



**Date:** October 22, 2019

**From:** Procurement and Partnerships Team, INVEST Project; Implemented by DAI Global LLC

**Subject:** Expressions of Interest (EOI) INVEST-001 in support of Blended Finance Approaches to Women’s Economic Empowerment

**Due:** **1:00 pm EDT on Friday, November 1, 2019**

Dear all:

Through this Expression of Interest (EOI), INVEST aims to identify potential partners and innovative approaches that leverage USAID resources to catalyze commercial investment for women’s economic empowerment and equality in USAID presence countries.

- I.** Submission of Questions – Questions must be submitted no later than **1:00 pm EDT on October 25, 2019** via email to [INVEST\\_Procurement@dai.com](mailto:INVEST_Procurement@dai.com).
- II.** Submission of EOI’s – EOI’s must be submitted no later than **1:00 pm EDT on November 1, 2019** via email to [INVEST\\_Procurement@dai.com](mailto:INVEST_Procurement@dai.com), copying [Katherine Tilahun@dai.com](mailto:Katherine_Tilahun@dai.com), [Talin Baghdadlian@dai.com](mailto:Talin_Baghdadlian@dai.com), and [Matthew Mitchell@dai.com](mailto:Matthew_Mitchell@dai.com). The subject line of the email should be your organization name, followed by “Submission under EOI INVEST-001 Blended Finance Approaches to Women’s Economic Empowerment.” Please limit file submissions to 10 megabytes or less.

### **Introduction**

Through INVEST, USAID seeks to unlock the potential of private capital to drive inclusive growth in countries around the world. Increasingly, private investors and businesses are looking to emerging markets for better returns and new market opportunities. Encouraging investment in high-impact areas important to USAID such as agriculture, financial services, infrastructure, energy, clean water, health, and education, requires new forms of collaboration between USAID and the investment and business community.

USAID’s Office of Gender Equity and Women’s Empowerment (USAID/GenDev) has engaged INVEST to support the Women’s Global Development and Prosperity Initiative (W-GDP) to increase women’s entrepreneurship and economic empowerment through a range of innovative and blended finance approaches including the promotion of gender smart investing, the expansion of financial services to women through innovative channels, and the empowerment of women through workforce development opportunities and the strengthening of the enabling environment.

The White House established the [Women’s Global Development and Prosperity Initiative](#) (W-GDP) in order to execute the vision articulated in the President’s National Security Strategy (NSS) to empower women worldwide to fulfill their economic potential, and in doing so, create conditions for increased stability, security, and prosperity for all. As stated in the NSS, “societies that empower women to participate fully in civic and economic life are more prosperous and peaceful. We will support efforts to advance equality, protect the rights of women and girls, and promote women and youth empowerment programs.”

While there are many factors that influence women's empowerment, this initiative will deliberately focus on economic issues. When women are empowered economically, they invest back into their families and communities, producing a multiplier effect that spurs economic growth and creates more peaceful societies. Accelerating women's economic empowerment around the world is integral to enabling developing countries to achieve economic self-reliance and transition from being recipients of foreign aid to becoming U.S. trading partners.

This call for Expressions of Interest seeks to find new partners and develop innovative solutions through co-creation that employ a blended finance approach to achieving the goals laid out across the three W-GDP initiatives.

### **W-GDP Background**

Women make up half the world's population, yet they own only one-third of the world's formal businesses, provide the majority of the world's unpaid care, are more likely to work in insecure, low-wage jobs in the informal economy, and have less access to finance, markets, and property. Women face more barriers to starting, running, or working in a business. Although women make up over 35 percent of private businesses, women-owned businesses account for less than one percent of purchases from corporations and government procurement. These challenges reduce prosperity for individuals, communities, firms, and nations.

For the purposes of this Initiative, women's economic empowerment and equality are defined as the end state whereby women can meaningfully participate in, contribute to, and benefit from economic opportunities as individuals, workers, consumers, innovators, entrepreneurs, and investors, so that they enjoy the same access, rights, and opportunities as men to participate in, contribute to, control, and benefit from economic activity.

To work toward this end state, the W-GDP Initiative identifies three separate-yet-interrelated Pillars, which, if addressed in a sustained manner over the long term, can catalyze opportunities and measurable benefits for women internationally as workers, consumers, innovators, entrepreneurs, and investors.

Pillar 1: Women Prospering in the Workforce

Pillar 2: Women Succeeding as Entrepreneurs

Pillar 3: Women Enabled in the Economy

### **Pillar 1: Women Prospering in the Workforce**

**The Goal:** Increase women's global labor force participation and advancement in quality jobs by providing women and girls with quality education, training, and support essential for successful, safe, and better-paid work.

**The Problem:** A healthy global economy is critical to America's economic and national security and depends upon the economic contributions of both women and men. Around the world, women's labor force participation rates are unequal, decent work opportunities are far

too limited, and significant gender pay gaps in the labor market remain. Growing evidence reveals that women's low participation in the labor market can impede economic growth and poverty reduction.

Many women face multiple barriers when trying to enter, remain, or advance in the workforce. The problem starts early, as societal norms and expectations often keep girls and women from pursuing education and skills training. Globally, women and girls are more likely than their male counterparts to shoulder the time burden of unpaid activities, such as cleaning the home, caring for children and elders, and collecting clean water. These practices often prevent them from obtaining education, training, and skills needed to enter into higher-wage, high-growth occupations, such as science, technology, engineering, and math ("STEM") where men are disproportionately employed. Women and girls also face less access to digital services, which can be a platform for training, employment, or financial services. These factors reinforce women's economic inequality and leave them vulnerable to victimization in forced labor and trafficking.

Women's economic empowerment and equality exists in the workforce when women and girls receive the same market-relevant education and educational opportunities as men and boys, and, once in the workforce, have the ability to compete on equal terms with men for job openings, advancement, and retention with equal remuneration for equal work.

## **Pillar 2: Women Succeeding as Entrepreneurs**

The Goal: Increase the access of women entrepreneurs and business owners to financing, market opportunities, and training to establish and grow their businesses.

The Problem: Women entrepreneurs are a growing market force, serving as an important source of innovation and job creation for economic growth. However, growth-oriented women-owned businesses do not have equal access to the capital needed to stabilize or expand. In many countries, immature or underdeveloped financial systems do not adequately serve the "missing middle," such as women-owned SMEs that have financial needs beyond micro-finance commercial loans and whose assets do not qualify them for larger commercial loans. Solving this problem requires not only long-term, systemic reforms, but also short-term financial mechanisms that can address immediate needs. Few financial intermediaries are able to address these short-term needs without some form of external assistance.

Women entrepreneurs also lack access to markets, market information, digital and personal services, networks, mentorship, and other resources that enable them to overcome the obstacles of starting and growing firms as well as connecting with buyers. As with finance, some of these barriers are systemic, and others are more individualized. Systemic barriers require institutional reforms (addressed under Pillar 3: Women Enabled in the Economy). Individualized solutions require development of public and private sector institutions that can provide the training or assistance needed.

Women's economic empowerment and equality exists when women entrepreneurs enjoy equal access to the same affordable financing mechanisms that men do, including both credit and equity, as well as equal access to markets, market information, digital technology, and services.

### **Pillar 3: Women Enabled in the Economy**

The Goal: Promote an enabling environment that increases women’s economic empowerment by reducing barriers and enhancing protections in policies, laws, regulations, and practices (public and private) to facilitate women’s participation in the economy.

The Problem: The environment for economic activity in any country often includes numerous barriers that disadvantage women as they pursue employment, business, and investment opportunities. Broadly defined, the enabling environment for women in the economy encompasses the legal and regulatory framework, policies and practices (public and private sector), and social norms that support women to operate in the formal economy or improve basic conditions for women working in the informal economy. Conversely, each of these factors, if not addressed, can disable women’s economic empowerment.

Women are frequently discouraged and often effectively barred from economic engagement by disproportionate burdens of unpaid care, the impact of gender-based violence, and underinvestment in their education. Some of the economic barriers women face arise from foundational limitations such as laws that limit women’s rights to inherit, own property, or enter contracts in their own name. However, there is a role for the private sector to help address these barriers.

The benefits of women in the economy are substantial. Countries with greater balance of men and women in the workplace and workforce have greater growth, innovation, and stability. The same goes for firms: those with a stronger ratio of women in leadership, management, and the workforce outperform those with less. Improvements in the enabling environment increase economic opportunities for all women in that economy, which in turn benefits their families, communities, firms, and nations as a whole through broad-based economic growth and development.

#### **Objectives**

Through this Request for Expressions of Interest, INVEST aims to identify potential partners and innovative approaches that leverage USAID resources to catalyze commercial investment for women’s economic empowerment and equality in USAID presence countries.

In employing a blended finance approach for women’s economic empowerment, USAID hopes to achieve three goals:

1. Create avenues to mobilize private capital investment into commercial opportunities that positively impact women’s workforce development.
2. Support platforms to crowd-in private capital investment to address financial inclusion of low-income women with the expansion of customized financial access and services.
3. Develop innovative de-risking solutions to encourage commercial bank lending of secured business loans to women-led enterprises moving beyond micro-lending.

This co-creation will build on the momentum of Gender Lens Investing as a platform for the financial sector’s participation in blended finance approaches. We are interested in further exploring these approaches to advance the key development objectives above and will use the workshop that follows receipt of EOI responses (more details below) to collectively design

solutions that leverage USAID resources to catalyze systemic change in service of the W-GDP objectives.

While USAID has not pre-identified solutions to this challenge, there are a number of promising blended finance approaches we are interested in further exploring through this co-creation process. These include:

- The provision of technical assistance to asset managers, impact investors, and SME lending platforms in structuring gender-smart investment vehicles. Catalytic contributions, in the form of first loss capital, to blended finance funds for the purpose of providing downside investor protection to crowd-in commercial investors and mobilize investment into new markets/opportunities economically empowering women. The provision of technical assistance to portfolio companies alongside investments.
- The provision of technical assistance for systems and technology that provide access to data enhancing the creditworthiness of and mobilize investment in women-led enterprises.
- The provision of technical assistance and first-loss catalytic capital for the purposes of unlocking solutions that move women-led enterprises from micro-lending to commercial borrowing.

Additionally, we are seeking new ideas and creative approaches beyond those listed above and look to organizations submitting Expressions of Interest to bring fresh thinking to how USAID might use its resources to support the three pillars of W-GDP.

### **Who May Apply**

In using a co-creation approach, INVEST and USAID hope to bring together stakeholders from different parts of the gender lens investing ecosystem including investors, asset managers, intermediaries, technical assistance providers, and thought leaders to collectively discuss the challenges faced by the financial sector associated with scaling its lines of business, expansion plans, and/or operational growth in a direction to support gains in women's economic empowerment in USAID presence countries, such as:

- lack of pipeline;
- market failures;
- regulatory barriers;
- perceptions of investor risk; and
- other obstacles as identified by respondents.

By bringing the ecosystem together, INVEST and USAID look to the co-creation to evaluate the possibility of modified or new business models, products or services to help achieve W-GDP goals and to identify new models for partnership between USAID and the financial sector that overcome operating hurdles and unlock the sector's critical involvement in women's economic prosperity.

Expressions of Interest may come from organizations in the public, nongovernmental, academic, and private sectors including asset managers, intermediaries, investors, technical assistance providers, and thought leaders that have experience and capabilities in line with the objectives of this solicitation and that can contribute meaningfully to the discussion as

described above. Please note that INVEST welcomes Expressions of Interest from entities or individuals who also seek to contribute ideas, knowledge and expertise to the co-creation process, but are not necessarily seeking funding from USAID.

### **Submission and Formatting Instructions**

Expressions of Interest should illustrate the submitting organization's interest, capabilities, and/or experience in providing solutions for one or more of the pillars of W-GDP.

Submissions should highlight an organization's capabilities and qualifications regarding gender-smart investing, should detail how they fit into the gender-smart investing ecosystem, and include initial ideas on how to achieve the goals of W-GDP.

Expressions of Interest must be submitted no later than **1:00 pm EDT on Friday, November 1, 2019**. Submissions should:

- Be in English;
- Be submitted electronically to the following e-mail addresses: [INVEST\\_Procurement@dai.com](mailto:INVEST_Procurement@dai.com) copying [Katherine\\_Tilahun@dai.com](mailto:Katherine_Tilahun@dai.com), [Talin\\_Baghdadian@dai.com](mailto:Talin_Baghdadian@dai.com), and [Matthew\\_Mitchell@dai.com](mailto:Matthew_Mitchell@dai.com).
- Be three to five (3-5) PowerPoint slides in length;
- Include a title slide (not counted against slide limit) with the following information: Respondent Name/Group; Contact Information; and Response Title.
- Include two submission attachments in email, one in .ppt and one in .pdf format.

Please note that no cost information is required to be submitted with the Expression of Interest.

In your Expression of Interest, please describe your organization's ideas/approach to how USAID can use its resources to catalyze investment into women's empowerment and support the goals of W-GDP, including:

- Your organization's idea(s) on how USAID can best use its resources to crowd-in additional investment in order to achieve the goals of W-GDP;
- Your organization's approach to supporting the goals of W-GDP;
- Whom your organization targets;
- How your organization could partner with USAID to amplify your work and catalyze additional investment;
- How your approach will be sustainable beyond USAID funding;
- How you will monitor and evaluate your approach;
- Your organization's talent and other resources you are willing to dedicate to this collaboration;
- Your organization's unique perspectives and capabilities, as well as your ability to harness the comparative advantage of other partners.

### **Criteria**

The following criteria will be applied to all Expressions of Interest. Submissions are not evaluated against other submissions, but solely against the evaluation criteria outlined below:

1. Idea(s) for partnering with USAID: Fresh, informed, and realistic thinking about how USAID can work collectively with the financial sector to unlock capital and catalyze investment into women's economic empowerment.
2. Approach to supporting the W-GDP goals: Comprehensive approach based on experience to gender-smart investing and using market-driven solutions for empowering women.
3. Qualifications and Experience: Strengths of your organization as a partner, including your ability to make a unique contribution to the achieving the goals of this activity; your organization's willingness to collaborate with other players in the ecosystem and contribute to strategic solutions that move the industry forward.
4. Diversity of Perspectives and Capabilities: INVEST seeks to bring together a diverse set of participants in order to enable broader thinking around unlocking capital and driving systemic change. The selection of individual applicants will be made with the goal of achieving this diversity.

### **Selection Process**

INVEST will review and select Expressions of Interest submitted in accordance with the guidelines and criteria set forth in this solicitation. INVEST reserves the right not to review any Expressions of Interest that do not meet the guidelines. Please note that due to the expected large number of Expressions of Interest, INVEST is unable to provide detailed information to those EOIs that are not selected to move forward.

**Stage 1:** Selected groups will be invited to join the co-development process which will begin with a co-creation workshop, to take place in Washington, DC on or about November 21-22, 2019. INVEST, USAID, and selected participants will gather to collaboratively develop solutions designed to achieve the objectives articulated above. Up to two experienced technical experts from the submitting organization must be available to participate in this workshop to develop the ideas presented while collaborating with INVEST, USAID, and other selected organizations. Please note and take into consideration that costs associated with the co-creation workshop, including travel and labor, will not be reimbursed by INVEST or USAID, and therefore must be budgeted accordingly by the organization. The workshop will result in one or more proposals outlining a concrete programmatic plan, focus areas, goals, timelines, and budgets.

**Stage 2:** Following the co-creation workshop, one or more participants will be selected to move to the next stage during which they will be asked to submit a full proposal outlining a concrete programmatic plan, focus areas, goals, timelines, and budgets. Not all participants may be asked to submit a proposal. Proposals will be due on or about December 20, 2019 and will be reviewed by INVEST for final selection. Proposals may be further refined and/or co-designed before final award and implementation. More information on this stage will be provided to the firms with the selected concepts.

**Stage 3:** Proposals that are reviewed by INVEST and are deemed technically feasible and in line with objectives and criteria as laid out in this solicitation will be "greenlighted," meaning that they will be considered for funding. Those that are found to be outside of the scope and objectives of this activity, or that are found not to be technically feasible or acceptable will not move forward.

The greenlit proposals will be considered for funding based on the availability of funds. Some may be funded immediately upon selection, while others may be considered for future funding should it become available. The reputation of an organization, its past performance, the managerial and technical ability of the person or team of people engaged in the endeavor are always significant considerations in assessing the potential and risks associated with each award. INVEST reserves the right to check the past performance, references, and other pertinent offeror information in making award decisions. Previous experience with USAID is not required.

### **Protection of Information**

INVEST's goal is to facilitate the collaborative discussion and market information gathering that is required to identify innovative blended finance solutions to achieve the goals of W-GDP. Understanding the potentially sensitive nature of submitters' information, INVEST will work with organizations to protect intellectual property throughout the process.

We request that Expressions of Interest be free of any intellectual property that the submitter wishes to protect, as selected Expressions of Interest may be shared with other invited participants for purposes of preparing for the co-creation workshop discussions. During the workshop, we ask participants to be open and collaborative in order to foster a meaningful and valuable discussion to achieve the goals laid out above. However, we do recognize that the protection of intellectual property is important and ask participants to note the proprietary nature of any information they believe important for INVEST and USAID to have during the workshop that they would not like shared. Following the workshop, as selected participants move into the proposal phase, all information shared regarding technical approach, management and staffing plans, partnerships and budget information will be kept confidential and will not be shared beyond the evaluation committee.

*Issuance of this solicitation does not constitute a commitment, award, or engagement on the part of DAI nor does it commit DAI to any future commitment, award, or engagement.*

Thank you,

**DAI INVEST Procurement and Partnerships Team**

[INVEST\\_Procurement@dai.com](mailto:INVEST_Procurement@dai.com)





USAID INVEST Project  
1440 G Street NW, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20005  
INVEST\_Procurement@dai.com

**To:** W-GDP Co-Creation Workshop Shortlisted Offerors

**Date:** December 2, 2019

**From:** Procurement and Partnerships Team, INVEST Project; Implemented by DAI Global LLC

**Subject:** Proposal Guidance: Women’s Global Development and Prosperity Initiative (W-GDP) Co-Creation Concepts Moving to Proposal Stage

**DUE:** **1:00PM EDT on December 20, 2019**

Dear Offerors:

Enclosed is a solicitation to support the implementation of DAI’s INVEST project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). DAI invites firms to submit a proposal building on their workshop concepts for work as part of the USAID Office of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (USAID/GenDev) and Women’s Global Development and Prosperity Initiative (W-GDP) buy-in activities.

- I. Proposal Process and Deadlines:** This solicitation will result in the greenlighting of one or more Fixed Price subcontract(s). Please include your total proposed fixed price along with details for specific deliverable pricing. If relevant, please include information regarding the amount of commercial investment that will be catalyzed based on your estimated leverage ratio.
  - a. Submission of Questions – Questions may be submitted on an ongoing basis as part of the co-creation process to [Noemi Danao-Schroeder@dai.com](mailto:Noemi_Danao-Schroeder@dai.com), [Nicole Garcia@dai.com](mailto:Nicole_Garcia@dai.com), and [Lauren Zinser@dai.com](mailto:Lauren_Zinser@dai.com).
  - b. Submission of Proposals – Proposals must be submitted no later than **1:00 pm EDT on December 20, 2019** via email to [INVEST\\_Procurement@dai.com](mailto:INVEST_Procurement@dai.com), copying [Katherine Tilahun@dai.com](mailto:Katherine_Tilahun@dai.com), [Matthew Mitchell@dai.com](mailto:Matthew_Mitchell@dai.com), and [Talin Baghdadlian@dai.com](mailto:Talin_Baghdadlian@dai.com). The subject line of the email should be your organization name, followed by “Submission under W-GDP Co-Creation Workshop Concept.” Please certify in your submission email a validity period of 60 days for the price(s) provided and include your organization’s DUNS number. Please limit file submissions to 10 megabytes or less.
  
- II. Composition of Proposal:** Your organization’s proposal should comprise the following submission documents. The Technical Proposal and Cost Proposal should be prepared as separate files for independent evaluation, as follows below. Technical proposals should be submitted as a slide deck of no more than ten (10) slides with a minimum font size of 12, and graphics with a minimum font size of 10. Submissions in PowerPoint or PDF are acceptable, although PDF is preferred along with an accompanying PowerPoint document. Please provide a copy of your cost proposal in Excel format.

**Part 1 – Technical Proposal**

Building on the Expressions of Interest, co-creation workshop discussions, and workshop concept presentations, submitting organizations should prepare a proposal

that details the proposed concept and approach to implementation. Proposals should be in English and submitted electronically the email addresses listed above. Organizations should prepare a technical approach that includes the following:

1. Description of the concept including its main objectives, activities, partners, expected results and potential impact.
2. Proposed implementation plan for carrying out the activities included in the concept.
3. Identification of key stakeholders, including the technical role of each implementer involved in the consortium, key partners and/or other stakeholders involved, and target beneficiaries.
4. Intended outputs, outcomes and impact and the alignment with the goals outlined above and those of the W-GDP initiative.
5. Estimated timeline, proposed milestones, and deliverables.
6. Blended Finance nature of proposed concept and how USAID/INVEST funding will be catalytic.
7. Management plan including details of personnel who might be assigned to work on the implementation and details on the responsible party(ies) for development, review, and submission of all associated deliverables.

A cover slide must be included and will be considered a non-counting slide. It should include the following information: Respondent Name/Group; Contact Information; and Response Title.

Throughout the proposal development process, USAID and INVEST will work with organizations to continue the co-creation process, provide guidance and feedback as proposals develop, and answer questions as they arise.

### **Part 2 – Cost Proposal**

The contract type for the presumptive task order will be Fixed Price, awarded as a subcontract by DAI Global, LLC. Please include your total proposed fixed price along with details for specific deliverable pricing. If relevant, please include information regarding the amount of commercial investment that will be catalyzed based on your estimated leverage ratio. Additionally, please include a cost breakdown of proposed activities including the hourly rates for proposed personnel, if applicable, with a build-up to their total proposed price or include substantiating price reasonableness documentation/ justification. Offerors are expected to use their own cost/budget template(s); please limit file submissions to 10 megabytes or less.

- III. Evaluation of Proposal:** DAI will use best value determination for the greenlighting of proposals. A best value determination means that, in DAI's estimation, the selected offer(s) will provide the greatest overall benefit to USAID in response to the requirements stated in this solicitation document. Proposals that are reviewed by INVEST

and are deemed technically feasible and in line with objectives and criteria as laid out in this solicitation will be “greenlighted,” meaning that they will be considered for funding. Those that are found to be outside of the scope and objectives of this activity, or that are found not to be technically feasible or acceptable will not move forward.

The greenlit proposals will be considered for funding based on the availability of funds. Some may be funded immediately upon selection, while others may be considered for future funding should it become available. The reputation of an organization, its past performance, the managerial and technical ability of the person or team of people engaged in the endeavor are always significant considerations in assessing the potential and risks associated with each award. INVEST reserves the right to check the past performance, references, and other pertinent offeror information in making award decisions. Previous experience with USAID is not required.

Each proposal will be evaluated within the context of the larger co-creation process, including the Expressions of Interest, co-creation workshop discussions, workshop concept presentations, and submitted proposals, with the following criteria guiding the evaluation. Submissions are not evaluated against other submissions, but solely against the evaluation criteria outlined below:

1. Idea(s) for partnering with USAID: Fresh, informed, and realistic thinking about how USAID can work collectively with the financial sector to unlock capital and catalyze investment into women’s economic empowerment.
2. Approach to supporting the W-GDP goals: Comprehensive approach based on experience to gender-smart investing and using market-driven solutions for empowering women.
3. Qualifications and experience: Strengths of your organization as a partner, including your ability to make a unique contribution to the achieving the goals of this activity; your organization’s willingness to collaborate with other players in the ecosystem and contribute to strategic solutions that move the industry forward.
4. Diversity of perspectives and capabilities: INVEST seeks to bring together a diverse set of participants in order to enable broader thinking around unlocking capital and driving systemic change. The selection of individual applicants will be made with the goal of achieving this diversity.

**Cost Proposal:** Cost will be evaluated separately from the technical approach, with due consideration for realism, price reasonableness, and allowability consistent with US government cost principles. Evaluation for this section will be dependent upon all information presented by the Offeror in their deliverable table and supporting cost information, as well as its alignment with the proposed technical approach.

- IV. Offeror’s Agreement with Terms and Conditions:** The completion of all solicitation requirements in accordance with the instructions in this solicitation and submission to DAI of the technical and price proposals will constitute an offer and indicate the Offeror’s agreement to the terms and conditions in this solicitation and any attachments hereto. DAI is not required to accept and/or evaluate proposals that do not conform to the instructions of the solicitation, and additionally, DAI may reject all proposals and not award a subcontract for this solicitation. DAI reserves the right to award a subcontract without discussion and/or negotiation; however, DAI also reserves the right to conduct

discussions and/or negotiations, which among other things may require an Offeror to revise its proposal (technical and/or price). By submitting an offer, Offerors agree to comply with the general terms and conditions for an award, including Representations and Certifications compliance. Offerors must provide full, accurate, and complete information in response to this solicitation. By submitting an offer, Offerors certify that they have not/will not attempt to bribe or make any payment to DAI employees in return for preference. Issuance of this solicitation in no way obligates DAI to award a subcontract, nor does it commit DAI to pay any costs incurred by the Offeror in preparing and submitting the proposal. DAI reserves the right to award a subcontract to one organization or to issue multiple awards to different organizations based on the results of our evaluation.

Thank you,

**DAI INVEST Procurement and Partnerships Team**

[INVEST\\_Procurement@dai.com](mailto:INVEST_Procurement@dai.com)

## **Statement of Objectives:**

Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative (W-GDP) Shortlisted Co-Creation Concepts

### **Introduction**

Through INVEST, USAID seeks to unlock the potential of private capital to drive inclusive growth in countries around the world. Increasingly, private investors and businesses are looking to emerging markets for better returns and new market opportunities. Encouraging investment in high-impact areas important to USAID such as agriculture, financial services, infrastructure, energy, clean water, health, and education, requires new forms of collaboration between USAID and the investment and business community.

USAID's Office of Gender Equity and Women's Empowerment (USAID/GenDev) has engaged INVEST to support the Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative (W-GDP) to increase women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment through a range of innovative and blended finance approaches including the promotion of gender smart investing, the expansion of financial services to women through innovative channels, and the empowerment of women through workforce development opportunities and the strengthening of the enabling environment.

The White House established the [Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative](#) (W-GDP) in order to execute the vision articulated in the President's National Security Strategy (NSS) to empower women worldwide to fulfill their economic potential, and in doing so, create conditions for increased stability, security, and prosperity for all. As stated in the NSS, "societies that empower women to participate fully in civic and economic life are more prosperous and peaceful. We will support efforts to advance equality, protect the rights of women and girls, and promote women and youth empowerment programs."

Through this co-creation process, INVEST seeks to find new partners and co-design innovative solutions that employ a blended finance approach to achieving the goals laid out across the three W-GDP initiatives.

### **Objectives**

INVEST aims to identify potential partners and innovative approaches that leverage USAID resources to catalyze commercial investment for women's economic empowerment and equality in USAID presence countries.

In employing Blended Finance for Women's Economic Empowerment (BF4WEE), USAID hopes to achieve three goals:

1. Create avenues to mobilize private capital investment into commercial opportunities that positively impact women's workforce development.
2. Support platforms to crowd-in private capital investment to address financial inclusion of low-income women with the expansion of customized financial access and services.
3. Develop innovative de-risking solutions to encourage commercial bank lending of secured business loans to women-led enterprises moving beyond micro-lending.

### **Background**

Women make up half the world's population, yet they own only one-third of the world's formal businesses, provide the majority of the world's unpaid care, are more likely to work in insecure, low-wage jobs in the informal economy, and have less access to finance, markets, and property. Women face more barriers to starting, running, or working in a business. Although women make up over 35 percent of

private businesses, women-owned businesses account for less than one percent of purchases from corporations and government procurement. These challenges reduce prosperity for individuals, communities, firms, and nations.

For the purposes of the Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative (W-GDP) women's economic empowerment and equality are defined as the end state whereby women can meaningfully participate in, contribute to, and benefit from economic opportunities as individuals, workers, consumers, innovators, entrepreneurs, and investors, so that they enjoy the same access, rights, and opportunities as men to participate in, contribute to, control, and benefit from economic activity.

To work toward this end state, the W-GDP Initiative identifies three separate-yet-interrelated Pillars, which, if addressed in a sustained manner over the long term, can catalyze opportunities and measurable benefits for women internationally as workers, consumers, innovators, entrepreneurs, and investors.

- Pillar 1: Women Prospering in the Workforce
- Pillar 2: Women Succeeding as Entrepreneurs
- Pillar 3: Women Enabled in the Economy

### **Pillar 1: Women Prospering in the Workforce**

The Goal: Increase women's global labor force participation and advancement in quality jobs by providing women and girls with quality education, training, and support essential for successful, safe, and better-paid work.

The Problem: A healthy global economy is critical to America's economic and national security and depends upon the economic contributions of both women and men. Around the world, women's labor force participation rates are unequal, decent work opportunities are far too limited, and significant gender pay gaps in the labor market remain. Growing evidence reveals that women's low participation in the labor market can impede economic growth and poverty reduction.

Many women face multiple barriers when trying to enter, remain, or advance in the workforce. The problem starts early, as societal norms and expectations often keep girls and women from pursuing education and skills training. Globally, women and girls are more likely than their male counterparts to shoulder the time burden of unpaid activities, such as cleaning the home, caring for children and elders, and collecting clean water. These practices often prevent them from obtaining education, training, and skills needed to enter into higher-wage, high-growth occupations, such as science, technology, engineering, and math ("STEM") where men are disproportionately employed. Women and girls also face less access to digital services, which can be a platform for training, employment, or financial services. These factors reinforce women's economic inequality and leave them vulnerable to victimization in forced labor and trafficking.

Women's economic empowerment and equality exists in the workforce when women and girls receive the same market-relevant education and educational opportunities as men and boys, and, once in the workforce, have the ability to compete on equal terms with men for job openings, advancement, and retention with equal remuneration for equal work.

## **Pillar 2: Women Succeeding as Entrepreneurs**

The Goal: Increase the access of women entrepreneurs and business owners to financing, market opportunities, and training to establish and grow their businesses.

The Problem: Women entrepreneurs are a growing market force, serving as an important source of innovation and job creation for economic growth. However, growth-oriented women-owned businesses do not have equal access to the capital needed to stabilize or expand. In many countries, immature or underdeveloped financial systems do not adequately serve the “missing middle,” such as women-owned SMEs that have financial needs beyond micro-finance commercial loans and whose assets do not qualify them for larger commercial loans. Solving this problem requires not only long-term, systemic reforms, but also short-term financial mechanisms that can address immediate needs. Few financial intermediaries are able to address these short-term needs without some form of external assistance.

Women entrepreneurs also lack access to markets, market information, digital and personal services, networks, mentorship, and other resources that enable them to overcome the obstacles of starting and growing firms as well as connecting with buyers. As with finance, some of these barriers are systemic, and others are more individualized. Systemic barriers require institutional reforms (addressed under Pillar 3: Women Enabled in the Economy). Individualized solutions require development of public and private sector institutions that can provide the training or assistance needed.

Women’s economic empowerment and equality exists when women entrepreneurs enjoy equal access to the same affordable financing mechanisms that men do, including both credit and equity, as well as equal access to markets, market information, digital technology, and services.

## **Pillar 3: Women Enabled in the Economy**

The Goal: Promote an enabling environment that increases women’s economic empowerment by reducing barriers and enhancing protections in policies, laws, regulations, and practices (public and private) to facilitate women’s participation in the economy.

The Problem: The environment for economic activity in any country often includes numerous barriers that disadvantage women as they pursue employment, business, and investment opportunities. Broadly defined, the enabling environment for women in the economy encompasses the legal and regulatory framework, policies and practices (public and private sector), and social norms that support women to operate in the formal economy or improve basic conditions for women working in the informal economy. Conversely, each of these factors, if not addressed, can disable women’s economic empowerment.

Women are frequently discouraged and often effectively barred from economic engagement by disproportionate burdens of unpaid care, the impact of gender-based violence, and underinvestment in their education. Some of the economic barriers women face arise from foundational limitations such as laws that limit women’s rights to inherit, own property, or enter contracts in their own name. However, there is a role for the private sector to help address these barriers.

The benefits of women in the economy are substantial. Countries with greater balance of men and women in the workplace and workforce have greater growth, innovation, and stability. The same goes for firms: those with a stronger ratio of women in leadership, management, and the workforce outperform those with less. Improvements in the enabling environment increase economic opportunities for all women in

that economy, which in turn benefits their families, communities, firms, and nations as a whole through broad-based economic growth and development.