Terms of Reference (ToRs)

Integrated Ecosystem Mapping and Market Study

With Strong Social Inclusion and Disability Lens

**FCDO’s Green Inclusive Growth - Business Development Services (GIG-BDS)**

# **Project Title:** Green Inclusive Growth Initiative’s Business Development Services (GIG-BDS)

**Commissioning Organisation:** Accelerate Prosperity (AP), under the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), coordinated by the Aga Khan Foundation (UK) [AKF(UK)]

# **Background**

The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) is a private, not-for-profit, non-denominational, international development agency established in 1967. It seeks sustainable solutions to long-term problems of poverty, hunger, illiteracy, and ill-health with a special emphasis on rural communities in mountainous and other resource poor regions, primarily in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Its main areas of focus are education, health, rural development, environment and strengthening civil society.

[Accelerate Prosperity (AP)](https://accelerateprosperity.org/) is an initiative of the AKDN in Central and South Asia, offering a formal structure to support and catalyze sustainable small and growing businesses and startups. Started in 2016 as a joint initiative of the AKF and the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development’s Industrial Promotion Services (AKFED’s IPS), AP aims to inspire entrepreneurship, facilitate innovative business models, coach promising entrepreneurs, create networks and mentorship opportunities and accelerate business growth. Accelerate Prosperity implements various projects across Central and South Asia from multiple donors.

The FCDO-funded ***Integrated Ecosystem Mapping and Market Study*** serves as a foundational assessment to understand the entrepreneurship ecosystem in target regions, identify gaps in market systems, and integrate a gender and People with Disability (PwD) lens to synthesize an exhaustive and inclusive analysis. The findings will inform implementation strategies for effective outreach, capacity building, and programmatic interventions.

**Note:** This integrated study will combine ecosystem mapping with a rapid gender assessment and PwDs’ needs assessment to ensure that programmatic strategies under GIG-BDS effectively promote inclusive economic participation. These components are closely ***interconnected***, making it essential to conduct them in an integrated manner. ***By doing so, we aim to streamline data collection, reduce duplication of efforts, and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the economic landscape vis-à-vis women and PwD entrepreneurship.***

# **Project Background**

The GIG-BDS is a five-year project funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and implemented by Accelerate Prosperity (AP) under the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF). The project operates in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, aiming to foster green and inclusive economic growth through the development of small and growing businesses (SGBs) and startups.

The overall objective of this initiative is to support sustainable economic growth and enhance equitable economic well-being for men, women, youth, and people with disabilities in these regions.

The specific objectives of the GIG-BDS initiative are:

* To improve access to finance and business development services for targeted groups.
* To strengthen market linkages and promote green entrepreneurship.

The initiative is structured around two intermediate outcomes:

1. **Increased Growth of Supported Enterprises:** Enabling SGBs to achieve higher levels of growth and sustainability through tailored business support services and financing mechanisms.
2. **Improved Inclusivity in Economic Participation:** Addressing systemic barriers faced by women, youth, and people with disabilities to ensure their active participation in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

# **Objectives and Scope**

The integrated study will provide a comprehensive analysis of the entrepreneurship landscape in **Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan,** and **Uzbekistan,** identifying gaps and opportunities to foster sustainable and inclusive economic growth. It will generate actionable insights to guide programmatic strategies under the GIG-BDS initiative while ensuring a **cross-cutting gender-responsive approach and disability inclusion lens**. The study will assess the entrepreneurial ecosystem’s capacity to support diverse groups, including women, youth, and People with Disabilities (PwDs), by evaluating access to finance, business development services, training, mentorship, and market linkages within the **Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs (ANDE)** key pillar's framework.

## **Objectives**

1. **Map the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem:** Evaluate key stakeholders, resources, and market gaps to support sustainable, inclusive entrepreneurship, leveraging the ANDE framework.
2. **Identify Barriers and Opportunities:** Examine systemic barriers to entrepreneurship for women, youth, and PwDs, by incorporating lived experiences.
3. **Inform Programmatic Design:** Develop targeted and actionable recommendations to enhance access to finance, training, mentorship, and market linkages through the FCDO-funded GIG-BDS program.
4. **Integrate a Cross-cutting Gender Lens:** Ensure a gender lens is applied to all the key pillars of entrepreneurship ecosystem being studied in this context to ensure gendered challenges and opportunities are accounted for in the program design. This can be achieved by adopting the ***Women’s Entrepreneurship Development (WED) Framework*** to assess the specific barriers women entrepreneurs face, the gender responsiveness of policies and regulations, the accessibility of financial and business development services, and the extent to which women business owners are represented in public-private policy dialogues. This ensures that gendered challenges and opportunities are systematically identified and incorporated into program design, leading to targeted and effective interventions.
5. **Conduct a PwD-Specific Needs Assessment:** Identify challenges and enablers specific to PwDs or Entrepreneurs with Disabilities (EwDs), ensuring that program design is fully inclusive. The PwDs Needs Assessment will focus on understanding the unique needs, barriers, and opportunities for integrating People with Disabilities (PwDs) into entrepreneurial ecosystems. Unlike a traditional ecosystem analysis, the framework will center on understanding the lived experiences, systemic barriers, and aspirations of PwDs in the context of entrepreneurship, ensuring that findings directly inform actionable and inclusive programmatic strategies.

## **Scope**

1. **Assess the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem:** Evaluate the current landscape of entrepreneurship, including key stakeholders, available resources, and existing gaps in business development services (BDS), leveraging the ANDE framework for structure and depth. This includes an assessment of the accessibility and inclusivity of these services for PwDs.
2. **Identify Key Stakeholders, Barriers, and Opportunities:** Examine systemic challenges across the key pillars of entrepreneurship, including support services, finance, human capital, and market linkages. Special attention will be given to barriers limiting the participation of women, youth, and PwDs in the entrepreneurial space, including structural, attitudinal, and systemic obstacles.
3. **Explore Market Opportunities and Inclusion for PwDs:** Investigate the role of businesses offering products and services tailored for PwDs, regardless of the founders’ backgrounds, and identify how such businesses can foster an inclusive ecosystem.
4. **Inform Programmatic Design:** Provide actionable recommendations for scaling and adapting GIG-BDS program design and offerings. The report should inform GIG-BDS strategy for expansion within CA, notably where AP does not have an on-ground presence.
5. **Map Existing Resources and Identify Gaps in Services for PwDs:** Assess current support mechanisms available for EwDs, highlighting key ecosystem actors and PwD-specific support organizations who could champion disability inclusion.
6. **Conduct a Gender and Disability-Inclusive Assessment:** The assessment will identify barriers and opportunities for women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PwDs) in entrepreneurship, ensuring alignment with AKF’s gender equality strategy and the ***Women’s Entrepreneurship Development (WED) Assessment Framework***. It will examine the *legal and regulatory environment*, including *labour laws, business registration, licensing procedures*, and *property and inheritance rights*, to assess their impact on inclusive entrepreneurship. Additionally, the study will evaluate *policy leadership and coordination*, determining whether WED is a national priority and if dedicated government mechanisms exist to promote it. The assessment will also explore *access to gender-sensitive financial services*, analyzing both mainstream and targeted financing programs for women entrepreneurs. Furthermore, it will assess the *availability and responsiveness of business development support (BDS)* services, ensuring that both general and tailored support mechanisms meet the needs of underrepresented entrepreneurs. The study will also investigate *market access and technology inclusion,* including government procurement opportunities, supply chain participation, export promotion, and access to digital tools. Lastly, it will evaluate *women’s representation in business associations*, *entrepreneurship networks, and public-private policy dialogues,* ensuring their voices influence decision-making processes. The findings will generate *evidence-based recommendations* to foster a more equitable, gender-responsive, and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem.
7. **Undertake a detailed review of barriers and opportunities specific to People with Disabilities (PwDs),** **Entrepreneurs with Disabilities (EwDs)**, and business offering products and services for PwDs, ensuring alignment with AP’s broader gender equality strategy and providing evidence-based recommendations to promote their economic participation.
8. **Document Best Practices and Case Studies:** Identify successful initiatives for PwDs inclusion in entrepreneurship, developing case studies showcasing innovative approaches and their outcomes.
9. **Support Policy and Advocacy Efforts:** Provide recommendations to address gaps in policies and practices supporting EwDs, aligning findings with regional and global frameworks for inclusive entrepreneurship.

# **Assessment Framework**

Utilize the Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs (ANDE) Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Diagnostic Toolkit, which synthesizes various evaluative frameworks identified through a comprehensive literature review. This toolkit provides a structured approach to assess the state of entrepreneurial ecosystems, focusing on key elements and indicators relevant to the local context.12

## **Key Pillars of the ANDE Framework**

The ANDE framework identifies **eight primary pillars** that shape entrepreneurial ecosystems: finance, human capital, markets, support services, infrastructure, culture, policy, and research and development (R&D). **Finance** encompasses access to funding sources such as venture capital, angel investors, and grants. **Human capital** focuses on the availability and quality of education, workforce skills, and training programs essential for entrepreneurs. **Markets** evaluate opportunities for accessing local and international markets. **Support services** assess the availability and effectiveness of incubators, accelerators, and business development services. **Infrastructure** considers both physical and digital resources that support businesses. **Culture** addresses societal attitudes towards entrepreneurship and risk-taking, while **R&D** reflects innovation capacity through patents, research institutions, and technology transfer. The **policy** pillar examines the regulatory environment, including tax incentives and the ease of starting a business.

For this assessment, we will prioritize specific pillars that are critical to understanding the ecosystem's dynamics as it relates to the current FCDO GIG-BDS project. These include support services, where we will evaluate the availability and effectiveness of incubators, accelerators, mentorship programs, and other support mechanisms; finance, focusing on access to funding across different stages of entrepreneurship; human capital, assessing the skills gap, workforce readiness, and education systems that support entrepreneurs; and market linkages, exploring opportunities for entrepreneurs to connect with local and global markets. Although the policy environment is included in our analysis, it will not be a key priority area for this assessment.

## **Gender Lens Integration and PwDs Needs Assessment**

This assessment will apply a gender lens across all pillars being studied using the ANDE framework, which includes evaluating how gender roles influence access to resources and opportunities across the ecosystem. The aim is to identify gender-specific trends and disparities in access to resources, opportunities, and outcomes within the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The ***Women’s Entrepreneurship Development (WED) Framework*** will be used to assess the specific barriers women entrepreneurs face, the gender responsiveness of policies and regulations, the accessibility of financial and business development services, and the extent to which women business owners are represented in public-private policy dialogues. This ensures that gendered challenges and opportunities are systematically identified and incorporated into program design, leading to targeted and effective interventions. This approach ensures inclusivity and highlights systemic barriers faced by women entrepreneurs.

To generate valuable insights, the assessment also must incorporate a PwDs Needs Assessment to evaluate the intersectionality of disability and entrepreneurship, ensuring that accessibility, lived experiences, and systemic barriers are accounted for in the entrepreneurial landscape.

### ***Pillars and Key Research Questions***

#### **Support Services:**

* What is the landscape of incubators, accelerators, and business development services in the region, and how do they contribute to entrepreneurship growth?
* What are the key barriers that women entrepreneurs face in the country, and how do these barriers impact their business growth and sustainability?
* How effective are enterprise support policies and programs, including financial and business development services, in addressing the needs of women entrepreneurs? Do these programs offer tailored products and services?
* Are existing incubators, accelerators, and mentorship programs equally accessible to women entrepreneurs and people with disabilities?
* How effective are these services in addressing the unique needs of underrepresented groups?
* What is the level of understanding and awareness among the business community in TJK, UZB, KRG on challenges faced by PwD, and how to eliminate social stigma surrounding disability and entrepreneurship?
* What are current gaps in existing training, mentoring programmed to ensure access to relevant resources for PwDs to develop their entrepreneurial skills?
* How might the private and public sector promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in the mainstream business sector by fostering partnerships and encouraging diversity and accessibility?
* Are business development services adapted to ensure inclusivity for EwDs?
* How accessible are training, mentorship, and financial advisory services for PwDs, including those with mobility, visual, hearing, or cognitive impairments?

#### **Finance:**

* What financial mechanisms (grants, venture capital, loans, microfinance) are available for startups and small businesses in the region?
* What barriers do women and marginalized groups face in accessing startup capital, venture funding, private equity funding, angel investment, and debt financing?
* Are there differences in the financing models utilized by women-led businesses compared to their male counterparts?
* What financial tools and mechanisms exist to improve accessibility for EwDs?
* Are banks, microfinance institutions, and investors equipped to offer inclusive financial services for EwDs?
* How do stigma and biases impact funding decisions for PwD-led enterprises?

#### **Market:**

* What are the key sectors driving entrepreneurial growth in the region, and how do entrepreneurs access market opportunities?
* Do women entrepreneurs face additional challenges in accessing local or international markets?
* What systemic factors affect the ability of women-led businesses to establish market linkages?
* How can EwDs effectively participate in supply chains and business networks?
* Are businesses producing goods and services tailored for PwDs given market access and support to scale?
* Are there inclusive procurement policies that facilitate market entry for PwD-owned businesses?

#### **Legal and Policy Frameworks:**

* What are the key policies and regulations shaping the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and how do they affect business development?
* What policies exist to promote gender equality and inclusivity in entrepreneurship?
* How do existing policies, laws, and regulations affect women business owners, and to what extent are these frameworks gender-responsive?
* To what extent are businesswomen represented in public-private policy dialogues, and how effectively are their concerns addressed in these forums?
* What concrete country-specific policy and programmatic recommendations can be made to address the main barriers to women’s entrepreneurship development?
* How effectively are these policies being implemented, and are they achieving their intended outcomes?
* What are current national programmes & policies that empowers people with disabilities to become successful entrepreneurs by fostering a supportive ecosystem?
* What legal frameworks exist to support PwD entrepreneurship, and how well are they enforced?
* Are national disability inclusion policies aligned with entrepreneurial development programs?
* How do regulatory frameworks influence the ease of doing business for PwD-owned enterprises?

#### **Human Capital:**

* What are the key skill gaps in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and how are they being addressed?
* Are there noticeable gaps in training or skills development opportunities for women and youth entrepreneurs?
* How do educational and professional backgrounds impact the entrepreneurial success of women compared to men?
* What tailored skill development initiatives exist for EwDs?
* Are there specialized programs that address financial literacy, digital skills, and business management for PwDs?
* What roles do disability-inclusive hiring and employment policies play in entrepreneurship?

#### **Culture and Social Norms:**

* How does the cultural perception of entrepreneurship impact business formation and growth in the region?
* How do societal norms and gender expectations influence women’s participation in entrepreneurial activities?
* Are there cultural attitudes that support or hinder inclusivity within the entrepreneurial ecosystem?
* How does societal perception of disability impact PwDs’ participation in entrepreneurship?
* What strategies have successfully shifted cultural biases against EwDs in other markets?

Given the importance of gender integration and the inclusion of PwDs into this project AP’s Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Advisor and the **AKF’s Global Lead Gender Equality** will be closely involved in the assessment to ensure alignment with best practices. Additionally, the **AKF Global Lead Gender Equality** will actively engage during the reporting phase to ensure that **gender-focused insights and PwDs inclusivity considerations** are robust, actionable, and aligned with **AP’s broader gender equality strategy**.

# **Research Design**

The consulting firm is expected to propose a viable assessment approach, design, and methodology, along with a detailed justification for recommending the said methodology in their proposal. Accelerate Prosperity suggests using a mix of quantitative and qualitative primary data collection methods from key stakeholders, entrepreneurs, and ecosystem actors. ***The methodology must ensure inclusivity, particularly applying a gender-sensitive lens to capture insights specific to women, youth, and people with disabilities.***

Additionally, the methodology must also ensure inclusivity when studying the needs and challenges of people with disabilities in the entrepreneurship ecosystems in question, ***particularly ensuring a fair representation of women, youth, and Entrepreneurs with Disabilities (EwDs) from rural areas or alternatively businesses from rural areas providing products or services to PwDs.***

## **Desk Review:**

The firm will conduct a comprehensive review of existing project documentation, including the project proposal, logical framework, progress reports, variance reports, interim annual reports, and relevant monitoring data. Additionally, the consultant should review relevant literature, entrepreneurship ecosystem reports, and publicly available datasets to contextualize findings within the broader regional landscape. The review should help adjust the report content and refine research questions accordingly.

In relevance to the PwDs Needs Assessment aspect, the review must help adjust the report content and refine research questions accordingly. To ensure a thorough understanding of the **FCDO funded GIG-BDS project**, including its intended approach to **gender and PwDs inclusion**, the review should also incorporate the following:

* **AP and AKF Gender Policies and Strategies**: Review any existing **AP or AKF gender policies**, gender mainstreaming strategies, and related frameworks that provide guidance on inclusive entrepreneurship development.
* **Safeguarding and Inclusion Policies**: Review **AKF’s safeguarding policy** to understand general commitments and guiding principles on diversity, equity and inclusion.
* **Existing AP Program Evaluations and Reports**: Analyze past assessments, evaluations, or case studies conducted within AP or AKF to identify lessons learned and areas of improvement.
* **National and Regional Policies on PwDs and Gender Inclusion**: Examine legislation and policies on disability rights, gender equality, and entrepreneurship in the target countries to assess alignment with global and regional frameworks.
* **Global and Regional Best Practices**: Identify gaps and opportunities based on international guidelines, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), SDGs related to gender and economic inclusion, and reports from organizations like the World Bank, ILO, and UN Women.
* **Intersectionality in Entrepreneurship**: Explore existing studies on intersectionality, gender, and disability in the business landscape, ensuring that findings are grounded in real-world barriers and opportunities.

## **Mixed-Method Approach:**

The assessment should combine qualitative and quantitative data to provide a holistic view of the ecosystem.

### ***Quantitative Data:***

* + Use **Self-Completed Questionnaires (SCQs)** to gather structured online survey data from a representative sample of businesses (including startups and SGBs), Entrepreneurship Support Organizations (ESOs), investors (including VC funds, angel investors, debt financiers, etc.) and policy stakeholders (including government regulatory bodies) in each country of implementation, i.e., Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
		- Use tailored **SCQs** to gather structured online survey data from a representative sample of Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs), community representatives, EwDs, and businesses offering products and services to PwDs in each country of implementation, i.e., Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
	+ Analyze existing beneficiary datasets, including data on job creation, support services, enterprise growth, investment patterns, market linkages, demographics, and training outcomes.
		- Particularly in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan leverage existing data from AP's work on the ground with respect to support services, financing, coworking spaces, human capital, market linkages and so on.
		- Utilize publicly available secondary data to supplement findings and address gaps in the data.
		- Analyze existing secondary beneficiary datasets specifically pertaining to PwDs and EwDs.

### ***Qualitative Data:***

* + Conduct Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with key program stakeholders, including AP leadership, country directors, entrepreneurs, ecosystem support organizations, business associations, national associations for women entrepreneurs, investors, and policymakers.
	+ Organize Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in each country to capture diverse perspectives, particularly from marginalized groups such as women entrepreneurs and people with disabilities.
	+ Document case studies that highlight project successes, challenges, best practices, and lessons learned.
	+ Conduct Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs), community representatives, EwDs, and businesses offering products and services to PwDs, to understand their unique challenges and needs.
	+ Conduct KIIs with key program stakeholders, including AP leadership, country directors, entrepreneurs, ecosystem support organizations, investors, and policymakers to get an overview of the ecosystem from the PwDs Needs Assessment lens.
	+ Document case studies that highlight project successes, challenges, best practices, and lessons learned.

## **Data Collection Considerations for PwDs**

**Participatory Research Principles**:

* Engage Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) and community representatives at every stage, ensuring the principle of "Nothing About Us Without Us."
* Engage the stakeholders such as National Women's Machinery, UN Women, and Technical Coordination Groups, in consultations related to Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE)."
* Incorporate gender-sensitive and culturally appropriate methods to avoid biases.

**Survey Design and Administration**:

* Administer the quantitative ecosystem survey with a sample of EwDs to ensure direct insights on the differences in needs, opportunities, and challenges for PwDs in the entrepreneurship ecosystems in the countries of implementation.
* Design another brief survey and adapt it to capture data on functional and accessibility needs using frameworks like the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning.1
* Ensure accessible formats for all surveys (e.g., large print, braille, and digital options compatible with screen readers).

**Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**:

* Conduct in-depth interviews with Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs), community representatives, EwDs, and businesses offering products and services to PwDs, to understand their unique challenges and needs.

**Case Studies of Innovation and Success**:

* Document success stories showcasing how tailored interventions have improved PwDs participation in entrepreneurship.
* Analyze the scalability and replicability of these initiatives.

**Validation Workshops**:

* Host multi-stakeholder workshops to review preliminary findings and co-create solutions, ensuring insights are practical and aligned with community needs.

# **Deliverables**

Below is the list of deliverables to be submitted by the consultant(s).

## **Inception Report with a Detailed Work Plan**

Upon reviewing available documents and an initial discussion with the project team, the consultant should submit an inception report—along with a detailed methodology and work plan—and deliver a presentation to the Project Management Unit (PMU). The inception report and presentation will:

* Describe the conceptual framework that will be used and how it will be implemented to undertake this study.
* Explain the proposed methodology, incorporating any changes as required.
* Set out in detail the data analysis plan to answer the key questions, data sources by specific question, data collection methods, sampling, and selection criteria of respondents for interviews, surveys, and FGDs.
* Detail the work plan for the assessment, indicating its phases, key deliverables, and milestones, for each country.
* List the key stakeholders to be interviewed and the tools to be used for interviews and discussions.
* Present a detailed and tentative outline/table of contents for the final ***Integrated Ecosystem Mapping and Market Study.***
* Share a **detailed outline of the report** to demonstrate the expected structure and flow of its content in the inception report, before proceeding with the full draft. Feedback from the PMU team can be incorporated into this to refine it and use it at the drafting stage.

## **Initial Findings and Detailed Report Outline**

Prior to drafting the ***Integrated Ecosystem Mapping and Market Study,*** the consultant should provide a briefing document and a formal presentation of initial findings to the AP/AKF and the PMU team. This presentation should:

* Summarize the preliminary results of the key research questions posed under the assessment.
* Incorporate feedback from the AP/AKF team to refine the report parameters.
* Deliver a briefing document summarizing preliminary findings.
* Presentation to AP/AKF leadership summarizing key research outcomes and initial observations.
* A proposed updated structure for the final report, incorporating feedback from the AP/AKF team.

## **Draft Report**

The consultant will submit the first draft of the ***Integrated Ecosystem Mapping and Market Study*** to the AP team for review. This draft will:

* Incorporate feedback and comments from the AP management team.
* Be revised based on inputs from AP leadership and other stakeholders, including the FCDO.
* Incorporation of feedback from AP, AKF’s Global Lead Gender Equality, and FCDO stakeholders.
* The draft should provide clear evidence-based insights and actionable recommendations.
* Provide clear evidence-based insights addressing the assessment objectives and key questions.

## **Final Report and Presentation**

The final report will:

* Submission of a comprehensive final report, incorporating all stakeholder feedback.
	+ Provide a detailed assessment of the entrepreneurship ecosystems in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, including gender lens and PwDs needs assessment as detailed above.
* A PowerPoint presentation summarizing key findings, challenges, and recommendations for AP leadership and FCDO.
* Inclusion of detailed datasets, such as completed questionnaires, interview transcripts, and analyzed data.
* Incorporate and address all comments from AP, AKF, FCDO, and other key stakeholders.

The consultant(s) will also prepare a PowerPoint presentation summarizing key findings, insights, and recommendations. This presentation will be delivered to AP/AKF leadership (including the AP Executive Committee).

# **Duration, Implementation Arrangements, and Work Plan**

The ***Integrated Ecosystem Mapping and Market Study*** must be carried out by a consultant within 60 Calendar Days, starting no later than **Friday, March 28, 2025** *(preferably earlier if possible)* and handing over the final AP and FCDO-approved report and slide deck before/by **Friday, May 30, 2025**. The first draft of the report must be submitted to AP preferably by **Friday, April 18, 2025, or latest by Friday, April 25, 2025.** The exact schedule/plan of the consultancy will be agreed upon with the consultant before the signing of the contract. However, the most suitable firm for this assessment MUST have the capacity to run these assessment activities simultaneously, including HR capacity to assign people to data collection, translation, analysis, report writing, and other critical tasks.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| S.No. | Activity | Days |
| 1 | Kick-Off Meeting | 1 |
| 2 | Desk Review | 5 |
|  | Inception Report & a Detailed Work Plan | 1 |
| 3 | Pilot the instruments | 1 |
| 4 | Data collection | 15 |
| 5 | Data analysis | 5 |
|  | Present Initial Findings [& Share Report Outline] | 1 |
| 6 | Incorporate AP’s feedback | 3 |
|  | Submission of the First Draft of the Report | 10 |
| 7 | Incorporate feedback | 7 |
|  | Submission of the Final Draft Report & Presentation | 1 |
| 8 | Share Final Draft with FCDO | 1 |
| 9 | Firm to share revised Report after FCDO feedback | 8 |
|  | Approval of the Final Report & Presentation | 2 |
| Total |  | **60** |

# **Implementation Arrangements**

The consulting firm will work in close collaboration with the Accelerate Prosperity (AP) Project Management Unit (PMU), including the PMU Manager and the Regional MERL Manager. The PMU will progressively provide feedback on the assessment to ensure alignment with FCDO’s expectations and that the key objectives of the study are met.

# **Budget and Payment**

Accelerate Prosperity is open to discussing with the consultants the tasks that could be completed within the given budget. Payment to the consultant will be made based on the following schedule:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| S.No | Deliverable | Payment Schedule |
| 1 | Approval of the inception report, initial presentation, and the detailed work plan | 30% |
| 2 | Approval of initial findings, report outline, & documents entailing the primary data gathered in the field | 30% |
| 3 | Submission and approval of the final draft of the report and the presentation (slides) by AP and FCDO | 40% |

# **Consultant(s)/Firms Experience and Qualification**

The ***Integrated Ecosystem Mapping and Market Study*** is open to consulting firms only. The firms must meet the following criteria:

* Over ***10 years’ experience*** in conducting ecosystem assessments and evaluations in ***Central Asia***, preferably for development organizations such as the FCDO.
* Proven experience in ***assessing and mapping entrepreneurship programs and ecosystems*** in ***Central Asia.***
* Team members with subject matter expertise and postgraduate degrees in business, research, economics, gender and social inclusion, and other relevant fields is required.
* The consulting firm must have experts with ***demonstrated expertise in social inclusion, particularly in gender and persons with disabilities (PwDs)***. Additionally, the firm should ensure that resumes of key experts are included in the submitted proposal package.
* Familiarity with ***assistive technologies and accessibility needs****,* such as braille documents, ramps, or sign language interpretation, to ensure inclusive data collection.
* Extensive conceptual and methodological skills and experience in quantitative and qualitative assessments, including evaluation designs, participatory approaches, and mixed-method analysis.
* Deep understanding of the Central Asian entrepreneurship ecosystem.
* Demonstrated proficiency in facilitation, coordination, negotiation, and report writing in English.
* ***Fluency in regional languages (e.g., Kyrgyz, Tajik, Uzbek) is required***, or alternatively the firm must have translators available for interviews, FGDs, publicly available documents and data translation needs. Preference will be given to the former.
* The firm must demonstrate ***ample HR capacity to conduct simultaneous research activities*** during the assessment period considering the rapid nature of this assessment.
* Preference will be given to local companies associated with the geographies of interest including Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, but the RFP is open to international firms with relevant experiences, expertise, and resources as well.

**Selection Criteria**

The proposal will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. **Conceptual Framework and Methodology**:
	* Relevance and responsiveness of the proposed framework and methodology to the Terms of Reference (ToRs), particularly integration of the Gender Lens across all pillars of entrepreneurship.
	* Alignment with the assessment objectives and the GIG-BDS project priorities.
	* Robustness of the conceptual framework and methodology proposed for the PwDs Needs Assessment aspect of the study.
	* Evaluation questions aligned with the GIG-BDS project objectives, objectives and scope of the current assessment, and the ANDE framework’s approach for ecosystem mapping.
2. **Relevant Experience**:
	* Relevant professional experience of the consulting firm demonstrated through CVs of the team and relevant sample reports shared.
	* Proven expertise in conducting ecosystem mapping exercises in frontier and emerging markets. Experience designing and conducting such assessments in Central Asia will be a significant advantage.
	* Proven ability to conduct **disability-inclusive assessments in entrepreneurship and business development.**
	* Familiarity with **assistive technologies and accessibility needs**, such as braille documents, ramps, or sign language interpretation, to ensure inclusive data collection.
	* Demonstrated ability to engage with Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs) and marginalized groups effectively.
3. **Quality of Past Work**:
	* Submission of at least two high-quality evaluation reports from the past five years that are relevant to the current ToRs.
4. **Organizational Profile**:
	* A minimum of 10 years of relevant experience.
	* Capacity to run simultaneous research activities during the assessment period.
5. **Cost Effectiveness**:
	* A detailed financial proposal outlining costs for tasks and deliverables.

**Note:** On-ground presence in Central & South Asia will be considered an advantage.

**Proposal Submission**

Email applications should be forwarded to Accelerate Prosperity at quotations.msdspkg@akdn.org by March, 20 before 5:00 PM Bishkek time.

The application should comprise:

* A detailed technical proposal with the proposed methodology.
* A detailed budget.
* An updated copy of the lead consultant’s CV and other key team members including key evaluators and experts’ resumes, including two references with contact details.
* Two examples of recently completed assessment reports, preferably something similar to the current report.