



THE FIRST CALL FOR CONCEPT NOTES “Women’s Economic Empowerment and Policy Funding – Scheme 1”



**Gender Responsive and Equitable Agriculture and Tourism (GREAT)
Lao Cai province**

August 2018



GREAT is an initiative of Aus4Equality Program managed by CowaterSogema on behalf of Australian Government.

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THE FIRST CALL FOR CONCEPT NOTES

“Women’s Economic Empowerment and Policy Funding Scheme – Scheme 1”

1. Background

Aus4Equality|GREAT is a flagship initiative of the Australian Government's Aid Program for the socio-economic development of women in north-west Vietnam, which was officially launched in November 2017 and will be implemented over four years (2018-2021).

The programme will be implemented in Son La and Lao Cai provinces with total funding of over AUD 33 million, of which AUD 18,500,000 will be invested through multiple co-investment agreements through different funding instruments/schemes such as Women Economic Empowerment and Policy Funding, Inclusive Business Funding and Innovation Funding with 70 – 80 partners in the two provinces.

The Provincial People’s Committees of Son La and Lao Cai is the Program’s owner . Within each Province a Project Management Unit (PMU) works collaboratively with CowaterSogema as the Australian Aid Program, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) - appointed Managing Contractor to provide essential coordination, liaison, and advisory roles.

Key results of this Program in each province include: increased income of at least 20,000 women of working age by 2021; creation of 2,000 new full-time (or equivalent) waged positions for women; 15 percent increase in women led and co-managed formal businesses or cooperatives; and increased confidence, enthusiasm and self-esteem of 80 percent of women beneficiaries in families as well as in their lives and to leverage three million US Dollars from the private sector for business activities in each province.

Major approaches to be applied in Aus4Equality|GREAT include (1) Market Systems Development (MSD), and (2) Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE). MSD aims to create pro-poor inclusive and sustainable growth by changing the way whole sectors of the economy or industries operate using a mix of methods in partnership with local market actors, whilst WEE will help women improve their ability to succeed and advance economically and have power to make and act on economic decisions at all levels (household, community, market and society). With these approaches, Program partners are encouraged to cooperate with market players in agriculture and tourism sectors including for example (a) enterprises, cooperatives, social enterprises, foreign invested enterprises, etc. who play key roles in the market development and product/service supply chains; (b) agencies who provide supporting services such as financial institutions, training providers, business advisory providers for business development; and (c) agencies facilitating enabling business environment such as government departments, business associations, professional associations, non-governmental organizations, universities/colleges, research institutes, mass organisations, etc.

The present Call for Concept Note is for The Women’s Economic Empowerment and Policy Funding Scheme (Scheme 1) which will target at those partners who intend to implement solutions for achieving the Aus4Equality program’s objective 1 “**Women’s Economic Empowerment in Agriculture and Tourism**” and objective 3 “**Improving Sector Governance and Policy**” in Lao Cai province.

Total investment amount of the fund is 6.12 million AUD (4,4 million EUR for WEE and 1,720 million AUD for improving sector governance and policy) in Lao Cai province, over a 36-month period (2019-2021).

2. Co-financial investment and technical assistance under Scheme 1

Scheme 1 will co-invest up to 90% of total investment cost of the selected proposals offering effective and innovative solutions for “Women’s Economic Empowerment in two sectors of Agriculture and Tourism” and “Improved Sector Governance and Policy” in Lao Cai province through a public and competitive call for proposals.

Funding sizes under Scheme 1 are as follows:

Small grants:
From AUD50,000 to AUD80,000
Outreach: at least 100 households in agriculture and 30 households in tourism

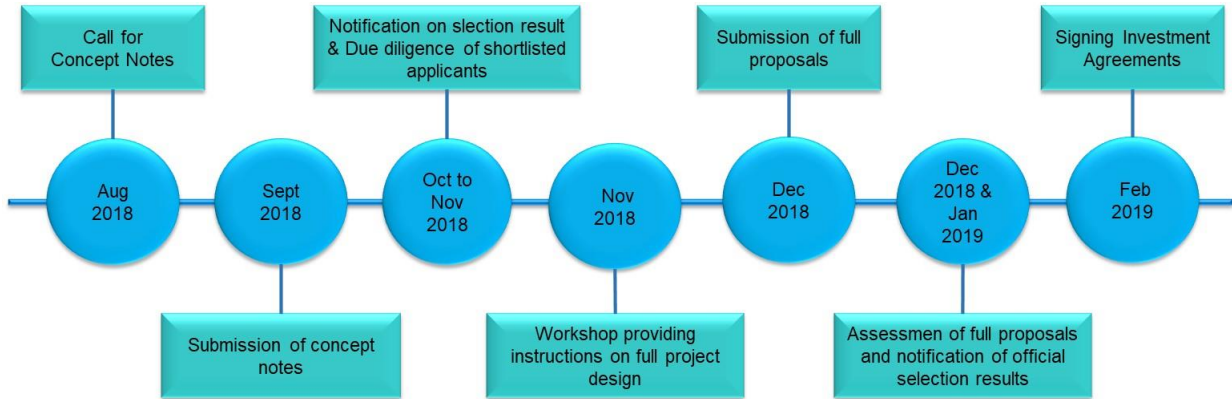
Medium grants: From AUD80,001 to AUD500,000
Outreach: at least 300 households in agriculture and 100 households in tourism

Large grants:
From AUD 500,001 to AUD1,000,000
Outreach: at least 1,000 households in agriculture and 300 households in tourism

The changes in market system in term of sustainability, scalability and resilience) in agriculture and tourism sectors is also a factor to consider the Scheme’s investment size. It is estimated approximately 20-30 proposals of different sizes in Lao Cai province shall be funded by the Program.

3. Timeframe

Funding Scheme 1 will be implemented in three years (36 months) with preparation time as follows:



Summarized steps of the first Call for Concept Notes:

Activities	Timeframe	Agencies in charge
Official publication of Call for Concept Notes	21 th August 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lao Cai PMU and GREAT
Questions for clarification from interested agencies/ organizations	15 days prior to the submission deadline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lao Cai PMU and GREAT
Responses to clarification questions	8 days prior to the submission deadline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lao Cai PMU and GREAT
Submission of Concept notes	26 th September 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants
Assessment and selection of concept notes	01-12 th Oct 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appraisal Committee consisting of three representatives: one from PMU, one from Managing Contractor (GREAT) and one independent expert experienced in investment fund management (agreed and selected by PMU and GREAT)
No-objection by DFAT on the short-list of Concept Notes	25 th Oct 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DFAT
Notification on results of concept notes selection to applicants	25 th October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GREAT sends written notification to selected applicants and invites them to design full project proposal
Due diligence of shortlisted applicants	29 th October – 9 th Nov 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GREAT PMU Lao Cai Independent expert (if needed)
Workshop on detailed project design and partnership for market system development, including proposal presentations	13 – 16 th November 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GREAT and PMU Lao Cai
Submission of full proposals	17 th December 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants

Activities	Timeframe	Agencies in charge
Assessment of full proposals and drafting partnership agreements	24 th December 2018 to 3 rd Jan 2019	• PMU, GREAT
No-objection of final selection results	15 th January 2019	• DFAT
Notification of final selection results	15 th January 2019	• GREAT
Signing of partnership agreement	February 2019	• GREAT and successful partner(s)

4. Sectors and prioritized themes

Themes eligible for investment by Women's Economic Empowerment and Policy Development Funding Scheme (Scheme 1) are listed in below table.

Sector: Agriculture
Theme: Empowering local women. Suggested intervention areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply advanced production techniques and product diversification to minimize climate change risks and market risks for women producer groups; • Apply innovation solutions in trainings on production techniques and business for groups; • Connect producer groups with traders, cooperatives, and companies to improve market access; • Improve women's access to skill training services and vocational opportunities in agriculture; • Build capacity in business and improve market access for women led enterprises and cooperatives; • Empower women's decision-making in different aspects, including household finance; • Improve labor division/sharing workload between women and men.
Sector: Tourism
Theme: Empowering women in tourism. Suggested intervention areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand opportunities for women to engage in quality and diversified community-based tourism (CBT) services in current and new tourist destinations; • Improve the production and marketing capacity of traditional handicraft groups to access the tourism market • Develop and provide tourism training services linked to job creation for women.
Theme: Improving sector governance and policy. Suggested intervention areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve sectoral business environment to attract enterprises to invest in and associate effectively with households in agriculture and tourism sectors; • Promote the implementation of national target programs on gender equality and women's economic empowerment in ethnic minority areas (NTP programs in Lao Cai province); Advocate for the development of national target program and strategy for the period 2021-2025; • Support business and start-up initiatives of women linked to policy making and enabling environment • Improve financial access of households and women-led enterprises; • Integrate business and gender equality measurement into district competitiveness Index (DCI);

Interested applicants can apply independently or in association with other partners.

5. Assessment criteria

a) Eligibility

- A concept note must be relevant to at least one of the two objectives: (i) Empowering local women in agriculture and tourism in Lao Cai province (in five districts of Sa Pa, Bat Xat, Bac Ha, Van Ban and Muong Khuong) and (ii) improving sector governance and policy in agriculture and tourism;
- State management agencies are eligible to concept notes of objective (ii) only;
- Public service delivery organizations and non-profit organizations (including non-governmental organizations/mass organizations, research institutes, universities, organizations/unions and professional associations) and social enterprises which is

licensed to operate and sufficient years of business operations justified by relevant business license in Vietnam, are eligible to concept notes in both objectives (i) and (ii)

- Relevant working experience of the lead partner in the proposed aspects:
 - 3 years with applications for small size funding
 - 4 years with applications for medium size funding
 - Over 5 years with applications for large size funding

Any concept note which fail to meet any of the above criteria shall not be considered for further assessment.

b) Assessment criteria and grid

The below key criteria will be assessed:

- Relevance
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Sustainability and Scalability
- Innovation

See **Annex 5** – Assessment Criteria and Grid for further details

6. Financial mechanism

- Applicants must commit and demonstrate its capacity to contribute at least 10% of the total investment capital in cash and/or in kind;
- Advance mechanism is applicable. The advance replenishment and liquidation shall be based on achievement milestones of project outcome indicators committed in the partnership agreement and the level of compliance with administrative and financial management principles.
- Non-refundable investment under Funding Scheme 1 can be used to cover:
 - ✓ Project implementation cost (trainings, workshops, etc. community investment)
 - ✓ Technical advisory cost
 - ✓ General operating expense (travelling, office, etc.)
- Project management cost (staff, overhead) is applicable for applicants who are not state management agencies
- The following items are not eligible for the non-refundable investment by Scheme 1:
 - ✓ Purchasing and rental of existing land or buildings (under their ownership);
 - ✓ Leasing equipment and infrastructure;

7. Procedure for submission of concept note

- Deadline for submission of Concept Note for Funding Scheme 1 **is no later than 17:00 pm, Wednesday, 26th September 2018** in the form of:
 - ✓ An electronic version of the concept note in pdf format (scanned version) shall be sent to the email address: c4p@aus4equalityvn.org, **AND**
 - ✓ A hard copy (printed version) of signed and sealed concept note shall be submitted to the **GREAT Project Office on 7th floor**, Vinapaco building, No. 142 Doi Can Street, Ba Dinh District, Hanoi (as attested by date on postmark).
- Concept note submission dossier should include:
 - ✓ Concept note (maximum 12 pages, as per template provided)
 - ✓ Operating permit or decision on the establishment of the organization/group or business registration of the enterprise/company;
 - ✓ Latest annual financial statements (audited or certified by financial authorities) on the agency/organization's performance;

- ✓ Any other relevant supporting documents to further explain the concept note can be provided as annexes
- Language of the Concept Note: Applicants are encouraged to submit the concept notes in both English and Vietnamese. The Vietnamese version is obligatory.
- Font type: Arial; font size: 10
- Format: Left indent justification

Please refer to **Annex 1** – Concept Note template for **“Women’s economic empowerment”** or **“improved sector governance and policies”**.

8. Confidentiality

Information provided by applicants in the concept notes shall be kept confidential, and solely used for the purpose of concept note selection and assessment by the Program.

The selection committee's decisions are final and its deliberations are held in closed session. The members of the selection committee are bound to secrecy.

All selection reports and written records, in particular, are for internal use only and may be communicated neither to the Applicants nor to any party other than the PMU, GREAT program and DFAT.

9. Clarifications

The deadline for requests for clarification is 15 days before the deadline for submission of concept notes. All clarification requests must be sent to c4p@aus4equalityvn.org. Applicants may also refer to the ‘Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)’ document to clarify some applicant queries. The deadline for replies by the GREAT program to all candidates is 8 days before the deadline for submission concept notes.

Please refer to the website: equality.aus4vietnam.org for FAQs and other information about the Program.