

SECTION C – DESCRIPTION / SPECIFICATIONS/STATEMENT OF WORK

USAID Support for Trade Acceleration (STAR) Plus

I. OVERVIEW

The objectives, approach, technical assistance agenda, and key contract and performance requirements are set out in this SOW for the Support for Trade Acceleration (STAR) Plus project, building upon the previous iteration of USAID/Vietnam’s Support for Trade Acceleration (STAR) Project, scheduled to be completed in September 2010. Although it will provide continuity of some of STAR’s key focus areas and methodology, this new project will intensify efforts in some areas already undertaken in the previous STAR projects, and may include activities beyond the scope of previous projects.

The purpose of the STAR Plus project is to support the Government of Vietnam’s (GVN) own efforts to implement trade and investment reforms, including changes in economic governance and macroeconomic areas, to ensure an environment attractive for investment, trade and private sector growth. The flexible, demand-driven project will assist Vietnam with its integration into the global economy and with furthering reforms as it continues its transition to a market-driven economy

The STAR Plus program will build on the success of earlier USAID-funded activities by focusing on the areas where GVN reforms continue to evolve. The project must remain flexible to respond to GVN identified needs in these areas. This “demand-driven” quality and real time responsiveness were key reasons for the success of the previous STAR projects, and will be a key element of the project methodology of the STAR Plus project as well. STAR Plus will be a three-year award.

Given the multiple USG agencies involved in administering foreign assistance and the unique policy initiatives in which the STAR Plus project is engaged, USAID will coordinate the implementation of the project closely with USTR, the U.S. State Department, Treasury Department, Commerce Department, and other relevant USG agencies responsible for US international trade policy.

II. STAR PLUS OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project is to support the GVN’s efforts to continue its high level of trade and investment reforms, including changes in economic governance and macroeconomic areas to ensure an environment attractive for investment, trade and private sector growth. To achieve this, the project must focus on the following objectives:

- Identify, select, and fully vet initiatives that support the GVN’s efforts to implement and ensure compliance with all obligations and commitments to Vietnam’s trade and investment related agreements as they relate to the United States, in particular the U.S. – Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA), and the World Trade Organization (WTO)

Agreement. The project should provide sufficient flexibility to support additional or future commitments Vietnam may undertake related to trade or investment agreements.

- Support the GVN's efforts to develop Vietnam's private sector and continue its implementation of global trade rules to facilitate integration into the global economy. This may include but is not limited to supporting initiatives and work identified under the U.S. – Vietnam Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) discussions and will involve close coordination with USG agencies on these initiatives;
- Undertake specific capacity building or technical assistance work, as appropriate, to support domestic legal and regulatory changes necessary to advance Vietnam's regional integration efforts;
- Assist the GVN in the development of new laws, regulations, and procedures pertaining to trade and the development of a market oriented economy and a legal structure that encourages and supports growth of the private sector;
- Train and build capacity among Vietnamese Ministry staff, the Judiciary, and Vietnamese enforcement and regulatory agencies to improve the implementation/enforcement of existing laws and strengthen the legal framework in conjunction with economic reforms;
- Provide technical assistance to support the establishment and operation of trade related obligations consistent with international practice under international standards of economic governance, (intellectual property rights (IPR), transparency, accountability, fairness, etc.);
- Train staff, assist to develop institutions, and build the capacity of officials in GVN line ministries and agencies to fully understand and implement international trade and investment obligations in the practice of using and enforcing existing laws and support the expansion of these concepts into future measures related to trade and investment.

Technical and capacity building support under the STAR Plus project must seamlessly build on the multi-faceted economic and legal reforms and technical assistance of the previous STAR projects, and further the cooperative working relationship of the U.S. and Vietnam fostered under STAR. The flexible, demand-driven nature of the previous STAR projects has been instrumental to their success. USAID's active coordination with the Vietnamese Government and relevant USG agencies (such as FCS, Treasury, USTR, etc.) has also been critical to achieving the developmental goals under STAR. The new STAR follow-on project must replicate this working methodology and remain flexible enough to respond quickly to requests for assistance from the GVN. As part of its role as the manager of the STAR follow-on project, USAID will ensure that new requests and work plans are vetted with relevant USG agencies to obtain input and technical guidance from stakeholders. Annual workplans will be vetted for approval with the GVN and the interagency.

The Contractor must, as appropriate, support USAID's efforts to coordinate with donors and providers of related technical assistance to the GVN and its agencies in (a) completing essential legal reforms; (b) moving through the next critical stage of administrative decree and regulatory

change; (c) advancing the vital follow-on processes of legal and regulatory implementation; (d) supporting the adoption of best practices; and (e) capacity building and skills development for effective promotion, application, oversight and enforcement capabilities of relevant GVN line ministries, agencies, and the private sector.

A. Technical Assistance Areas and Approach

The Contractor must develop an assistance strategy and approach that responds to the needs articulated by the GVN, provided those needs are appropriate to the project. The focus and agenda of the project must be demand driven, with the flexibility to evolve as progress continues, new commitments are agreed to under relevant trade agreements, and new challenges and priorities are faced. USAID, working in coordination with the Program inter-ministerial Steering Committee¹ and relevant stakeholders, will direct interventions to priority technical areas, ministries, and other entities stemming from trade agreements or bilateral issues. Important factors at present in GVN reform and international integration include but are not limited to:

- rapidly changing economic environment, accelerating economic and industrial development,
- opening of markets and escalating forces of international/domestic competition,
- responding to the impacts of treaty requirements (BTA/WTO),
- expanding role of the private sector, the need to further deepen/refine the legal system and its daily commercial implementation,
- enforcement and compliance with new laws, regulations, reforms, and understanding of these reforms by relevant line ministries, agencies and the private sector,
- building the institutional capacity of key GVN entities,
- commercializing state enterprises,
- developing and deploying ICT and e-government mechanisms, and
- expanding transparency, anti-corruption and IPR enforcement.

Gender issues are central to the achievement of USAID programs, and USAID strives to promote gender equality, in which both men and women have equal opportunity to benefit from and contribute to economic, social, cultural and political development; enjoy socially valued resources and rewards; and realize their human rights potential. To the extent possible or as applicable, the Contractor must consider gender issues in the development of STAR Plus activities.

1. Capacity Building and Training for Legal and Regulatory Reform

In coordination with the GVN through the Project inter-ministerial Steering Committee², USAID will agree on a demand-driven set of priorities focusing on those institutions and activities that yield the highest developmental return and communicate them to the Contractor. These priorities

¹ In previous STAR projects, an inter-ministerial steering committee chaired by the Vietnamese Office of Government (OOG) oversaw STAR, providing technical guidance and approving workplans and updates on a semi-annual basis. The Government of Vietnam will determine the best option for overseeing the new STAR Plus project, whether through a Steering Committee or other arrangement.

² The Project Steering Committee or other designated counterpart or entity to be determined by the GVN.

will be agreed through USAID's discussions with relevant USG stakeholders, including USTR, State, Treasury, and Commerce, to ensure alignment and consistency.

Priorities are likely to change at a pace and direction consistent with the fast moving Vietnamese economy and export markets. Initially, the Contractor *may* consider a focus on the following, illustrative areas:

Key Government Ministries: The STAR Plus project must continue the previous STAR projects' efforts to strengthen the capacity of selected ministries to enable them to meet new responsibilities arising from increased trade and market liberalization. These include:

- The Office of the Government in economic policy formulation and coordination, administrative and regulatory reforms, and transparency;
- Ministry of Industry and Trade in implementing trade agreement commitments, consumer protection and competition policy;
- Ministry of Finance and State Bank of Vietnam in developing fiscal and tax policies, developing a macroeconomic database, and banking sector reform;
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in liberalizing and developing the agricultural sector, strengthening sanitary and phytosanitary regimes; and
- Ministry of Justice in law-making, regulatory review and oversight, and capacity building.

The Contractor may consider appropriate activities to build the capacity of these ministries.

National Assembly: The Contractor may provide support to strengthen the National Assembly to upgrade its capacities in order to fulfill the responsibilities of reviewing, approving, and monitoring legal reforms required to implement the BTA, WTO, and commitments of future relevant agreements. The STAR Plus project should also aim to improve transparency and efficiency in the legislative process.

Financial Sector: The STAR Plus project must facilitate the growth of a vibrant, well-regulated financial sector that supports a growing private sector. The Contractor may provide training and institutional development support to the State Bank of Vietnam and the State Securities Commission (SSC). This could reinforce earlier efforts that involved drafting new regulations covering all aspects of the securities market, training of SSC personnel and reform of the laws governing the State Bank of Vietnam, local banks, and other credit institutions.

Judicial System: The STAR Plus project must support the GVN's efforts to increase the independence of courts, improve court procedures, enhance the authority and responsibility of judges, and improve institutional capacity and modern skills throughout the judicial system. The project must also support the efforts of the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuracy to restructure their organizations. This may include development of regional courts and prosecution offices to improve their independence and effectiveness.

2. Legal and Regulatory Changes

Along with capacity building and enforcement, the Contractor must assist the GVN in the development of new laws and regulations as appropriate through a demand driven approach. The list of laws that are important for programmatic involvement will change over time and will be subject to approval of the Project Steering Committee³, the USG interagency process, and USAID. Initially, the Contractor *may* consider a focus on the following illustrative areas:

- Law on Access to Information (equivalent to the Freedom of Information Act in the United States)
- Revision in the Labor Code
- Law on the State Bank of Viet Nam
- Law on Credit Institutions
- Revision in the Criminal Code
- Criminal Procedure Code
- Law on Arbitration
- Law on Metrology and the related Law on Quality and the Decree on Standards and Technical Regulations
- Law on Public Investment
- Revised Law on Securities
- Consumer Protection Law and Revised Competition Law

This list is subject to change / revision through the life of the project, with agreement of USAID and the Project Steering Committee.

B. Coordination and Leverage

Given the scope of activities under this project, the sensitivities involved, ongoing trade negotiations, and the impact on issues addressed by a broad range of U.S. government and other stakeholders, the need for regular and on-going inter-agency consultations with USG stakeholders is critical. The Contractor must regularly liaise with and obtain input from representatives of USAID, the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi, the U.S. Consulate General HCMC, the U.S. Trade Representative's Office (USTR), the U.S. Treasury Department, the U.S. Foreign Commercial Service, and other interested U.S. and international and agencies and private sector entities.

The specific areas of assistance will be determined annually, laid out in annual work plans agreed through consultations with USAID, incorporating the viewpoints of other stakeholders and approved by the Project Steering Committee⁴. However, the project must remain flexible to respond to requests for assistance as needed.

The Contractor must collaborate effectively with other related GVN entities and international development assistance agencies – being aware of other trade/investment related assistance so as to avoid unnecessary duplication or working at cross-purposes.

³ Either the Steering Committee or other designated counterpart or entity to be determined by the GVN.

⁴ Either the Steering Committee or other designated counterpart or entity to be determined by the GVN.

The Contractor may consider seeking the views of policy committees of the American Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam and NGOs whose mission includes relevant aspects of trade and investment.

As noted, effective coordination with multiple parties and stakeholders is paramount under this project, including those in the US, Vietnam and the international community. The GVN's multifaceted reform agenda will continue to generate support from the international development and business communities. The Contractor must therefore consult and coordinate with GVN stakeholders and other parties in order to ensure maximum impact, effective targeting of resources, and beneficial collaboration with the agenda of other donors.

The Contractor must work through USAID in its coordination of the STAR follow-on project's activities. Careful coordination is necessary with the US Embassy in Hanoi, the US Consulate in HCMC, appropriate U.S. government agencies (e.g. USTR, Treasury, FCS, etc.). USAID will work directly with Washington agencies on related implementation issues and strategies and obtain their input and engagement in project implementation.

Given the limited resources of USAID for project activities, the Contractor must seek to leverage its contract resources to further the goal and objectives of the STAR follow-on project. These sources could include private companies, other donor funding, support from other USG entities, other USAID projects, universities and the like. The Contractor must keep USAID closely involved in any leveraging of other entities' resources.

FAA section 660 prohibits the use of Development Assistance (DA) funds for assistance to police, prisons, or other law enforcement entities or officials. "Law enforcement" refers to individuals or organizations which are authorized to carry weapons, make arrests, search private premises, interrogate in private, or supervise confinement. It is anticipated that the assistance under this SOW in enforcing laws will generally be support to officials and entities who are not law enforcement within this meaning, in implementation and application of laws. Any assistance to individuals or entities who are "law enforcement" within the foregoing meaning may be provided only after USAID's written notification to the contractor that the assistance is eligible under an applicable exception to sec. 660.

Activities implementing trade and investment laws and regulations shall be consistent with USAID Program Principles for Trade and Investment Activities (ADS 225).

C. Agreements

In addition to assistance related to the BTA and WTO Agreements mentioned under Section A above, the Contractor must provide assistance, where appropriate, to support and facilitate implementation of commitments made by the GVN under the existing bilateral dialogue or other possible future agreement involving the United States.

1. Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA)

The United States and Vietnam concluded a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) in 2007 and have continued to meet regularly to review Vietnam's implementation of its WTO commitments, work to resolve bilateral issues of concern, and to consider additional

initiatives to further enhance trade and investment opportunities between the two countries. The discussions under the TIFA dialogue have led to the identification of technical assistance needs and opportunities and the previous STAR projects participated in this process by supporting Vietnam's requests for assistance and facilitating opportunities for closer cooperation between Vietnam and the United States. The TIFA chairs have coordinated closely with STAR throughout this process. The Contractor must also support objectives mutually agreed upon in the TIFA dialogue, to the extent that they are consistent with the broader objectives of the program.

2. Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)

In June 2008, the United States and Vietnam launched negotiations of a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) with the aim of expanding upon the existing investment provisions included in the BTA. Requests may arise from these negotiations as the Vietnamese look for assistance in implementing the provisions of any eventual agreement. The Contractor must coordinate with relevant U.S. agencies to respond, as appropriate, to these requests.

IV. DELIVERABLES

A. Work Plan Development

The Contractor will be responsible for implementing the activity. This will involve formulating the initial Work Plan and subsequent Work Plans in consultation with USAID/Vietnam and appropriate agencies and entities on both the U.S. and Vietnamese side. The Work Plan consultations are to: identify key technical assistance tasks to be accomplished during the period in question and their linkages with objectives for the life of the project; prioritize activities; and support implementation. As described below, the Contractor must develop annual Work Plans that lay out the principal areas of focus for each coming year and submit to USAID first, and then the inter-ministerial Steering Committee⁵ for approval. All Annual Work Plans must incorporate, as appropriate, guidance provided by USAID and other related entities as identified throughout this RFP, and shall be subject to overall guidance from the USAID COTR. The exact content and format of the Work Plan shall be determined in conjunction with USAID.

Initial Work Plan: Within 30 days of arriving in country, the Contractor must produce and submit to USAID/Vietnam a draft work plan for the first year of activity. The work plan must be adequately detailed and yet retain enough flexibility to respond, within reason, to unanticipated needs as they arise. The work plan must provide a focus on project outcomes, and must include information on outputs leading to those outcomes. This should be done in consultation with relevant entities in the GVN.

Annual Work Plan: The Contractor must formulate the Annual Work Plan in consultation with the Project inter-ministerial Steering Committee (or other designated entity), USAID/Vietnam, and other relevant counterparts/collaborators. The Contractor must provide the first Annual Work Plan to USAID and the Steering Committee in the first two months of the project and the subsequent Annual Work Plan in the first month of the calendar year.

⁵ Either the Steering Committee or other designated counterpart or entity to be determined by the GVN.

Semi-Annual Work Plan Update: The inter-ministerial Project Steering Committee (or other designated entity) is anticipated to meet twice per year to approve the STAR Plus work plan and at the mid-year point, review performance and update requests for the second half of the year. The Contractor must update the Work Plan accordingly based on recommendations from the meeting.

Updated and Subsequent Work Plans: Subsequent work plans must reflect any changes in trade and investment liberalization priorities for Vietnam or updates from trade agreements being actively negotiated. The work plans must be adequately detailed and yet retain enough flexibility to respond, within reason, to unanticipated needs as they arise. Updated work plans must reflect the agenda of needs from the Vietnamese counterpart agencies and evolving needs, challenges and opportunities confronted in the progress of reform.

B. Periodic Reports

The Contractor must provide brief monthly and semi-annual reports and an annual year end report to USAID. These reports must describe achievements to date in meeting project requirements, including adoption of trade/investment liberalization measures; any changes in trade and investment liberalization priorities for Vietnam; remaining commitments under the BTA, WTO, or other negotiated agreements, tracked indicators for both outputs and outcomes, and other components normally incorporated into periodic reports. The annual report must summarize the year's achievements, challenges, shortfalls and successes. USAID may also request brief weekly updates with brief highlights of key project initiatives/activities, upcoming events and international missions that may be of note to USG stakeholders. These reports must be made available to the Project Steering Committee and other stakeholders as requested.

With all reports, the Chief of Party (or designee) must note other critical issues/factors which may hinder achievement of work plan objectives, contract benchmarks, or budget goals for the balance of the year. In addition, the Contractor must report "success stories" that describe in concrete terms the achievements and benefits of a particular activity.

C. Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

The Offeror will be responsible for developing and executing a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan, in consultation with the COTR. Expected project results with illustrative indicators, midterm milestones/benchmarks, end-of-project results should be elaborated in the M&E plan. Data sources, collection methodologies, and Data Quality Assessment should also be noted for each indicator. The M&E plan shall be submitted to the COTR for approval within 60 days of the award of the Task Order. USAID/Vietnam and the Offeror will conduct periodic performance reviews to monitor the progress of work and the achievement of results based on the targets specified in the M&E plan. To the extent that circumstances, priorities and activities are refocused for good reason, and in consultation with key client stakeholders and the COTR, the M&E plan shall be adjusted accordingly. Financial tracking data will be required on a quarterly basis. The M&E plan may need to be revised as appropriate in collaboration with USAID.

D. Final Report

The Contractor, at the end of the contract, must submit one original and one copy of the Final Activity Report (with an electronic copy formatted in Word) summarizing the work carried out over the life of the activity, including the results achieved and problems encountered, as well as a summary of context and design of the activity, key activities, performance and achievements, lessons learned, and other relevant information as the Contractor may choose. The Contractor must indicate which areas are, in its judgment, most appropriate for continued project activities in the future. One copy of the report shall be sent to the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse.

V. STAFFING REQUIREMENTS AND QUALIFICATIONS

A. Staffing

USAID anticipates that this activity will require a mix of long and short-term expatriate and local experts, local support staff, along with home office support staff and management. The Contractor must provide the most appropriate and cost effective staffing mix to achieve the objectives of this project. The Contractor may propose such partnering relationships with other U.S. or local Vietnamese entities as may enhance the STAR follow-on project's ability to fulfill project objectives, operate effectively, and delivery high quality assistance in a timely fashion. The selection of short-term expatriate experts for specific assignments will be subject to USAID approval. A resident Chief of Party is required.

B. Qualifications

The Contractor Chief of Party (expected to reside in Hanoi), Deputy Chief of Party, and any other long-term expatriate experts must have extensive knowledge/experience in:

- Managing, designing, and implementing relevant technical assistance activities in developing countries--preferably at least some in collaboration with USAID
- Relevant areas of expertise in one or more areas such as economics, law, economic reform and integration, economic governance, and international private sector development
- Supervising teams of short- and long-term consultants
- Assisting host country governments in implementing economic policy reforms—preferably in areas relating to the liberalization of trade and investment regimes
- Liaison with USG agencies, host country government officials, private sector stakeholders, and other donors
- Working in Southeast Asia and (preferably) Vietnam
- Work experience with multilateral institutions preferred (i.e., WTO, OIE, CODEX, ASEAN, APEC, or other relevant entities)

Identified short-term expatriate experts must have extensive experience advising the governments of developing countries on issues relating to trade and investment liberalization in the context of global economic integration—for example: market access, investment regimes and safeguards, intellectual property rights, transparency measures, and other relevant areas as

deemed important by the Contractor in order to successfully fulfill project objectives. Experience with trade agreements, including the relevant WTO agreements is necessary.

Experience with bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, as well as WTO accession and compliance issues, is essential.

Long or short term local experts must have relevant technical expertise and demonstrated experience in dealing with a wide range of trade/investment issues to be addressed in this activity.

C. Project Registration

The Contractor is responsible for project registration with the Vietnamese Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) during the first 60 or 90 days of the program. USAID is not responsible for project registration, though USAID will facilitate the process and assist the Contractor with supporting documents and coordination with the GVN.

D. Technical Direction

Technical direction will be provided by the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) who shall be identified by separate letter of the USAID Contracting Officer at the Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA) in Bangkok.

ANNEX 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Given that this new project should build on the successes of the previous STAR projects, and maintain elements of the project methodology that made it successful, the Contractor must be aware of the history of the STAR project.

A. USAID/STAR - Phase I

In December 2001, the U.S. and Vietnamese governments normalized economic relations by bringing the U.S.-Vietnam BTA into effect. The BTA goes beyond tariff reductions and improvements in border policies, requiring Vietnam to make major reforms in many aspects of trade in goods and services, IPR protection, development of investment relations, trade facilitation, transparency, and the right to appeal administrative decisions. In particular, transparency and the right to appeal obligations required fundamental improvements in economic governance. Laws and regulations had to be published before coming into effect, administrative and regulatory procedures had to be readily available and understood, and businesses and citizens had to have the right to question government decisions. Most fundamentally, Vietnam's signing of the BTA and its subsequent accession to the WTO cemented the country's commitment to establish a stronger rules-based legal environment for commercial activity and related judicial procedures.

From 2002-2006, USAID's STAR project was the primary USG technical assistance vehicle to facilitate Vietnam's implementation of the US-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement and to prepare Vietnam to meet the requirements for accession to the WTO. STAR supported a large and significant legal and economic reform that helped to change Vietnam's economic structure. From 2002 through 2006, Vietnam, as both a developing and a transition economy, rewrote or developed most laws and regulation affecting commercial activity and related judicial procedures. Critically, these reforms responded both to the domestic-driven need for developing a legal system to support a market-oriented economy with a growing private sector, and the international, treaty-driven requirements for BTA and WTO accession.

During Phase I, STAR provided significant support as the Government of Vietnam drafted numerous laws and regulations, the majority of which were ultimately enacted. STAR provided assistance at different stages of the legislative development process, and to many institutions responsible for implementing the reforms. STAR helped most directly by explaining the relevance of BTA and WTO requirements and, more generally, by providing perspectives on international "best practice" regarding domestic-oriented legal reform. STAR helped to advance reforms within the Vietnamese system by providing detailed legal comments on often multiple drafts of each of these laws and regulations and by supporting several hundred seminars to gain feedback from stakeholders and to help develop consensus among state officials. In collaboration with myriad public and private sector partners, STAR trained thousands of government officials and businesses to improve their understanding of BTA and WTO requirements, and, once key new laws were promulgated, to build their capacities to enforce new laws more effectively.

At the beginning of the project, the Vietnamese government and USAID established STAR's operational modalities. A Government Steering Committee (SC) chaired by a Vice Chairman in

the Office of the Government (OOG), which is in the Prime Minister's Office, was established to supervise STAR's technical assistance.

To most effectively support requests for technical assistance from the GVN, STAR provided a tailored mix of legal analysis and comments on draft legislation, support for policy seminars and training workshops, development of research reports, dissemination of reference materials, development of websites, and strategically targeted local and international study missions. Vietnam's successful efforts towards joining the WTO were further supported via STAR's help in developing BTA implementation and WTO accession roadmaps for required reforms in the context of international trade standards. In this regard the STAR project has also contributed to expanding and strengthening trade relations between the US and Vietnam through mutually beneficial dialogue and study missions between policymakers, lawmakers, commercial entities and business leaders.

B. USAID/STAR Phase II

The first phase of STAR saw dramatic and broad progress in Vietnam's reform of policy and the economic and legal framework for commercial operation and trade. The Phase II project, covering FY 2007 through FY 2010, built on Phase I by helping the GVN translate the new legal framework into effective implementation to support trade and economic growth. Capacity building efforts supported by STAR II assisted the GVN with implementing the laws required by the BTA and WTO accession. STAR assistance also helped the private sector to better understand and use the improved business regulations.

STAR Phase II again provided technical assistance, training, learning and analyses on a client/demand-driven basis, to the wide range of government entities now charged with meeting the challenges and opportunities to continue and implement BTA, WTO and other efforts to integrate Vietnam into the international economy. Vietnam entered the WTO in January 2007.

Since its inception, STAR has provided assistance as the GVN worked on more than 150 laws and related regulations and decrees; and assisted several ministries, four committees of the National Assembly, the central bank, the Supreme People's Court and other government entities. The program works with several universities, including the Ho Chi Minh National Academy for Politics and Public Administration and Can Tho University. It is also working with the private sector, most notably through the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI).

The GVN Steering Committee sets out annually the areas in which it wants STAR to operate. The contractor prioritizes the activities and sets out its work plan for USAID review and approval. The relationship between the GVN counterpart and USAID's STAR contractor is important. Requests often come on an ad hoc basis for what the GVN often considers new priority activities. Flexibility and ability to move quickly is important in responding to most of these special requests.

STAR also responded to the broad range of requests by seeking leverage and other entities to complement its work. Nearly two dozen collaborations or direct support has been leveraged to date by USAID/STAR. The contract team has also been able to link with a local law firm and the chambers of commerce to leverage their assistance.

The full range of commitments under the BTA and WTO membership are far-reaching, extensive, and encompass multiple aspects of trade, investment, regulatory reform with extensive supporting administrative reforms. Completion and fulfillment of these requirements will demand efforts over the next few years and significant institutional capacity building, human resource development and skills training.

END OF SECTION C

