



USAID Trade Project

Trade Portal: Business Case

USAID Trade Project
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Introduction

This document outlines the business case for selecting a partner to operate and manage a Trade Portal aimed at disseminating trade-related information to stakeholders and promoting Pakistani exporters, manufacturers and service providers to the world market. It outlines the responsibilities, costs, and sustainability of the Trade Portal, from the perspectives of both the US Agency for International Development (USAID) Trade Project and the operating partner. Within the context of this business case, the Trade Portal is a platform where trade-related information is publicly posted for consumption by its users. The portal will support local and foreign stakeholders to effectively capitalize on Pakistan trade opportunities.

Currently there is no fully formalized mechanism to collect and, subsequently, disseminate trade-related information to the public and private sectors within Pakistan. As a result, local and foreign businesses are unable to interact with each other on trade opportunities

USAID Trade Project's subcontractor Mazars Pakistan completed the development of the Trade Portal in May, 2013. The user testing of the Trade Portal was completed in subsequent cycles, with the last one concluding in May, 2014. The USAID Trade Project and is currently exploring potential partners who could host and sustain the Trade Portal. The potential hosts to be considered should be either a:

1. Public sector organizations with mandate to facilitate and promote Pakistan's trade; or
2. Non-Profit, private sector organizations such as chambers of commerce and industries.

Objectives

The objectives of developing and operating the Trade Portal are as follows:

- Provide a web-based platform to enable collaboration between local and foreign businesses
- Provide information related to trade promotion activities, such as trade shows
- Provide a business-to-business (B2B) platform to facilitate Pakistani traders to market and promote their products and services internationally
- Provide a virtual space for Pakistani traders to promote their businesses
- Provide a database directory of Pakistani traders

Key Features

Through the Trade Portal, users will be able to exchange information and facilitate interaction with each other. Key features of the portal are listed below.

Feature	Description
Exporters' Database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A database showcasing Pakistani exporters, manufacturers, and service providers • A comprehensive list of goods/services offered by each exporter • An exporters' database, including advanced search capabilities • A dashboard area for each exporter
Importers' Database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A database of foreign importers interested in trading with Pakistani businesses
Trade Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A feature, accessible to selective users, where registered users can post trade leads or queries for dissemination
Event Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A feature where relevant information regarding local and international events/trade shows is available
News & Announcements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A feature, accessible to all users, where news and announcements relevant to trade are posted
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A feature, accessible to all users, where FAQs regarding trade are listed by category and answered
Alerts & Notifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mechanism where alerts, including email and SMS, based on user profiles are automatically generated
Testimonials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A feature, accessible to all users, where feedback from registered users is available

Recommendations

The sustainability of the Trade Portal can be best assured with minimum additional investment if it is integrated into the business model of the prospective operating partner, either from the public or private sector, which meets at least all the following criteria:

- i. Has expressed interest in adopting the Trade Portal
- ii. Has a successful track record of managing a website/portal
- iii. Has an existing technical, managerial and operational capacity to operate a website/portal
- iv. Has demonstrated financial resources required to operate the Trade Portal.

This section contains recommendations with regard to the staffing, maintenance, and training for the management of the Trade Portal and internal support structure of the operating partner for the effective management of the platform.

The Trade Project recognizes the Portal has to be managed by a team of individuals, rather than one single person. Granting administrative rights to more than one person reduces the burden of maintaining the site and ensures that content is relevant and useful to stakeholders. In addition to the recommended team structure, this section discusses training needs, hosting options, and maintenance requirements.

Recommended Structure of the Trade Portal Management Unit

The technical team is responsible for the general management of the portal. It will establish liaison with the vendors, hosting company and relevant technical and non-technical staff at a high level. In addition, the team will handle information technology (IT) related technical issues and the deployment of data in the portal coming from a variety of sources. Preferably, these positions should be filled in from within the partner organization. Members include:

- System administrator
- Portal Support Resource

A help desk resource is required to be responsible for the collection, evaluation and quality assurance of the relevant data, to forward to the technical team for deployment. They will also be responsible for answering queries by end users of the Trade Portal. An internal IT resource is required for the help desk, preferably from within the operating partner organization. This position is required full-time on-site at the operating partner office. .

Recommended Trade Portal Application Maintenance

The maintenance of the portal should be the responsibility of the operating partner. The technical team should have knowledge of the specific applications and the framework associated with the Portal necessary to maintain and fix any issues that arise. All the available documents (business and functional requirements and technical specifications documents) and the code will be provided to operating partner, who will have ownership rights. An application developer can translate any changes or modifications required afterwards into the Trade Portal.

Recommended Trade Portal ISP Hosting

While efficiency and efficacy of any IT application is dependent on several factors, fast connectivity is vital. The hosting environment plays an important role in this and should be outsourced to a reputable hosting company. The current hosting vendor of the operating partner should be investigated to determine if it is the correct solution for the ISP considering the portal's expanded capabilities. If not, then the operating partner needs to procure services from a reputable ISP for the purpose of hosting.

Recommended Approach to Training of Trade Portal Staff

The portal is expected to be an intuitive, user-friendly application. As such, a simple training program should be developed for the staff assigned to the Trade Portal's administration. This training should

be arranged by the operating partner and should cover technical and non-technical usage and updating of the Trade Portal.

Sustainable Portal Administration

The operating partner will solely define a salary and benefits package for staff augmentation. TORs for these positions can be developed with mutual consultations between the Trade Project and the operating partner pending time available to the Trade Project before the latter ends in August 31, 2014.

Some items to consider prior to and during the transition of ownership of the Trade Portal are:

Human Resources: The Trade Project may assist the operating partner in developing the TOR's for 2 technical roles and 1 help desk resource based on mutual discussions. This is assuming that the operating partner would seek Trade Project's assistance at least 8 weeks in advance of the project close out on August 31, 2014.

Benefits

The Trade Project expects the following outcomes, or benefits, to be realized upon the deployment of the Portal:

- **Improve the trade environment** by providing information, opportunities for businesses, and platforms to showcase Pakistani goods.
- **Streamline trade procedures** by improving access to necessary information to establish trade links between Pakistan and other countries.
- **Inform the international community** of trade opportunities in Pakistan through the event section. This functionality informs interested parties of upcoming trade shows, or other similar events, where foreign importers have an opportunity to assess the quality of Pakistani goods and local manufacturers may initiate deals with interested exporters.
- **Provide opportunities** for Pakistani exporters. Foreign buyers will be able to generate inquiries about commodities of interest and communicate with exporters listed in the database. Exporters can explore new markets and manufacturers determine the potential of manufacturing and exporting goods.
- **Facilitate exports** by providing access to trade regulations and information. The import tariffs, their FTAs and PTAs with other trading partners, SPS and TBT standards, trade policies, trends and trade patterns, among others, can be made available in the Portal. Furthermore, the Portal can address user queries.
- **Serve as a comprehensive repository** of information for stakeholders interested in trade with Pakistan. From a regulatory perspective, the Portal will serve as the ultimate source of information on Pakistan's cross-border, regional, and international trade policies.

Potential Risks

Technology-Related Risks

The existing Trade Portal is built on MySQL with PHP. Both of these technologies are acceptable in the marketplace. However, it is unknown how the vendors who have created the Trade Portal utilized these tools and more specifically whether the design and documentation of the existing Portal has the capability of supporting linking the Trade Portal with the current website/portal of the operating partner.

Implementation Risks

There are risks associated with the implementation of the Trade Portal. They are:

- The timeframe to implement the deployment and transition of ownership of the Trade Portal is limited. There will be a need to mitigate any activity that hampers the timely completion of the Portal deployment.
- The operating partner needs to provide positions and salaries for the suggested human resources, if hired externally, to sustain the Trade Portal.
- The hosting service and the ongoing portal maintenance/support is the responsibility of the operating partner. The operating partner needs to have budget to pay for these services on an ongoing basis.

Business Risks

The Portal's functionality is dependent on robust business processes that support the collection of data from various sources, both internal and external to the operating partner. The recommended technical team will filter, approve and ensure data quality prior to its inclusion on the portal. It must be seen, verified and tested by designated quality controllers.

There is a high level of business risk involved in IT based projects where owners fail to develop reporting systems and procedures corresponding to an application's IT requirements. Risks exist if technology solutions, like a portal, are not updated on a periodic basis. In cases where latest information is not available, registered users and visitors are discouraged and stop visiting the portals.

To eliminate this risk, the operating partner will have to support the development of processes that addresses quality control and procedures around content.

HR Risks

The Trade Project has recommended three staff positions to effectively manage and operate the Trade Portal. The operating partner needs to provide positions and salaries for the suggested human resources, if hired externally, to sustain them in the long run.

Financial Risks

To run the Trade Portal as it is currently envisioned, from a technical and non-technical perspective, efficient hosting and continuous monitoring and evaluation of the portal are required. All these aspects have cost considerations that necessitate budgetary provisions. If such resources are not made available by the operating partner the Portal's success and utility will be at risk.

Timeline *

The Trade Portal idea initiated from the inception of the USAID Trade Project. Based on USAID/Trade's Year 5 Activities that will culminate in August of 2014, the TDAP Portal project will adhere to the following timelines:

Deliverable	Start Date	End Date	Owner
Selection of the operating partner	June, 2014	June, 2014	Trade Project
Deployment of the Trade Portal	June 2014	June 2014	Trade Project/Operating Partner
Outreach, Awareness / Marketing Campaign	July 2014	Beyond August 2014	Trade Project/Operating Partner
On-the-job Training	July 2014	August 2014	Operating Partner
Finalize the Application Maintenance and Hosting Arrangements	July 2014	July 2014	Operating Partner
Transition of Portal ownership	July 2014	July 2014	Trade/Operating Partner

*The dates in this time line must be met or the Trade Project will not be able to complete the Portal before the end of the Trade contract (August 2014).

Annex I: Estimated Costs

An outline of estimated cost of the Trade Portal initiative is shown for five years in the table below. Estimates are conservative (high), and based on estimates of what costs would be to the Trade Project. It is likely that the operating partner can secure lower rates for items such as application hosting.

Cost Item	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Portal Enhancements	\$15,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$35,000
Application Hosting	\$200	\$220	\$242	\$266	\$293	\$1,221
Internet Connection	\$1,500	\$1,650	\$1,815	\$1,997	\$2,196	\$9,158
Help Desk Staff	\$4,200	\$4,200	\$4,200	\$4,200	\$4,200	\$21,000
Technical Team	\$16,800	\$16,800	\$16,800	\$16,800	\$16,800	\$84,000
Outreach/Awareness	\$20,000	-	-	-	-	\$20,000
Total	\$57,700	\$27,870	\$28,057	\$28,263	\$28,489	\$170,379

Cost Item Details:

Portal Enhancements

Why Required?

This cost only applies in case additional enhancements are required in the Trade Portal by the operating partner.

Who to Pay?

This cost will be paid to the IT firm employed by the operating partner for portal enhancements. Since the Trade Portal has been developed by Mazars, it can be considered as an IT firm responsible for portal enhancements.

Costing Assumption(s)

Significant additional enhancements/changes might primarily be required during Year 1. In the subsequent years, only less significant enhancements might be required.

Application Hosting

Why Required?

Hosting services will allow the operating partner to provide content to the Internet for users' access to the Portal. This service requires an Internet connection and bandwidth.

Who to Pay?

This cost will be paid to the Application Service Provider (ASP) providing the application hosting environment to the Trade Portal operating partner.

Costing Assumption(s)

A rate of 10% per year has been applied to cater increase in inflation.

Internet Connection

Why Required?

An active Internet connection is required to operate the Trade Portal.

Who to Pay?

This cost will be paid to the Internet Service Provider (ISP) providing the Internet services to the Trade Portal operating partner.

Costing Assumption(s)

A rate of 10% per year has been applied to cater increase in inflation.

Help Desk

Why Required?

Help desk staff is required to answers queries by end users of the Trade Portal. An internal IT resource is required for help desk, preferably from within the operating partner organization. This position is required full-time on-site at the operating partner office.

Who to Pay?

This amount will be paid as salary to one Help Desk staff member on full-time basis.

Costing Assumption(s)

This is at par with the current market compensations and benefits rates.

Technical Team

Why Required?

The technical team is required for the general management of the Trade Portal. The team is responsible for establishing liaison with the vendors, hosting company and relevant technical and non-technical staff. In addition, the team will handle information technology (IT) related technical issues and the deployment of data in the portal coming from a

	<p>variety of sources.</p> <p>A system administrator will be required for support with portal administration. An additional resource will also be required to manage the portal. Preferably both these positions should be filled in from within the operating partner organization. These positions are required part-time on-site at the operating partner office.</p>
<i>Who to Pay?</i>	This amount will be paid as salary to two technical team staff members on part-time basis.
<i>Costing Assumption(s)</i>	This is at par with the current market compensations and benefits rates.
<i>Outreach/Awareness</i>	
<i>Why Required?</i>	Outreach/awareness efforts are required to inform the public, in general, and the Pakistani business community, in particular, about the Trade Portal. An effective medium for this can be planned trade shows and seminars to promote the Trade Portal and give short trainings on how to effectively use it. Additional outreach can be carried out through traditional media tools, like newspaper advertisements.
<i>Who to Pay?</i>	This cost will be paid to various vendors employed during the outreach/awareness efforts.
<i>Costing Assumption(s)</i>	Outreach/awareness for the Trade Portal might primarily be required during Year 1.

The above table outlines the costs the Trade Project *estimates* for the Trade Portal.

Annex II: Acronyms

Acronym	Description
EMS	Exporters, Manufacturers, and Service Providers
FPCC&I	Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
IT	Information Technology
LoA	Letter of Agreement
MoC	Ministry of Commerce
NTB	Non-tariff Barrier
RTA	Regional Trade Agreement
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards
TBT	Technical Barrier to Trade
ToR	Term of Reference
UAT	User Acceptance Testing
USAID	US Agency for International Development

Annex III: Outreach, Awareness and Marketing Campaign

Overview

The Trade Portal is aimed at improving access to trade-related information to support trade promotion efforts. This Communications Plan outlines the activities to encourage end-users' adoption of the Trade Portal.

The Trade Project recommends that the operating partner adopt a multimedia approach to building interest and driving users to access the site. Proposed communication channels to use are: stakeholder buy-in workshops, newspaper advertisements, and leveraging existing seminars.

Target Audience

The audience for the Trade Portal may be classified as follows:

- Exporters, Chambers and Associations in Pakistan
- Relevant Government institutions, like the MoC, FPCC&I and associations across Pakistan

Outputs

Activity	Status
Audience analysis and campaign design - Conduct stakeholder analysis - Conduct analysis of the state of trade-related information currently available - Conduct analysis on existing trade-related websites currently available	TBD
Leverage Trade Organizations Seminars *Recommended* - Promote the Portal using existing conferences, seminars and workshops	TBD
Newspaper Supplements *Recommended* - Supplement existing newspaper communications with a half-page insert in the Sunday edition - Conduct this activity for a period of 3-6 months, depending on budget	TBD
Stakeholder buy-in workshops *Optional* - Obtain buy-in from Chambers of Commerce & Industry and Trade Associations to conduct awareness workshops - Invite relevant stakeholders to workshops - Conduct workshops with stakeholders	TBD

Branding & Profile

Branding guidelines will be mutually decided between the Trade Project and the operating partner in subsequent discussions. Inputs from the USAID and Deloitte Home Office would need to be considered to finalize branding guidelines.

Constraints

Coordination will be required with the trade chambers and associations of cities, like Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad and Sialkot. In the smaller, more remote locations of Peshawar, Multan, Quetta and Hyderabad the challenge will be to bring a large enough sample of stakeholders together as possible to build consensus and interest in the Trade Portal.