person | |  |  |  | Name & Position: | |  | Email: | |  | Tel: | |  |  |  | Name & Position: | |  | Email: | |  | Tel: | |  |  |  | Name & Position: | |  | Email: | |  | Tel: | |
| *Requested Grant from the EEDA (in US$) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*  *Purpose of Grant:* |
| **☐** Activity implementation  *Please specify location or locations (Regions/State) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_* |
| Are you a former grant beneficiary?**☐ Yes ☐ No**  *If yes, please state donor source and describe how the grant was utilized and the outcome.* |
| Do youcommit to submit regular monthly reports to the USAID EEDA based on the grant agreement?  **☐** Yes, I commit **☐** No, I cannot commit |
| *Please check if your organization represents or is related to any of the following groups:*  ☐Political parties, groupings, or institutions or their subsidiaries and affiliates  ☐ Organizations promoting anti-democratic policies or illegal activities  ☐ Faith-based organizations whose main deliverables for the activity is of a religious nature |

1. **APPLICATION FORM**

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| 1. Title of the proposed activity: 2. Goal and objectives of the proposed activity:   Goal:  Objectives:  1.  2.  3.     1. Activities and Technical Approaches:   Describe the proposed activity, technical approaches and expected results in details.  Activity 1.  Activity 2.  Activity 3.  Activity 4.  Activity 5.  …  Expected Results:  1.  2.  3.  4.  5.  …  Proposed key personnel to implement activity (positions):  1.  2.  3.   1. Anticipated duration of activity from start to finish:  |  |  | | --- | --- | | Overall length (total number of months) |  | | Start and end date (day, month, and year) |  |  1. Implementation Timeline: Please list the main activities phases with estimated start and end dates for each task. Please include all events, trainings, etc  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Description of Activities | Responsible Party(s) and Specialists | Start & End Dates | Milestone of Achievement | | Activity 1: |  |  |  | | Activity 2: |  |  |  | | Activity 3: |  |  |  | | Activity 4: |  |  |  | | Activity 5: |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | | etc: (please add rows as needed) |  |  |  |  1. Approximate summary of cost of this activity:  |  |  | | --- | --- | | Budget Category | Total Resources Needed from EEDA  (in Tajik Somoni) | | Salaries: |  | | Other Direct Costs: |  | | Training: |  | | Professional Services: |  | | Travel and Transportation: |  | | Goods and Materials: |  | | [Add more rows as needed.] |  | | Total Estimated Costs (in Tajik Somoni) |  |  1. *Other Attachments*     * + 1. *Detailed Budget and note to budget: Prepare a detailed budget using the sample format in ANNEX 1 a (Excel spreadsheet), including note to budget. Project budget should correspond to activities described in Application.* |

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**Name of Applicant Signature**