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SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM FOR CONDUCTING REGULATORY IMPACT ANALYSIS BUSINESS PLAN OF ISET-PI

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28 September 2020

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ACRONYMS

AoG	Administration of Government
CBA	Cost-Benefit-Analysis
CERGE-EI	Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education - Economics Institute
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EU	European Union
G4G	Governing for Growth in Georgia
GEL	Georgian Lari
GET	The German Economic Team
GGI	Good Governance Initiative
GIZ	German Development Agency
GoG	The Government of Georgia
ISET	The International School of Economics at Tbilisi State University
ISET-PI	ISET Policy Institute
MoESD	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia
MoJ	The Ministry of Justice
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEER	The Partnership for Economic Education and Research
PIKRC	ISET-PI RIA Knowledge Center
PoG	The Parliament of Georgia
RIA	Regulatory Impact Assessment
SIGMA	The initiative of Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
TTF	The Think-Tank Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of USAID Energy Program is to enhance Georgia's energy security through improved legal and regulatory framework and increased investments in the energy sector. The Program had a contractual obligation to build the capacity of the Government of Georgia, and other key stakeholders to perform Regulatory Impact Analyses (RIAs).

Although the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia (MoESD) was already well-trained in performing such analyses in the forms of RIAs, MARKET Allocation (MARKAL) modelling, and Long-range Energy Alternatives Planning (LEAP) modelling, the changes of administration, staff turnover, or even developments in modelling sciences, posed challenges in sustaining high level of expertise within the government. Therefore, the USAID Energy Program undertook in-depth training needs assessment and situation analyses that revealed avenues for future capacity building needs and for the sustainability of the system.

The Program conducted several RIA trainings and rendered 12 RIAs by fully leveraging the local resources. The observation revealed that The International School of Economics at Tbilisi State University (ISET) was the most appropriate institution capable of turning into a key actor for creating a sustainable system. Therefore, the Program invested in ISET through PURC RIA trainings which have been initially offered to ISET for further advancement of the existing expertise, followed by performance of RIA trainings by ISET to a large audience of the key stakeholders, including the realization of complex RIAs on the selected priority topics.

Finally, ISET developed a Business Plan comprising of detailed activities aimed at creating a sustainable system for supportive legal and regulatory environment. Hence, the present document describes the plan for delivering highly technical academic courses in subjects providing competences that are crucial for performing high-quality RIAs. The document also offers details for the design and delivery of successful trainings with public servants, members of academia and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and its key role in the realization and adoption of the RIA methodology for Georgia.

PRODUCT

ISET-PI RIA Knowledge Center (PIRKC) will develop and deliver certified professional development courses for individuals aspiring to become RIA analysts / experts and/or RIA trainers. These courses will follow paths carefully designed to provide to the participants all the skills and knowledge necessary to perform the functions expected according to the corresponding level of competence certified.

In addition, PIRKC will develop and administer regularly exams aimed at testing and certifying the level of competences accumulated by individuals aspiring at working as RIA analysts / experts.

Finally, PIRKC will complement these initiatives with the provision of institutional-based support services such as: a) RIA coaching; b) Production of technical background papers for in-depth RIAs; c) RIA quality control. These services will be available for public and private institutions (including business associations and CSOs) alike.

CUSTOMERS

The target audience for PIRKC is:

- public servants performing (or aiming to perform) duties as RIA analysts and/or trainers;
- employees of businesses aiming to develop capacity in RIA;
- private individuals interested proving and extending their competences to enter the labor market as RIA analysts / experts / trainers;
- private and public institutions requiring technical support and expert advice for the implementation of complex RIAs.

2. ISET POLICY INSTITUTE

ISET Policy Institute (ISET-PI) is a Georgian non-governmental non-profit institution which, at the initiative of the ISET, was established as a university-based think-tank on the ISET platform. It was founded by the Partnership for Economic Education and Research (PEER) (US non-profit foundation) in 2011 as a Georgian Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) under the initial financial support of the Think-Tank Fund (TTF) of the Open Society Foundation. Today ISET-PI provides independent policy research and training in a broad spectrum of economic policy areas, and reaches out to the broader academic, policy and business communities in region. The institute is recognized by the policy community, civil society organizations and international development partners as a leading economic policy research institution in Georgia and the South Caucasus region. Led by internationally renowned PhD economists, ISET-PI employs more than 20 researchers who regularly undertake analytical tasks, implement projects, participate in public policy discussions, deliver training and increase public awareness about economic issues and policy among the public.

MISSION STATEMENT

ISET-PI was established to complement the educational mission of the ISET, a prominent center of excellence in economics education and research serving the South Caucasus region, educating the public, translating economic research into policy advice and inform policy making. It was expected that high-quality policy research and the promotion of evidence-based policy making would contribute to economic transition of the country, and more broadly to transition of the region.

ISET-PI RIA EXPERTISE

Since 2015 ISET-PI has played a key role in the mainstreaming and institutionalization of RIA as a good-policy practice in Georgia.

ISET-PI research teams have been assisting the Government of Georgia (GoG) and the Parliament of Georgia (PoG) both by conducting RIAs on complex topics (such as the pension reform, the reform of insolvency law, the water resource management reform, the biodiversity law, and the entrepreneurship law), by coaching Ministerial and Parliamentary teams tasked with conducting RIAs, and by producing key technical background papers to inform the policymaking and RIA processes.

ISET-PI RIA experts have been sharing their expertise, developing and delivering numerous tailored RIA trainings to public servants, as well as CSOs and academics, under the sponsorship of several key donors (USAID Governing for Growth in Georgia (G4G), Good Governance Initiative in Georgia (GGI), USAID Energy Program, European Union (EU), German Development Agency (GIZ)), contributing also to the establishment of the interministerial RIA Community of Practice.

In virtue of their demonstrated RIA expertise, senior PI researchers have been selected to develop – together with an international consultant – the methodological document providing the technical background to the Governmental Decree institutionalizing RIA in Georgia.

3. MARKET RESEARCH

DEMAND SIDE ANALYSIS

Over the last few years, the GoG has embarked on the process of institutionalizing RIA as an integral part of policy-making. These efforts culminated with the realization of the Government Decree #35 on RIA Methodology (published on the 17th of January 2020).

This has partially addressed the criticisms raised in the 2018 The initiative of Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA) / The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, according to which the RIA implementation process was delayed by the absence of tools and capacity and by the lack of official documents institutionalizing the RIA practice and defining minimum standard characteristics, with a negative impact on the quality of analysis supporting new policies and laws.

The approval of the Government Decree #35 on RIA Methodology, shifted the emphasis on the need to accelerate capacity-building efforts in different government institutions, to put them in the condition of abiding by the new legal requirements. At the same time, the GoG is facing the challenge to set up a long-term sustainable system for the training of current and future public servants, aimed at the continuous upgrading and upscaling of their skills in RIA.

In the immediate, the GoG – through the Ministry of Justice of Georgia (MoJ) – has requested additional assistance to organize extensive RIA trainings to public servants from all the country's Ministries, as well as Parliament and the Administration of Government. ISET-PI has been chosen as the main partner of the GoG in this phase. Under the sponsorship of GGI, ISET-PI experts have been developing and delivering a pilot training program that was conducted before the summer 2020. At the same time, ISET-PI developed and delivered another tailored RIA training targeting Energy Market stakeholders, sponsored by the USAID Energy Program. Given the success of the two initiatives, ISET-PI has been asked to deliver additional trainings, incorporating the lessons learned in the process, starting in September 2020.

While the first capacity-building efforts take place, the GoG, the Georgian Parliament, representatives of Business Associations, Civil Society and donors are also engaged in discussions about how to complete the institutionalization of RIA in the country, which involves ensuring a sustainable long-term program for capacity building and upgrading, as well as the development of a RIA revision / quality control system, possibly involving academia, and CSOs.

The demand for RIA trainings can be expected to remain high for several years from now, as all ministries, the parliament, academia and civil society first build and then upgrade their capacity. Initially, a relatively large number of individuals will need to receive a basic training on RIA, focusing mostly on standard RIAs – the less technically complex and more qualitative version, which is expected to be the norm. Preliminary estimates emerged during discussions with representatives of GoG and several donors, are of between 60 and 100 individuals to be trained over a 12 months' time, just in the public sector¹. We estimate numbers to more than double over a 24-month time horizon, as the demand from business associations and civil society kicks in. As time passes, we expect demand for new individuals competent in basic RIA practices to stabilize at a 60-80 per year, including both demand from the public and the private sectors. In addition, we expect the emergence of demand for intermediate and higher skills, growing over time to reach a yearly demand of 20-30 individuals per year and up to 10 per year, respectively.

Unfortunately, at this stage, true expertise in the RIA field is still limited in the country, and it hampers the development of a fully transparent and proper governance. We have been recently observing the proliferation of programs aiming at providing basic RIA knowledge across the academic institutions of the country. Several universities, have indeed already been setting up courses on the topic. However, based on our experience, the quality and depth of the courses is heterogeneous and, in several cases, scarcely connected to real practice. In most cases, these courses are delivered by lecturers with either limited (or partial) practical RIA experience, and/or relatively weaker academic / technical background. In our experience, most of these programs do not provide an adequate preparation to

¹ This number appears realistic, considering the number of ministries (10) who will need to train some of their staff members to perform RIAs, to which should be added the Administration of Government (AoG), the Parliament Secretariat and other public institutions/agencies.

conduct even standard RIAs. If not addressed, this is another issue that might negatively affect the development of a modern evidence-based policymaking process.

ISET-PI RESPONSE: ISET-RIA KNOWLEDGE CENTER (PIRKC)

ISET-PI has the potential to be a key contributor in this area, building on the experience of its staff in the realization of complex RIAs, in the design and delivery of highly technical academic courses in subjects providing competences that are crucial for performing high-quality RIAs, in the design and delivery of successful trainings with public servants, members of academia and CSOs, and on its key role in the realization and adoption of the RIA methodology for Georgia.

The best way for ISET-PI to play this role would pass through the creation of the ISET-PI RIA knowledge center. This center would concentrate all the expertise accumulated by ISET-PI and channel it in three main directions:

1. PIRKC will develop – based on its experience in the RIA field and on its ties with the best Graduate program in Economics in the country – rigorous professional development courses for individuals aspiring to become RIA analysts / experts and/or RIA trainers. These courses will follow paths carefully designed to provide to the participants all the skills and knowledge necessary to perform the functions expected according to the corresponding level of competence certified. One of the main responsibilities of the ISET-PI RIA knowledge centers will be to continuously update the curricula, to match the developments in the best international practices and the lessons learned by the implementation of RIA in the country.
2. PIRKC will develop – ideally in cooperation with the GoG and the other main stakeholders in the RIA process – a certification system aimed at testing and certifying the level of competences accumulated by individuals aspiring at working as RIA analysts / experts. The levels of certifications would be three: basic, intermediate, advanced. ISET-PI could also develop a certification program for RIA trainers/lecturers for the three levels of training. These certification programs could ideally be formally recognized by the public administration (acquiring a legal value). In case this proves unfeasible, they would simply build on ISET-PI reputation and – over time – become a generally accepted proof of achieved competence level.
3. PIRKC will complement these initiatives with the provision of institutional-based support services such as:
 - a. RIA coaching
 - b. Production of technical background papers for in-depth RIAs
 - c. RIA quality control

PIRKC could also perform a fourth function, provided it manages to attract dedicated funding (by public administration, businesses, and civil society), developing an online portal with the function of a Data / Information / Documentation repository. This would be a storage entity that would house all internally generated and processed data and research, as well as third-party generated data that are freely available from other sources or are shared for usage under certain conditions. ISET-PI would respect all third-party data ownership rights and would carefully follow those rights when granting access to these data sources. On the portal would also be uploaded policy reports, RIA reports, policy papers and academic papers in the areas of policy design, impact assessment, policy evaluation. Again, ISET-PI would respect all ownership rights and will carefully follow those when granting access to these documents. All documents produced by ISET-PI would be uploaded on the portal and – when feasible – translated into three languages: English, Georgian, and Russian. The portal would also have two forum areas: (1) a certified practitioners' forum area, in which certified practitioners would have the chance to dialogue with ISET-PI experts and among themselves on a continual basis, to exchange experiences and best practices, share resources, provide each other support in addressing common challenges; (2) an open forum, accessible to anyone, for networking, information-sharing and discussion. In addition, ISET-PI would distribute periodically among the registered contacts, its newsletter, providing continuous updates about ISET-PI activities and the main policy-relevant findings and new resources acquired.

CUSTOMERS

The target customers for ISET-PI Knowledge Center are:

- public servants performing (or aiming to perform) duties as RIA analysts and/or trainers;

- employees of businesses aiming to develop capacity in RIA;
- private individuals interested proving and extending their competences to enter the labor market as RIA analysts / experts / trainers;
- private and public institutions requiring technical support and expert advice for the implementation of complex RIAs.

PIRKC ADVANTAGES

PIRKC will be relying on the synergies between the unique and extensive practical/field expertise of its staff, engaging daily in high level policy analysis activities (including, but not limited to, RIAs), and the strong academic profile of the ISET. The linkages between ISET and its Policy Institute are remarkable. Most Lead Economists in the Policy Institute are Ph.D. economists teaching courses in the undergraduate and graduate programs of the School and that all the ISET-PI researchers have completed graduate studies in Economics (many at ISET) or related fields and have been receiving pedagogical training by Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education - Economics Institute (CERGE-EI), Prague, in partnership with ISET and are teaching at different universities at undergraduate and graduate level.

Another key advantage of PIRKC is that it will build on the established reputation of the Policy Institute for impactful and independent high-level policy analysis, that makes of ISET-PI the top economic think tank in the country. PIRKC will build on ISET-PI existing network of contacts within the public and private sectors, including partners, donors and project beneficiaries, to promote the certification program and to make sure its design reflects international best practices and matches the country needs.

Finally, ISET-PI will build on all the past experience in developing successful training programs not only in RIA but also in other areas such as: Electricity Trading (also designed as a first step towards certification of competences in the Energy Trading field), financed by the USAID Energy Program; Cost-Benefit-Analysis (CBA) for Government Professionals, commissioned by the German Economic Team (GET); Integrating Ecosystem Services into Local Development Planning, financed by GIZ.

4. SERVICE LINE

TRAINING PROGRAMS

Professional development path for RIA analysts / experts.

- Level I (Basic – 160 hours): designed to provide participants with the ability to analyze critically RIA documents and to perform standard RIAs as defined in the Government Decree #35 on RIA Methodology (17th January 2020)
 - 20 hours of frontal classes introducing basic mathematical concepts and tools;
 - 40 hours of frontal classes introducing to basic economic concepts (micro and macro) and providing basic background for the economic, social and environmental analysis of the impact of regulation;
 - 40 hours of frontal classes introducing to basic statistical and financial analysis concepts (includes 10 hours of practical applications on excel);
 - 30 hours of frontal classes and practical exercises about the Government Decree #35 on RIA and its practical translation into a RIA document (RIA steps);
 - 30 hours of group work to produce a draft standard RIA.
- Level II (Intermediate – 210 hours): designed to provide participants with the ability to perform basic ex-ante and ex-post qualitative Cost-Benefit analysis – including economic, social and environmental effects – based on secondary (collected/generated by others and/or available in the literature) as well as simple primary (generated/collected autonomously, without a statistically rigorous approach) data, allowing the participants to contribute to the realization of in-depth RIAs.
 - 30 hours of frontal classes on Principles of Environmental Economics and Social Economics (includes 10 hours of practical work);
 - 30 hours of frontal classes on Principles of Impact Evaluation (includes 10 hours of practical work);
 - 60 hours of introduction to Principles of Econometrics (with estimation of values to interest from existing datasets using statistical software);
 - 40 hours of frontal classes on Principles of Cost-Benefit Analysis (includes 10 hours of practical exercises on Cost-Benefit Analysis);
 - 50 hours of individual work to produce a complete Qualitative Cost-Benefit Analysis with economic, social and environmental components.
- Level III (Advanced – 250 hours): designed to provide participants with the ability to perform complex ex-ante and ex-post qualitative Cost-Benefit analysis and impact assessments – including economic, social and environmental effects – based on secondary (collected/generated by others and/or available in the literature) as well as primary (generated/collected autonomously, following a statistically rigorous approach) data.
 - 40 hours of frontal classes on advanced mathematical and statistical tools for impact assessment;
 - 30 hours of frontal classes on time series econometrics (includes 10 hours of practical work);
 - 30 hours of frontal classes on panel data econometrics (includes 10 hours of practical work);
 - 30 hours of frontal classes on CGE Models (includes 10 hours of practical work);
 - 30 hours of frontal classes on the evaluation of impacts from observed behavior: experiments and quasi-experiments (includes 10 hours of practical work);
 - 30 hours of frontal classes on the estimation of impacts from observed behavior: direct estimation of demand curves and consumer surplus (includes 10 hours of practical work);
 - 30 hours of frontal classes on the evaluation of impacts from observed behavior: indirect market methods (includes 10 hours of practical work);
 - 30 hours of frontal classes on contingent valuation methods: using surveys to elicit information about costs and benefits (includes 10 hours of practical work).

Professional development path for RIA trainers.

- Level I (Basic);

- Basic Certification for RIA expert (with 90%+ score);
- 30 hours frontal classes in teaching methods for basic level certification (includes 10 hours of practice);
- Successful preparation and delivery of a sample lecture in each of the topics for the Basic Level of RIA expert.
- Level II (Intermediate)
 - Intermediate Certification for RIA expert (with 90%+ score);
 - 30 hours frontal classes in teaching methods for intermediate level certification (includes 10 hours of practice);
 - Successful preparation and delivery of a sample lecture in each of the topics for the Intermediate Level of RIA expert.
- Level III (Advanced)
 - Advanced Certification for RIA expert (with 90%+ score)
 - 30 hours frontal classes in teaching methods for advanced level certification (includes 10 hours of practice)
 - Successful preparation and delivery of a sample lecture in each of the topics for the Advanced Level of RIA expert.

CERTIFICATIONS

Professional development path for RIA analysts / experts.

- Level I (Basic) - requires passing a written exam on the following topics:
 - basic economic concepts (micro and macro);
 - fundamentals of economic, social and environmental analysis of the impact of regulation;
 - basic statistical and financial analysis concepts (with applications in excel);
 - knowledge of Government Decree #35 on RIA;
 - critical analysis of a RIA document;
 - written in-class development of a synthetic RIA document;
- Level II (Intermediate) - requires passing a written exam on the following topics:
 - Principles of Environmental Economics and Social Economics;
 - Principles of Impact Evaluation;
 - Principles of Econometrics;
 - Principles of Cost-Benefit Analysis;
 - Written in-class development of a synthetic Qualitative Cost-Benefit Analysis with economic, social and environmental components.
- Level III (Advanced) - requires passing a written exam on the following topics:
 - Time series econometrics;
 - Panel data econometrics;
 - CGE Modeling;
 - Evaluation of impacts from observed behavior: experiments and quasi-experiments;
 - Estimation of impacts from observed behavior: direct estimation of demand curves and consumer surplus;
 - Evaluation of impacts from observed behavior: indirect market methods;
 - Contingent valuation methods: using surveys to elicit information about costs and benefits.

Professional development path for RIA trainers.

- Level I (Basic) - requires:
 - Successful preparation and delivery of a sample lecture in each of the topics for the Basic Level of RIA expert.
- Level II (Intermediate) - requires:
 - Successful preparation and delivery of a sample lecture in each of the topics for the Intermediate Level of RIA expert.

- Level III (Advanced) - requires:
 - Successful preparation and delivery of a sample lecture in each of the topics for the Advanced Level of RIA expert.

OTHER SERVICES

- RIA coaching: assisting RIA teams from client institutions by providing mentoring as they develop RIA documents;
- Production of technical background papers for in-depth RIAs: performing one or more of the following:
 - independent assessment about the existence and the nature of the problems to be addressed by government intervention;
 - critical review of existing literature on the topic;
 - data collection and data analysis;
 - quantification of impacts.
- RIA quality control: assessing the quality of draft or finalized RIA documents and providing – whenever necessary – recommendations for improvements.

5. PRICING STRUCTURE

In consideration of the costs of design and delivery of courses, as well as of the costs of running the certification sessions, this is our expected pricing structure.

Training Programs for RIA experts [the full package includes 1 attempt at certification exam]:

- Level I (Basic): 200 GEL for 20 hours modules; 300 GEL for 30 hours modules; 400 GEL for 40 hours module. 1700 GEL for the full package;
- Level II (Intermediate): 600 GEL for 30 hours modules; 800 GEL for 40 hours module; 1000 GEL for 50 hours module. 4500 GEL for the full package;
- Level III (Advanced): 1500 GEL for 30 hours modules; 2000 GEL for 40 hours module. 12500 GEL for the full package.

Training Programs for RIA trainers [price includes 1 attempt at certification exam]:

- Level I (Basic): 750 GEL;
- Level II (Intermediate): 1500 GEL;
- Level III (Advanced): 3500 GEL.

Certification exam for RIA experts [1 attempt]:

- Level I (Basic): 500 GEL;
- Level II (Intermediate): 1000 GEL;
- Level III (Advanced): 2500 GEL.

Certification exam for RIA experts [1 attempt]:

- Level I (Basic): 500 GEL;
- Level II (Intermediate): 1000 GEL;
- Level III (Advanced): 2500 GEL.

NOTE: these are the prices for private / individual applicant. In case of collective agreements with public and/or private organizations / associations, or of external donor support providing core funding, prices might be lower.

Prices for other institutional services of a consulting / advisory nature will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

6. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

FUNDRAISING

To attract external support, PIRKC will do the following:

- Approach the Administration of Government (AoG) and individual ministries to promote the idea of a national RIA knowledge center situated at ISET, in charge of training, testing and certification of RIA competences, as well as of providing expertise and quality control services to RIA-performing institutions, endorsed and – if possible – partially funded by the GoG (or by international donors, with the endorsement of the GoG);
- Approach the National Bank of Georgia, the Georgian Parliament, international donors, business associations, CSOs, to solicit support and sponsorships as well as to discuss particular packages of services provided by PIRKC in exchange;
- Network at RIA, CBA, impact evaluation, policy analysis, policy discussion conferences and events.

COMMUNICATE WITH THE CUSTOMER

PIRKC will communicate with its potential customers by:

- Establishing a dedicated RIA portal collecting references to best international practices and ISET-PI work, and constituting an interactive platform for the growing community of certified RIA experts (might be upgraded to become a full repository of RIA resources if sufficient funds become available);
- Issuing a periodic newsletter targeting RIA professionals within the public administration and the private sector and civil society with updates on RIA practices, research results, benefits of certification, information about certification (exam dates, certification requirements, available courses, etc.);
- Organizing RIA related events open to selected stakeholders and – sometimes – to the broader public;
- Using traditional media (radio, TV) as well as social media (such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and LinkedIn).

USAID Energy Program

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