

Request for Proposal (RfP)

Reference No. PR.TN016

FTA Ecosystem - Operational Model, Selection
of Sectors and Provinces & Pilot Plan

Structure

- Part 1 – Overview
- Part 2 – Scope of services
- Part 3 – Evaluation and selection criteria
- Part 4 – RfP conditions and contract terms

Attachments:

1. RFP Response Form
2. Financial Proposal

1 Overview

1.1 RfP title

Request for Proposal title	FTA Ecosystem - Operational Model, Selection of Sectors and Provinces & Pilot Plan
Reference	PR.TN016
Issued by	Boston Consulting Group (BCG), as Managing Contractor of the Aus4Growth program (A4G), on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

1.2 Invitation to submit proposals

BCG, as Managing Contractor of the A4G program on behalf of DFAT, invites suitably qualified service providers to submit proposals to support the Multilateral Trade Policy Department (MTPD) under Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT) in operationalising Vietnam’s proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Ecosystem.

This activity will support the translation of the existing FTA Ecosystem masterplan into a practical and evidence-based operational model, including the development of governance and coordination arrangements, identification of pilot sectors and provinces, and enterprise-level research to ensure the FTA Ecosystem responds to the practical needs of Vietnamese businesses. The FTA Ecosystem also need to consider inclusiveness of firms, women-led businesses, and enterprises located outside major export hubs who often face higher information, compliance, and coordination cost when attempting to use FTAs

The activity will support MOIT’s planned pilot phase commencing from July 2026 across three priority sectors and selected provinces, while informing the long-term rollout and service delivery model of the FTA Ecosystem.

Further details of the scope and requirements are set out in this RfP.

This RfP is issued as an open tender to all interested and eligible firms. Submission of a proposal does not constitute a commitment by BCG or DFAT to award a contract.

Principal

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The contracting entity and associated contracting arrangements may vary depending on the jurisdiction of incorporation of the successful bidder, as well as relevant legal, tax, and operational considerations.

1.3 Key dates

The anticipated timetable for this RfP process is set out below. BCG reserves the right to amend this timetable at its discretion.

Lodgement and query dates	Date
RfP issue date	21 May 2026
Deadline to confirm intent to submit a proposal	5:00 PM (Hanoi time), 25 May 2026
Deadline for submission of clarification questions	5:00 PM (Hanoi time), 1 June 2026
Deadline for proposal submission	5:00 PM (Hanoi time), 15 June 2026

Evaluation and offers (indicative timetable)	Date
Proposal clarifications and presentations (if required)	17 June 2026
Completion of evaluation	22 June 2026
Notification to supplier(s)	1 July 2026
Anticipated contract commencement	22 July 2026

1.4 RfP contact details and communications

All communications in relation to this RfP must be directed to nominated contact person below. Bidders must not contact other representatives of BCG, Aus4Growth, or DFAT in relation to this RfP.

Clarification questions must be submitted in writing by the deadline specified above. Responses to questions may be shared with all bidders, without attribution, at BCG's discretion.

Requests for clarification must be submitted by the deadline for submission of clarification questions specified above. Requests received after this time may not be considered.

Contact name	Karen Richardson
Position	A4G Operations Manager
Email	Richardson.Karen@bcg.com

1.5 Overview of RfP conditions

By submitting a proposal, bidders acknowledge and agree that:

- BCG is not obliged to accept any proposal or to award a contract as a result of this RfP;
- BCG may amend, suspend or cancel the RfP process at any time;
- All costs incurred in preparing and submitting a proposal are the sole responsibility of the bidder; and
- Proposals submitted in response to this RfP will be treated as confidential, subject to applicable laws and contractual obligations.

2 Scope of services

2.1 Context

Program context

Aus4Growth (A4G) is a partnership between Australia and Vietnam and aims to close gaps in policy and practice to support enhanced economic growth, trade and investment, clean energy and transport, inclusion, and digital acceleration.

Building on previous programs – Aus4Reform and Aus4Transport – A4G integrates emerging initiatives in economy, energy, trade, inclusion, and digital. A4G will directly support the priorities of the Australia – Vietnam Development Partnership Plan 2025-2030 and the Australia-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (March 2024).

A4G is funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and managed by Boston Consulting Group.

Policy and market context

Vietnam has concluded a broad network of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) covering markets that represent over 60 percent of global GDP. Despite this, the national FTA utilisation rate remains below 40 percent. To address this, the Government of Vietnam has tasked the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT) with formulating a Scheme on the “Ecosystem to Support Enterprises in Taking Advantage of FTAs,” mandated for submission to the Prime Minister by December 2025 (Decision No. 1256/QĐ-BCT).

Following the anticipated adoption of National Assembly Resolution 250/NQ/QH15 on special mechanisms for international economic integration, the Government requires a practical implementation model for the FTA Ecosystem. The Ecosystem will operate as a single system structured around two coordinated components:

- **A Management Component:** Central ministries and provincial departments connected via a Working Task Force.
- **A Business Component:** A social enterprise (joint-stock company) involving business associations, managed through an Executive Board, specialised departments, and sectoral committees.

MOIT intends to initiate a pilot starting from July 2026, targeting three priority sectors and selected provinces. This RfP seeks a specialised firm to translate the existing masterplan into a concrete operational model, provide evidence-based recommendations for pilot sector/province selection, and conduct a targeted empirical survey to ground the ecosystem’s design in the practical realities of Vietnamese enterprises.

2.2 Key requirements

The contracted firm must balance high-level strategic design with local insights, knowledge, and consultation networks. The work is structured across three integrated milestones.

Milestone 1: Practical Implementation Solutions for the Ecosystem Operational Model

Convert the conceptual framework into a sustainable, operationally workable model enabling effective coordination and service delivery.

- **Operationalisation of the Working Task Force:** Define practical implementation arrangements, mandate, functional accountabilities, reporting lines, and operational mechanisms for the Task Force (integrating central and provincial agencies).
- **Operationalisation of the Business Component:** Specify arrangements for the business component, including organisational structure, mandate, and coordination mechanisms among business associations and support organisations.
- **Nationwide Rollout & Sustainable Financing:** Review the institutional framework to ensure proposed functions and financing mechanisms are accessible and proportionate to SME capacities. Develop a high-level sustainable model estimating setup/operation costs and formulating a roadmap for long-term nationwide rollout.
- **Methodology:** Desk analysis, review of international good practices adapted to Vietnam's context, and targeted consultations to define top-down blueprints and high-level role charters.

Milestone 2: Evidence-based Identification of Pilot Sectors and Provinces and Expansion Plan

Identify priority sectors and provinces for the pilot and establish a phased expansion roadmap.

- **Development of Selection Criteria:** Establish quantitative indicators (e.g., export volume, trade balance, SME share, FTA utilisation rates) and qualitative readiness factors (e.g., digitalisation level, local government commitment, association maturity).
- **Selection of Pilot Targets:** Apply the criteria to select exactly three priority sectors and an initial set of provinces. Ensure selections demonstrate the potential for inclusive service delivery in lower-capacity or emerging export contexts.
- **Phased Expansion Plan:** Develop a sequenced, realistic roadmap for expanding the ecosystem's sectoral and geographic scope over the subsequent three years until full coverage is reached.
- **Methodology:** Systematic analysis of official statistical datasets, sector-level economic data, and structured consultations with central/provincial ministries and export industry representatives.

Milestone 3: Targeted Enterprise Survey and Policy/Operational Recommendations

Deploy a targeted empirical assessment to provide the evidence base for finalising the Ecosystem Office's service delivery model.

- **Survey Design and Deployment:** Design an evidence-driven, mixed-method survey for the selected pilot sectors and provinces. Capture empirical data on enterprise capabilities, FTA utilisation barriers, and service needs. Ensure minimum inclusion thresholds and disaggregation criteria for SMEs and women-owned enterprises (GEDSI integration).
- **Stakeholder Consultations:** Conduct in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with business associations, DOITs, and private service providers to validate findings and uncover execution bottlenecks.
- **Coordination Mapping:** Map existing support functions provided by government and private entities to identify service gaps, overlaps, and opportunities for integration within the new Ecosystem.
- **Synthesis and Operational Recommendations:** Formulate actionable, institutionally aligned policy recommendations shaping the finalised mandate, service offerings, and coordination mechanisms of the FTA Ecosystem Office.

2.3 Deliverables and milestones

Milestone	Deliverables	Dates
Milestone 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working Task Force Report: Operating model design and implementation roadmap. Business Component Report: Design and operationalisation roadmap. <p><i>The reports should be delivered in both English and Vietnamese.</i></p>	15 August 2026
Milestone 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot Selection Report: Evidence-based justification for the three priority sectors and pilot provinces. Implementation Roadmap: Practical arrangements for nationwide rollout, sustainability scenarios, and a 3-year phased expansion plan. <p><i>The report/roadmap should be delivered in both English and Vietnamese.</i></p>	15 September 2026
Milestone 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted Enterprise Survey Report: Detailed analysis of capabilities, challenges, and service needs. Integrated Final FTA Ecosystem Design Report & Guidebook: Concise synthesis of sector/provincial readiness and final operational recommendations. The guidebook should be developed as a professionally designed, print-ready document (minimum 30 pages excluding annexes) incorporating infographics, governance diagrams, workflow illustrations, and other visual communication tools to clearly present the FTA Ecosystem model. The design should be tailored for different stakeholder groups, including central ministries, provincial departments, business associations, and enterprises, ensuring the Management and Business Components are accessible, easy to navigate, and practical for both technical and non-technical audiences. <p><i>The reports/guidebook should be delivered in both English and Vietnamese.</i></p>	15 October 2026

@Note: All final deliverables are subject to joint quality review by DFAT, BCG and MOIT against program standards and benchmarks prior to formal acceptance.

3 Evaluation and selection criteria

3.1 Proposal submission requirements

Bidders should submit a proposal (see Response Forms provided including the Pricing Sheet/Financial proposal) that substantively and individually addresses the selection criteria specified below.

All proposals must be submitted in PDF format, with the financial proposal in the MS Excel format.

Proposal submissions should include:

1. Technical proposal (maximum eight (8) pages, excluding annexes, prepared in accordance with the Response Forms and instructions provided in this RfP):

- **Proposed approach & methodology:** A detailed explanation of the analytical frameworks for the strategic design (Milestones 1 & 2) and the mixed-methodology approach for the enterprise survey (Milestone 3). Explicitly detail the sampling strategy, data quality assurance, and GEDSI criteria.
- **Overview of past experience:** Description of relevant prior work including 2-3 examples of institutional/ strategic design, private sector assessments, or trade-focused surveys in Vietnam.
- **Proposed personnel:** Brief biographies of key team members (CVs may be appended separately). Team must demonstrate expertise in quantitative research, data analysis, private sector development, and expertise in gender and social inclusion analysis. Personnel nominated by the bidder – particularly senior/management personnel and technical experts – are expected to remain committed to delivery of the activity for its full duration.
- **Referees:** Contact details for at least two references from clients or partners for similar, relevant assignments.

Short-listed firms may be invited for a presentation of their proposal, followed by a short question & answer session by the selection committee.

2. Financial proposal

Bidders must submit a financial proposal as part of their proposal submission using the MS Excel cost template provided as part of this RfP. All prices must be quoted in either AUD and/or VND, in whole numbers.

a. Pricing approach

Pricing must be in line with the required timeline and deliverables, with a clear breakdown of costs for fieldwork, consultations, and reporting, and include:

- A lump-sum professional fee proposed on a milestone-based basis; and
- A separate breakdown of any proposed reimbursable costs, where applicable.

Payment will be made against accepted deliverables/milestones.

b. Financial requirements:

The financial proposal must reflect proposed personnel approach, team structure, and time allocation necessary to deliver the scope and outputs of the scope of services. Bidders will be required to provide:

1. **Total professional fees** for delivery of the full scope of services;
2. **A milestone-based cost allocation**, showing how the total fees are apportioned across the required deliverables/milestones (percentages or amounts, summing to 100%);
3. **A proposed team structure and time allocation**, presented as an indicative level of effort for key roles (e.g. person-days or hours); and
4. **Reimbursable costs**, including calculation methodology and assumptions, and proposed ceilings. Reimbursables will be subject to prior written approval and reimbursed at actual cost.

Professional fees should represent the bidder's fully loaded cost for the delivery of the services and deliverables, including all personnel inputs, management and administrative overheads, translation and or interpretation support required for deliverables.

Reimbursable costs, including travel expenses and reasonable assignment-related logistics required for delivery of the services, must be presented separately from professional fees and will be reimbursed at actual cost (with no mark-up), subject to prior written approval, agreed contract budget ceilings, and supporting documentation/receipts.

All prices, including professional fees and reimbursable expenses, must be quoted exclusive of applicable VAT or GST for financial evaluation purposes. Bidders must separately disclose in the financial proposal template whether VAT or GST applies, together with the applicable tax rate (%).

The final tax treatment of reimbursable expenses incurred in Vietnam (if applicable) will be determined based on the legal entity of the contracting party at the time of contract negotiation, in accordance with applicable Vietnamese tax regulations, including regulations applicable to ODA-funded projects where relevant.

Bidders are responsible for ensuring that all calculations are accurate and internally consistent. Inaccurate or inconsistent calculations may, at BCG’s discretion, result in the proposal being deemed non-conforming and excluded from further consideration. Final service fees and/or reimbursable cost ceilings may be subject to negotiation with the preferred bidder.

3.2 Evaluation criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

Criteria	Weighting
A. Technical approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity, quality, and feasibility of the proposed strategic design and data validation methodology, particularly the robustness of the survey design and field deployment plan. Alignment with the overall objective of strengthening trade policy implementation. Workplan and timeline ensuring delivery by tight deadlines in 2026. 	40%
B. Relevant expertise and experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated understanding of the Vietnamese business environment, FTA utilisation, and local institutional coordination mechanisms. Proven experience in conducting large-scale, high-quality surveys and field research in Vietnam. Proven ability to develop succinct and insightful policy reports in both English and Vietnamese. 	25%
C. Proposed team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expertise and qualifications of proposed personnel (mix of research, data analysis, and GEDSI experience). Evidence of capacity to deliver high-quality outputs on time. 	15%
D. Cost-effectiveness and Value for Money <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competitiveness of the proposed fee and transparency/justification of the cost breakdown (particularly regarding any anticipated fieldwork and event costs). Overall value provided relative to scope and quality of proposed work. 	20%

E. Clarity and completeness of the proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adherence to submission requirements and overall clarity of the proposal. 	Pass/Fail
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Financial evaluation

The financial proposal will be evaluated under Criterion ‘D. Cost effectiveness and Value for Money’ which carries a weighting of 20% of the total assessment score.

Financial scoring will be based on the total lump-sum professional fee proposed by the Bidder for delivery of the Scope of Services. Reimbursable expenses will be reviewed for Value for Money and compliance with the Scope of Services requirements.

4 RfP conditions and contract terms

4.1 RfP conditions

This RfP is issued as an open tender. BCG reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to:

- Amend, suspend, or cancel this RfP at any time;
- Clarify any aspect of a proposal with a bidder;
- Accept or reject any proposal, in whole or in part;
- Not award a contract as a result of this RfP.

4.2 Costs of proposal preparation

All costs and expenses incurred by bidders in preparing and submitting a proposal, including any costs associated with clarification meetings or presentations, are the sole responsibility of the bidder. BCG will not be liable for any such costs, regardless of the outcome of the RfP process.

4.3 Disclaimer

The information contained in this RfP is provided in good faith for the purpose of assisting bidders in preparing a proposal. While BCG has taken reasonable care in preparing this document, it makes no representation or warranty as to the accuracy or completeness of the information provided.

Bidders are responsible for making their own enquiries and assessments in relation to this RfP and the proposed services.

4.4 Contract terms

The successful bidder will be required to enter into a contract or service agreement with BCG, acting as Managing Contractor of A4G. The contract will set out the detailed terms and conditions governing the provision of services including scope, deliverables, payment terms, intellectual property, confidentiality and termination.

Subject to BCG’s discretion, the draft contract may be made available to bidders who have confirmed their intention to submit a proposal by the specified date.

The draft contract is commercial-in-confidence, and BCG may require execution of a non-disclosure agreement prior to its release.

Submission of a proposal in response to this RfP will be taken as acknowledgement that the bidder is willing to enter into the contract substantially in the form provided, subject to any permitted clarifications or amendments agreed during contract finalisation.

4.5 Confidentiality

All information provided by BCG in connection with this RfP must be treated as confidential and used solely for the purpose of preparing a proposal. Bidders must not disclose any such information to third parties without BCG's prior written consent, except as required by law.

BCG will treat proposals received as confidential, subject to applicable laws, DFAT requirements, and contractual obligations.

4.6 Conflicts of interest

Bidders must declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest that may arise in connection with the proposed services. This includes any relationships or activities that could reasonably be perceived to compromise the bidder's ability to perform the services impartially and independently.

BCG may, at its discretion, require bidders to propose appropriate mitigation measures or may exclude a bidder from the process if a conflict of interest cannot be adequately managed.

4.7 Ethics and compliance

The successful bidder will be required to comply with all applicable laws and regulations, as well as relevant DFAT, Aus4Growth, and BCG policies, including those relating to ethical conduct, fraud and corruption, safeguarding, and gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI). This includes but is not limited to:

- Commonwealth Supplier Code of Conduct ([link](#))
- BCG Supplier Code of Conduct ([link](#))
- DFAT Child Protection Guidelines ([link](#))
- Commonwealth Procurement Rules ([link](#))
- Commonwealth Fraud and Corruption Control Framework 2024 ([link](#))
- DFAT International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy ([link](#))
- DFAT Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy ([link](#))
- DFAT Family Planning and the Aid Program: Guiding Principles ([link](#))
- DFAT Information accessibility requirements combined in the Guidelines for preparing accessible content ([link](#))
- DFAT Environmental and Social Safeguards Policy for the Aid Program ([link](#))
- DFAT Australia's International Gender Equality Strategy ([link](#))
- DFAT Gender equality and women's empowerment strategy ([link](#))
- DFAT Displacement and Resettlement of People in development activities ([link](#))
- Background Checks: Mandatory security vetting, including vetting on the DFAT Consolidated List, the Criminal Code Act List, the World Bank List, or any other relevant list
- Compliance with DFAT's fraud, anti-corruption, and workplace safety guidelines.

Failure to comply with these requirements may result in termination of the contract.