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MULTILATERAL INVESTMENT FUND

REGIONAL

**WORKING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO IMPROVE THE
CAREER PATHS OF POOR AND VULNERABLE YOUTH**

(RG-M1256)

DONORS MEMORANDUM

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PROJECT ABSTRACT

WORKING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO IMPROVE THE CAREER PATHS OF POOR AND VULNERABLE YOUTH

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As in the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, the youth unemployment rate in Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico, and Peru is twice—and in some cases nearly three times—the overall rate. In Latin America, 55.6% of employed youth (ages 15-24) work in the informal sector. In fact, poor and vulnerable youth, especially women, have the highest rates of informal employment and unemployment. Employers who are in a position to offer quality employment require specific skills for these jobs. According to them, however, more than 50% of young people who have recently completed secondary school lack the necessary cognitive and socioemotional skills to be hired. Numerous studies point to a direct correlation between a good quality first job and a better career path for young people.

The project seeks to address the difficulties vulnerable youth face at the regional level to getting a good quality first job upon completing their secondary education.

The impact sought by the project is to improve the career and educational paths of poor and vulnerable youth. The expected outcome is an effective regional model of public-private coordination that narrows the gaps between the supply and demand for first jobs for young people, supporting a quality school-to-work transition for vulnerable youth.

Fondation Forge Uruguay, Fondation Forge Argentina, Fondation Forge Peru, and Fondation Forge Mexico will be the project's strategic partners. Fondation Forge is a regional nongovernmental organization with operations in three countries—Peru, Uruguay, and Argentina—and plans to expand to others (Mexico, in the near term). Through its “Formación y Trabajo” [Training and Work] program, Forge works comprehensively with the public sector (schools), the private sector (companies), and civil society, providing life skills and technical training (in high-demand occupations) to poor and vulnerable youth who are completing their secondary education at public schools. Forge provides job placement support through its “Red de Empresas de Calidad” [network of quality companies], comprised of companies that offer young people decent first jobs with opportunities for career progression and/or continuing education.

This project, which aims to support 14,000 young people, will be included under the New Employment Opportunities for Youth (NEO) initiative (document MIF/AT-1175). NEO seeks to improve the quality of human capital and the employability of 500,000 youth in 10 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Launched at the 2012 Summit of the Americas, NEO is spearheaded by the MIF, the IDB's Social Sector, International Youth Foundation (IYF), and the initiative's five founding partner companies: Arcos Dorados, Caterpillar, CEMEX, Microsoft, and Walmart. To date, four NEO projects have been approved: in the state of Nuevo León, Mexico; in the Dominican Republic; in the Urabá Region – Antioquia of Colombia; and in Brazil with the Confederação Nacional de Indústrias [National Confederation of Industries] (CNI).

The key criteria considered for including this project under NEO were: (i) Forge's commitment to adopt NEO quality standards for working at scale; (ii) Forge's commitment

to contribute good practices and knowledge at the regional level, especially for developing a 600-company network dedicated to providing good quality first jobs that NEO participating institutions could use to support youth in the school-to-work transition—not only in the three NEO priority countries where Forge operates (Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay), but in all countries where NEO projects are expected to be approved; (iii) Forge’s monitoring and evaluation system, which includes common NEO indicators; (iv) Forge’s clear potential to sustain activities at the regional level once MIF funding ends; (v) a cash counterpart contribution of more than three times the MIF contribution, surpassing NEO’s minimum leverage requirement for counterpart contributions; (vi) the Forge methodology’s potential to be adapted and replicated in other countries; and (vii) the technical merit and coverage of the project’s objectives and target.

ANNEXES

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Annex II	Summary Budget
Annex III	Quality for Effectiveness in Development (QED) Matrix

APPENDICES

Proposed resolution

AVAILABLE IN THE DOCUMENTS SECTION OF THE MIF PROJECT INFORMATION SYSTEM

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ABBREVIATIONS

CNI	Confederação Nacional de Indústrias [National Confederation of Industries] (Brazil)
ILO	International Labour Organization
IYF	International Youth Foundation
NEO	New Employment Opportunities for Youth initiative

**REGIONAL
WORKING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO IMPROVE THE CAREER PATHS OF POOR AND
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Country and geographic location:	Argentina, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay
Executing agency:	Fondation Forge Uruguay, Fondation Forge Argentina, Fondation Forge Peru, and Fondation Forge Mexico
Access area:	MIF Access to Markets and Capabilities Unit (MIF/AMC)
Agenda:	Youth
Coordination with other donors/Bank operations:	This project falls under the regional New Employment Opportunities for Youth (NEO) initiative (document MIF/AT-1175), inasmuch as it seeks to scale up a promising methodology to support the school-to-work transition, and is expected to have a high impact. Including this project under NEO will strengthen Forge with NEO quality standards, for operating at scale and enable it to benefit from NEO coordination experience with the public sector. In addition, Fondation Forge can offer NEO its methodology and good practices for supporting the school-to-work transition, as well as its regional network of 600 companies. The IDB's Labor Markets and Social Security Unit and its Education Division are strategic partners of this proposal, given that the school-to-work transition is a key area of action for both and requires innovative, effective solutions.
Direct beneficiaries:	14,000 youth (50% women) 600 companies
Indirect beneficiaries:	At least 56,000 family members of the direct beneficiaries (average of four family members per beneficiary) 180 public schools

Financing:	Technical cooperation:	US\$1,704,669 ¹	20%
	Investment:	US\$ 000,000	
	Loan:	US\$ 000,000	
	Total MIF contribution	US\$1,704,669	
	Counterpart:	US\$6,158,991	80%
	Cofinancing (if applicable)	US\$ 000,000	0%
	Total project budget	US\$7,863,661	100%
Execution timetable:	Execution period:	48 months	
	Disbursement period:	52 months	
Special contractual clauses:	The following will be conditions precedent to the first disbursement: (i) approval of the Operating Regulations; and (ii) appointment of a regional coordinator and individual country coordinators for the project.		
Environmental and social impact review:	This operation was pre-evaluated and classified in accordance with the requirements of the IDB's Environment and Safeguards Compliance Policy (Operational Policy OP-703). Since the impacts and risks are limited, this has been classified as a category "C" operation.		
Unit in charge of disbursements:	MIF/CUR (regional and Uruguay chapter); MIF/CAR (Argentina chapter); MIF/CPE (Peru chapter); MIF/CME (Mexico chapter).		

¹ NEO anticipated the inclusion of regional projects or those with an exceptionally high level of expected impact and with a MIF contribution that could surpass US\$700,000—the estimated amount for individual projects (document MIF/AT-1175, paragraph 3.18). Moreover, three of the four proposed countries are NEO priority countries where some initiatives are already under way, such as in Nuevo León, Mexico, or for which new initiatives are being prepared, such as Peru and Uruguay. The project with Fondation Forge would not replace the NEO initiatives, but rather complement them in each of the aforementioned countries.

I. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

A. Diagnostic assessment of the problem to be addressed by the project

- 1.1 According to the MIF's youth employment and entrepreneurship strategy, "Give Youth a Chance: An Agenda for Action" (MIF 2012), the youth unemployment rate was twice—and in some cases nearly three times—the overall rate.² This situation is repeated in Argentina, Peru, Uruguay, and Mexico, where labor conditions mirror those found at the regional level: of all youth ages 15 to 24 employed in Latin America, 55.6% work in the informal economy, which generally means low wages (on average, more than 50% of young people in these countries earn less than the minimum wage), job instability, and a lack of protections and rights.³ According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), young people—especially women and the most poor—have the highest informal employment rates.

Country	Informal employment rate (ages 15-24)
Argentina	60.5%
Peru	84.7%
Mexico	65.4%
Uruguay	37.7%

Source: ILO household surveys (2011).

- 1.2 With respect to the poorest young people, the main factors impacting their employment rate and the quality of their workforce integration are: low school completion rates (they tend to drop out of the system early, between the ages of 15-17); poor educational quality; information barriers; a lack of formal labor and personal and professional development models, and of access to networks and social capital to get information about and connect with opportunities for quality employment or decent work.⁴ Consequently, a high percentage of poor and vulnerable youth take work in the informal economy, in precarious, low-wage work.⁵ In the countries where Forge operates, school completion rates are low for the most vulnerable youth:

² "Los jóvenes hablan" [Young people speak.] ILO, 2012.

³ Trabajo Decente y Juventud en América Latina 2013. Políticas para la acción [Decent Work and Youth in Latin America 2013. Policies for Action]. ILO, 2014.

⁴ Decent work for youth (adapted from the ILO definition, 2009) is defined as work that meets the following criteria: (i) has contractual arrangements that meet the expectations of the young worker; (ii) qualifies as neither overemployment nor underemployment; (iii) pays at or above the average monthly wage rate of young workers; (iv) offers satisfactory job security (at least, a three-month contract); (v) offers the possibility for worker participation in labor unions or associations of employer organizations; and (vi) offers benefits, including paid sick and annual leave.

⁵ Jacinto, Claudia, 2010. La construcción social de las trayectorias laborales juveniles [Social construction of youth career paths].

Country	Total		School completion rate, highest quintile		School completion rate, lowest quintile	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Argentina	73.3%	59.2%	95.51%	79.23%	55.03%	36.81%
Uruguay	44.5%	32.2%	81.9%	58.5%	10.1%	7.6%
Peru	80.5%	82.4%	93.6%	93.7%	43.6%	58.2%
Mexico	51.2%	48.8%	79.5%	69.3%	19.4%	28.9%

Sources: Sociómetro, IDB, 2012; Peru, National Household Survey (ENAHU); Uruguay, Ongoing Household Survey (ECH); Argentina, Permanent Household Survey (EPH); and Mexico, National Survey of Household Income and Expenditures (ENIGH).

- 1.3 This situation is “especially serious because the employment circumstances of young people’s first jobs impacts their future career paths (...). Taking low-quality jobs brings about a vicious circle, in which young people’s poor initial preparation is followed by bad quality learning experiences in precarious jobs, preventing them from obtaining the knowledge and skills they need to access better employment and training opportunities.”⁶
- 1.4 Employers in the region demand specific job skills. According to them, however, over 50% of young people who complete secondary school lack the necessary cognitive skills—and especially the socioemotional skills—to secure decent jobs. It appears that the training young people receive in secondary school does not provide them with the necessary life skills and basic competencies to secure a first job. Consequently, companies have difficulty filling positions for which previous work experience is not required. These positions could be first employment opportunities for young secondary school graduates that could lead to career paths—e.g., administrative jobs or in fields such as logistics, sales, programming, and hospitality.
- 1.5 The problem the project seeks to address is the difficulty vulnerable youth encounter at the regional level in terms of finding good-quality first jobs after completing their secondary education.
- 1.6 The main causes of the problem are:
- 1.7 **(i) Civil society organizations working on issues associated with the school-to-work transition implement their models at the local level.** Very few of these organizations actually work and mobilize stakeholders at the regional level, rather than implementing a variety of different local models. Although Forge has implemented its Training and Work model in three different countries, it lacks the tools required to design and implement the model at the regional level with the same efficiency it has achieved locally. In the countries where the model has been

⁶ Los jóvenes en Latinoamérica. La transición escuela-trabajo como objeto de las políticas públicas [Youth in Latin America. The school-to-work transition as a subject of public policy], Vera A. and Castioni R., 2010.

implemented, it has thus far: (i) increased the school completion rates of program participants (between 2012 and 2013, the secondary school completion rates of Forge program participants rose 17 percentage points); (ii) placed young people in quality jobs (since 2006, Forge has successfully placed more than 70% of its beneficiaries in quality jobs; 86% of whom were still in their jobs after one year of completing the program); and (iii) increased the number of young people who go on to pursue post-secondary or university-level studies, or who study and work at the same time. In Uruguay, for example, 48% of Forge graduates go on to pursue post-secondary studies (76% women), 36% of whom study and work at the same time (82% women).

- 1.8 **(ii) Low level of private sector (large, medium-sized, and small enterprises) commitment to the issue of first jobs for young people.** While companies identify the problem at the operational level (difficulties in recruitment, high turnover), they have difficulty coming up with proposals (actions or policies) to improve the situation. According to a Manpower survey⁷ of 38,000 companies in 41 countries, 41% of the Latin American employers surveyed reported difficulties finding qualified employees. These employers expressed skepticism regarding young people's ability to apply the skills they learned in the classroom to the work world and questioned their social skills and work ethic. These shortcomings are considered an impediment to productivity. At this time, the public, private (chambers of commerce), and third sectors have not created suitable opportunities for engaging companies on this issue, or proposals attractive enough to get companies to address the problem. Some companies that work with civil society organizations have shown a degree of commitment at the local level. Regionally, however, there is still a shortage of spheres in which companies can demonstrate their interest in this issue and generate proposals for action.
- 1.9 **(iii) Lack of incentives for supporting the transition from school to work.** Public policies to smooth the transition into the workforce rarely target vulnerable youth who have completed their secondary education and are looking for their first decent job—a fact reflected in their rates of unemployment and informal employment. There are too few incentives for encouraging the private sector to offer decent first jobs to young people who have recently graduated from secondary school.

B. Beneficiaries

- 1.10 The project's direct beneficiaries will be: (i) 10,000 poor and vulnerable youth from working families in Argentina, Peru, Mexico, and Uruguay enrolled in their last year of secondary school and who, upon completing the program, meet the minimum age requirement to enter the job market pursuant to the legislation of each country (50% women) (By country, the project will support the following beneficiaries: 1,600 in Peru; 1,600 in Mexico; 4,820 in Argentina; and 1,980 in Uruguay); and (ii) 4,000 poor and vulnerable young people from four countries

⁷ Manpower, Talent Shortage Survey, 2012.

ages 15 to 16 who are enrolled in public secondary schools with high dropout rates. To prepare them for the Forge Training and Work program, these youth will be included in stay-in-school efforts and campaigns.

- 1.11 Countries were selected for the project based on those in which Forge is currently working and aims to consolidate its presence (Argentina, Peru, and Uruguay), and where it is exploring the possibility of initiating operations (Mexico). The selected countries—Argentina, Mexico, and Peru—have high rates of informal employment, making the case for testing the viability of a model at scale for placing people in quality jobs. In both Uruguay and Mexico, there are elevated school dropout rates for the most vulnerable segments, which also justifies action in these countries. Moreover, the scale of this work will be significant and will add validity to the project’s statistical analyses and evaluation. It will also make it possible to adapt the methodology to the countries’ labor regulations. With regard to launching the program in Mexico, Forge has conducted several analysis missions, meeting with public and private sector officials to assess the feasibility of potentially expanding the program to that country. The different characteristics of the countries in terms of their labor regulations and culture will make it possible to develop the foundations of a model that can be replicated in the region. The knowledge sharing and synergy that can be generated with the New Employment Opportunities for Youth (NEO) initiative will be crucial, and will also help strengthen the methodology and network of companies.
- 1.12 In all, 600 companies (large, medium-sized, and small) committed to youth employment will also be direct beneficiaries. They will be part of Forge’s network of quality companies, which means they meet the following requirements: (i) view human resources as a strategic value of the company; (ii) have internal policies governing promotions (career development); (iii) foster a good working environment; and (iv) offer formal employment (complying with the labor laws of each country). The companies in the network will benefit from hiring young people with better technical and socioemotional skills, who will receive mentoring support from Forge during their first year of employment.
- 1.13 The project’s indirect beneficiaries will be 56,000 family members of the direct beneficiaries (estimating four family members, not including the beneficiary) and 180 public schools, the school completion rates at which will increase as the result of Forge’s activities.

C. Contribution to the MIF mandate, Access Framework, and IDB strategy

- 1.14 The project will contribute to the MIF mandate by providing a replicable methodology to enhance the employability conditions of vulnerable youth and improve their transition from school to quality work; its work on this scale is innovative for the MIF, responding to the companies’ needs in terms of hiring human capital with the required skills. At the regional level, the project will contribute by showcasing the private sector’s responsibility for supporting the employability of young people.

- 1.15 **The proposed project and the NEO.** Due to the potential for bringing this project to scale and replicating it in a cost-effective way, it is consistent with NEO objectives and is therefore included under that initiative. The targets proposed and met by this project will be included among NEO achievements.
- 1.16 New Employment Opportunities for Youth (document MIF/AT-1175) is a regional initiative that seeks to improve the quality of human capital and the employability of 500,000 youth in 10 Latin American and Caribbean countries. Launched at the 2012 Summit of the Americas, NEO is spearheaded by the MIF, the IDB's Social Sector, International Youth Foundation (IYF), and the initiative's five founding partner companies: Arcos Dorados, Caterpillar, CEMEX, Microsoft, and Walmart. To date, four NEO projects have been approved: in the state of Nuevo León, Mexico; in the Dominican Republic; in the Urabá Region – Antioquia of Colombia; and in Brazil with the Confederação Nacional de Indústrias [National Confederation of Industries] (CNI).⁸ With respect to these four projects, it should be noted that the Brazil project with CNI was in the design phase at the time the NEO was approved. Consequently, the NEO Donors Memorandum envisaged its inclusion under that initiative. The project with CNI seeks to develop an education portal to teach mathematics, Portuguese, and life skills to vulnerable youth who, upon assimilating these basic competencies, would have access to training or better quality jobs. Given its similarities with the current project, the decision was made to include it within the regional program. The other three NEO projects—in Nuevo León, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and the Urabá Region – Antioquia, Colombia—follow a common approach based on coordinating a public-private partnership to scale up good practices and promote their adoption by public entities.
- 1.17 The key criteria considered for including the Fondation Forge project under the NEO were: (i) Forge's commitment to adopt NEO quality standards for working at scale; (ii) Forge's commitment to contribute good practices and knowledge at the regional level, especially for the development of a network of 600 companies dedicated to providing good quality first jobs that NEO participating institutions could use to support the school-to-work transition—not only in the three NEO countries Forge has deemed a priority (Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay), but in the entire set of countries in which NEO projects are expected to be approved; (iii) Forge's monitoring and evaluation system, which includes NEO common indicators; (iv) Forge's clear potential to sustain activities at the regional level once MIF funding ends; (v) a cash counterpart contribution of more than three times the MIF contribution, surpassing the NEO's minimum leverage requirement (3:1); (vi) the Forge methodology's potential to be adapted and replicated in other

⁸ The projects are as follows: “New Employment Opportunities for Young People in Nuevo León” (ME-1091); “Quisqueya Believes in You...” NEO in the Dominican Republic (DR-M1044); “New Employment Opportunities for Youth in the Urabá Region – Antioquia” (CO-M1094); and “Free Digital Education Project for Job Market Inclusion” (BR-M1114).

countries; and (vii) the technical merit and coverage of the project's objectives and target.

- 1.18 Forge will work in three NEO priority countries: Mexico (state of Nuevo León), Peru, and Uruguay. Broad public-private partnerships are being formed in these countries, with participation by the Ministries of Labor and Education, public and private educational institutions, private companies, and other stakeholders. By joining these partnerships, Forge would be able to promote its model, facilitating not only knowledge-sharing but also the possibility of forming strategic alliances with the current members of these partnerships.
- 1.19 **Link to MIF Agenda.** The project falls under the Access to Markets and Capabilities area of the MIF Youth Agenda for Action: Employment and Entrepreneurship. It is aligned with the following pillars of the MIF strategy to support vulnerable youth: (i) scale: The project seeks to speed up the growth and expansion of Forge's Training and Work program to reach a target of 14,000 vulnerable youth in four countries, which would entail a joint effort among the public sector (schools and government), the private sector (network of quality companies), and civil society to promote an effective model for making the transition from school to the work world that would facilitate better career paths going forward. The program will be carried out under NEO, since that initiative aims to scale up good practices in the areas of youth employability and strengthen training service providers with NEO quality standards, as indicated in paragraph 1.17; (ii) innovation: Implementing this model at the regional level will help build a better case for involving companies in youth employability programs and promote the regional network of quality companies (small, medium, and large). Efforts will be made to add more companies to the network that have already demonstrated greater commitment in MIF programs; (iii) results and knowledge: The project will validate, systematize, and disseminate a cost-effective model (that can be replicated at the public policy level) for working with poor and vulnerable youth enrolled in formal education that seeks to improve their career paths by promoting placement in quality jobs via a network of quality companies; and (iv) gender equity, since the project will promote placing more women in their first formal-sector job.
- 1.20 **Collaboration with the IDB Group.** The project is aligned with the Bank's strategies with the aforementioned countries in terms of promoting youth employment and improving education. Youth is a priority area of the country strategies with both Argentina and Uruguay. The program is also consistent with the Bank's country strategy with Mexico (document GN-2595-1), specifically with the objective of improved placement in the labor markets, and could be coordinated with loan operations of the Bank's Labor Market and Social Security Unit (SCL/LMK), such as the Multiphase Training and Employment Support Program (PACE III, loan 1579/OC-ME) and the Skills-based Human Resources Development Program (PROFORHCOM II, loan 2167/OC-ME). In Peru, the project will be linked to an investment loan (PE-L1152) being prepared by the

Bank's Labor Markets and Social Security Unit that will aim to strengthen that country's Ventanilla Única de Empleo [One-stop Employment Window] (VUPE) and employment training system.

II. OBJECTIVES AND COMPONENTS

A. Objectives

- 2.1 The impact sought by the project is to improve the career and education paths of poor and vulnerable youth. The expected outcome is an effective regional model of public-private coordination that reduces the gaps between the supply of and demand for first jobs for young people, supporting vulnerable youth in their transition from school to quality employment.

B. Description of model/solution/intervention

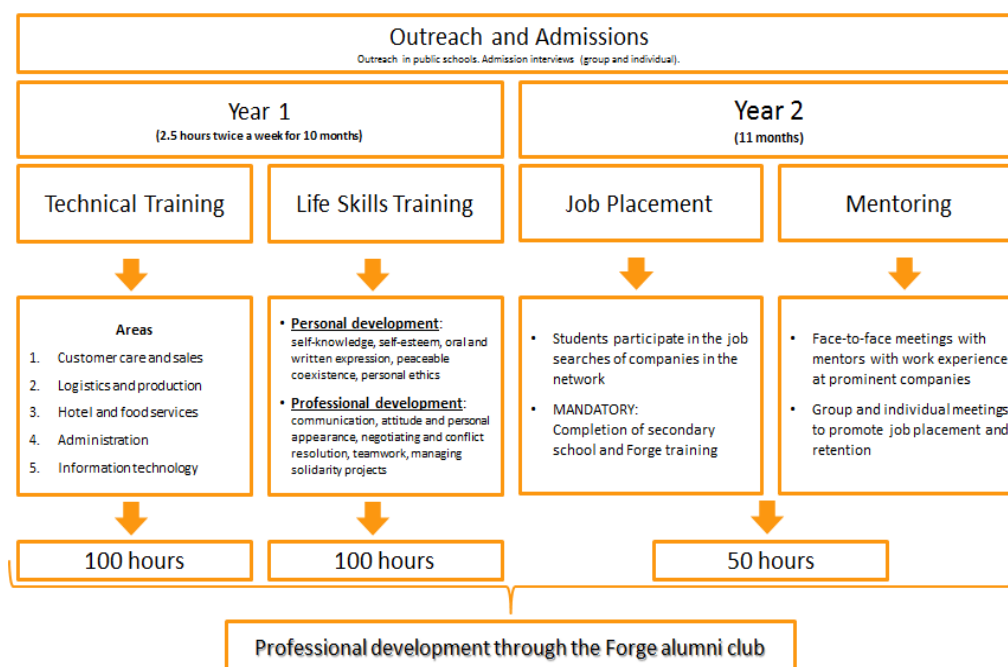
- 2.2 Forge's Training and Work program, which spans 250 hours over a two-year period, applies the following model:

1. Recruitment. First, public secondary schools in marginal areas with a vulnerable youth population will be identified and an agreement reached with school directors regarding the scope of work and support for students to be performed outside of school hours. Forge will conclude agreements with these schools and conduct outreach activities with students enrolled in their final year of secondary education. These young people will then be invited to take part in informational talks about the program, and those interested in participating will be encouraged to apply during the enrollment period or directly with Fondation Forge. The criteria considered for admitting young people to the program include: socioeconomic status (priority given to students from low-income households), motivation, value placed on work, family support, and education status (either enrolled in the last year of secondary school or just completed secondary school, and at the end of the program will be of legal working age). As mentioned in paragraph 1.2, these schools have high dropout rates.

2. Training. During the first year of the program, Forge provides life skills and technical training to young people after the school day. The former consists of 100 hours and focuses on developing the socioemotional skills employers value: (i) workplace attitudes; (ii) commitment and responsibility; (iii) customer relations; and (iv) the ability to work as part of a team. In keeping with the expectations of private sector employers, the young people must meet minimum attendance and punctuality requirements. Consequently, and despite the personalized support provided, dropout rates at the beginning of the program are somewhat higher than the NEO average, inasmuch as the young people's commitment and desire to improve are key factors in the program's success. The technical training component, which also spans 100 hours, is divided into five areas with high demand that require fewer skills: hotel and food services, logistics and production, communications, administration, and technology.

There are both theoretical and practical teaching content and methodologies, combining technical, university-level, and business training practices. Forge hires the program's instructors, most of whom are real-world practitioners employed in their particular activity or sector of teaching expertise. The training is provided at no cost to the students. The training process includes parallel activities to promote school completion—e.g., stay-in-school campaigns, academic support classes (given by employees of companies in the network), and special mentoring—that contribute to young people's employability.

3. Job coaching and placement. Once the young people have completed secondary school and passed the training provided by Forge, they begin a period of job coaching to help them secure good quality first jobs. During the one-year coaching process, young people receive 50 hours of mentoring and classes to support them in their job search. These jobs require few skills, have low training costs, and provide a career path or, alternatively, are in companies that facilitate or place priority on continuing post-secondary education. Job placement support is provided through Forge's network of quality companies, in which partner companies agree to consider Forge program participants when hiring. This commitment is reflected in agreements—for example, in Uruguay—or in the repeated requests of partner companies for Forge candidates, before opening their employment searches to the general public. Once young people find a job, a job coach, hired by Forge, mentors them through the first year of employment. This mentoring support is provided in a monthly group session. To fulfill this phase, mentees must attend 70% of these sessions.



- 2.3 **School retention and completion support:** To prepare its future Training and Work program participants, Forge, through employees at companies in the network, carries out activities with young people prior to their last year of secondary education to encourage them to stay in and complete school. The core activity in this regard consists of educational support for young people who are experiencing difficulties with specific subjects or classes. This raises their awareness about the importance of completing school and encourages them to take part in the Forge program.
- 2.4 **The network of quality companies** comprises companies of various sizes, both national and international, with which Forge works in four lines of action: internships, visits to companies, classroom visits from company representatives, and job placement.
- 2.5 Forge uses a scoring system to periodically rate company performance in areas including employer quality (e.g., legal aspects, transparency, internal environment), public image, and level of involvement with the program (e.g., participation as guest lecturer, availability for program events, and record of hiring program alumni). Currently, 100 companies participate in the network. The Forge seal guarantees lower-cost employee searches, hiring, and on-the-job training, since the training young people receive ensures that they will have the basic technical knowledge required for a job—which can be reinforced once they are working in a company—and the necessary socioemotional skills to perform and remain in their job. It also helps companies reduce employee turnover. The fact that these companies choose to remain in the network demonstrates that the young people trained by Forge meet the companies' demand for labor, although it does not yet cover it completely. Consequently, Forge has room to grow in each of the countries where it currently operates and at the regional level.
- 2.6 Regarding the model's emphasis on gender equity, Forge's current proposal presents some difficulties in terms of placing women in jobs. Although the data show that women have higher school completion rates than men (socioeconomically vulnerable segments), fewer are placed in jobs. Aware of this, Forge will explore ways to provide the companies in the network with incentives to hire women (e.g., include gender indicators in the scoring system) and will also work with companies in sectors most likely to hire women. This project expects to leverage the knowledge, lessons learned, and best practices generated by project AR-M1067, which promotes gender mainstreaming and equity in the methodologies used to support youth in their school-to-work transition, with a view to increasing the school completion rates of men and job placement rates of women. These methodologies are applied by civil society organizations that work in partnership with public schools and the private sector.

C. Components

- 2.7 The project is divided into four components.

Component I: Strengthening of the Training and Work model at the regional level (MIF: US\$513,600; Counterpart: US\$442,767)

- 2.8 The objective of this component is to develop and strengthen Forge institutional capacity, providing it with the tools it needs to expand the model at the regional level and improve existing methodologies and capacity for its implementation.
- 2.9 With a view to more efficiently expanding at the regional level the model that Forge currently applies in the individual countries where it operates, and so it can be replicated in part or in full, the following adjustments will be necessary: (i) assess and improve the monitoring and evaluation system, and Forge's management system, so they can be implemented regionally; (ii) systematize basic information about the model and the results of its implementation so it can be used to facilitate expansion; (iii) develop and implement a long-term sustainability strategy for operating at scale that includes a governance system as well as financial, technical, and operational resources; and (iv) give visibility to the model and share the associated lessons learned and knowledge generated thus far.
- 2.10 The activities will include: (i) develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation system: a consultant will be hired to adjust the system's current indicators in order to account for processes, outcomes, and impacts in a straightforward manner. The system will be launched via an online platform that can be accessed in the countries, and will constitute a valuable management tool at the local level that can be aggregated at the regional level;⁹ (ii) develop an administrative and management system: Forge will engage the development of a dual-currency administrative and management system for monitoring planning and management in each of the countries where it currently operates or may expand. This system will be linked with the monitoring system and allow for aggregation at the regional level; (iii) conduct an evaluation of the model's outcomes, to include recommendations for expansion. A consultant will be hired to conduct an evaluation of program outcomes thus far, systematize this information for dissemination (raise awareness among the companies and other stakeholders for program expansion), and identify any areas for improvement for regional expansion; (iv) promote continuous improvement of the teaching process; to ensure consistency at the regional level, an educator will be hired to develop common core curricula that can be adapted according to the cultural norms in each country. The educator will conduct regular training sessions with program instructors, to allow for ongoing adjustments to be made to the methodology and keep pace with the private sector's changing needs and technological advances; (v) certify at least six Forge centers under NEO quality standards. These certification services and recommendations will be provided directly by IYF, as established in paragraph 3.20 of the NEO project Donors Memorandum (document MIF/AT-1175). These services are provided via an

⁹ These indicators will be aligned with the Agenda's monitoring indicators, and MIF experience with platforms (e.g., NEO, YBI, and Microsoft) will be leveraged for this new monitoring platform.

online portal that enables the entities to rate themselves based on eight different dimensions and identify areas for improvement, based on an improvement and monitoring plan; (vi) develop a strategy for regional sustainability. Once work to expand the model has begun, Forge will analyze a sustainability strategy (institutional, technical, economic/financial) at both the regional and local levels, taking into account, *inter alia*, service fees and other private sector contribution schemes, and governance; and (vii) systematize and document the model and experience with its expansion in order to continue implementing it in other countries or to transfer it.

- 2.11 The expected outcomes of this component are regional in scope. They will be executed by Forge in Uruguay, which will be responsible for the program's regional coordination.

Component II: Youth job training and placement in quality jobs (MIF: US\$574,990; Counterpart: US\$4,180,711)

- 2.12 The objective of this component is to provide youth with job training and place them in quality jobs at the local level.
- 2.13 The courses will be given in accordance with the Forge model described above. This component covers inviting young people to participate in the program, selecting candidates based on group and individual interviews, delivery of courses, and mentoring and forging links with companies in the network. In all, 10,000 young people will benefit. In addition, 4,000 young people from the participating schools are expected to benefit from stay-in-school campaigns and educational support. Accordingly, young people will receive support in specific academic subjects from employees of the quality companies. Periodic surveys will be administered to assess labor demand, with a view to updating the technical training courses and existing curricula.
- 2.14 The activities under this component are listed in the description of the model provided in paragraph 2.2, namely: (i) recruitment; (ii) training (100 hours each for life skills and technical training, and 50 hours of mentoring); (iii) job coaching and placement; and (iv) school retention and completion support. The tools designed in Component I will be applied to improve program management and the outcomes obtained to date. The MIF's support is primarily geared to strengthen monitoring in the post-training stage (alumni club) and help increase coverage of beneficiaries.

Component III: Development and expansion of the network of quality companies (MIF: US\$96,333; Counterpart: US\$114,889)

- 2.15 The objective of this component is to strengthen and expand the network of quality companies described in the model. Membership in the network, which currently includes 100 companies of different sizes and capital structures, is expected to grow to 600.

- 2.16 This component envisages fostering a greater engagement of and evolving role for network member companies—one that not only embodies their commitment to offer decent work, visits to the companies, talks with company managers, and internships, but also to initiate activities on behalf of the network to make a difference in this area.
- 2.17 To this end, the program plans to hire a regional coordinator for the network, with counterparts at the local level. Activities will be carried out to raise awareness about and disseminate the model and to invite companies to join the network. Companies that wish to join the network will sign a framework cooperation agreement with Forge, which establishes four potential lines of action: internships, visits to companies, classroom visits by company representatives, and job placement.
- 2.18 The companies' human resources managers will also be invited to take part in training and exchange activities. Lastly, once the network becomes well-established, it is expected to become a proactive forum that can develop its own outputs to influence strategic issues related to youth employment.

Component IV: Knowledge management and communication strategy (MIF: US\$76,000; Counterpart: US\$252,349)

- 2.19 The objective of this component is to systematize, document, and disseminate project experience. It will also transfer the methodology and knowledge of the model applied in the Training and Work program to at least two public or private organizations.
- 2.20 The project's strategic audiences will be: (i) public agencies in the region associated with education and employment, interested in implementing highly efficient youth employment or first job programs or activities; (ii) large companies interested in adapting elements of the Training and Work model for their internal training programs; (iii) civil society organizations interested in implementing the model and expanding their portfolio of services; and (iv) other donor organizations interested in the issue of youth employment.
- 2.21 The following activities are anticipated to meet the knowledge needs of these audiences: (i) specific awareness-raising and training activities with the public sector at the national or subnational level, geared to disseminating the methodology, program outcomes, and fostering partnerships with public sector entities to increase scale at the local level; (ii) a series of communication activities, including the organization of and participation in specialized youth employment events; and (iii) development of a module-based methodological guide to serve as a tool for the partial or complete transfer of the model. Resources are also earmarked for at least one pilot transfer of the model to two organizations. Each year Forge will update the project factsheet at the local and regional levels. The factsheet contains basic information about the project, its challenges, intervention strategy, and outcomes.

- 2.22 By including the project under the NEO regional initiative, the knowledge generated with respect to quality, scale, and formation of the network of companies is expected to be shared among NEO partners and other projects of the MIF Youth Agenda. The methodology—which can be adjusted, transferred, replicated, and scaled—can also contribute to the objectives of the NEO initiative. Moreover, Forge will benefit from NEO methodological tools, which include quality standards and a labor intermediation guide.
- 2.23 The project will help narrow existing knowledge gaps in the Agenda with respect to enhancing career paths. It seeks to bridge the gap regarding “which training and intermediation models are effective at reducing the disparity between the supply and demand for labor.” Specifically, the following questions will be asked: (a) Is there a positive impact on career path quality as compared with those of other youth with similar characteristics who did not receive support from such programs or who took jobs in the informal labor market?; (b) What value do the most vulnerable youth place on “desirable” career paths that would make it possible to adjust the work methodologies in order to reach young people in this situation?; (c) Which best practices of the methodology can be scaled up without sacrificing quality? How can companies and schools or companies and training centers work together to improve the school-to-work transition of poor and vulnerable youth and ensure their placement in quality employment?

D. Project governance and execution mechanism

- 2.24 Given Forge’s presence in the region, the project will be regional in scope. The regional approach is also justified owing to the presence of a core model that can be applied to several countries as well as a regional network of companies. The Fondation Forge centers in each country—all of which have legal status—will execute the project at the local level. Accordingly, they will sign an agreement with the Bank, in its capacity as administrator of the MIF, and will report to the corresponding IDB Country Office in each country, which will supervise the operation. Fondation Forge Uruguay will be responsible for executing activities at the regional level as well as those in Uruguay. Staff at the Forge centers and the MIF will meet periodically to monitor the project’s overall progress.
- 2.25 Forge’s four executing units—Uruguay, Argentina, Peru, and Mexico—will report to Forge’s regional coordinator, who will in turn report to his or her manager and president. The four executing units will hold meetings at least quarterly to monitor program implementation. Moreover, the national strategies will be consistent with regional planning for the project.
- 2.26 An advisory committee will be formed for the project in each country. These committees will be made up of the representatives of companies and other donor agencies. With a view to promoting young people’s participation and empowerment, at least two Forge beneficiaries (program graduates) will serve on the advisory committees. At the regional level, Forge will have an advisory committee comprised of entrepreneurs and youth employment specialists who will meet annually with the president of Fondation Forge.

E. Sustainability

- 2.27 The sustainability of Forge will be analyzed at the regional and local levels on the basis of three main areas: (a) economic/financial; (b) institutional strategy (expansion at the regional level and the consolidation and broadening of local-level targets); and (c) technical/operational. This project is expected to lay the groundwork for achieving sustainability.
- 2.28 Once the midterm evaluation has been completed, a series of workshops will be scheduled to analyze each level of the Forge sustainability strategy. An analysis of the stakeholders—i.e., Forge mentors, instructors, and administrative staff; youth beneficiaries; program graduates; companies and other entities with which the program works—will be conducted to plan the necessary actions to ensure the model's sustainability. The outcome will be a sustainability strategy that will begin to be implemented during the project execution period.

F. Lessons learned in designing the project by the MIF and other institutions

- 2.29 Youth job training should be guided by labor market needs, offer employers business solutions, and be integrated with labor intermediation services. Companies' involvement in youth job training and placement is key to ensuring an effective transition.
- 2.30 The most innovative and effective interventions involve multiple providers and employers who work together. For example, employers can help design curricula and offer their employees as mentors, while instructors can arrange for their students to work at the companies.
- 2.31 The commitment of the beneficiaries' families helps the young people achieve the goals they set for themselves. Efforts are needed to keep young men as well as young women with children in school, and to ensure greater equity in the job placement of women.
- 2.32 The beneficiary selection processes for non-universal programs of this kind should consider, in addition to the young person's degree of vulnerability, his or her commitment to the program and interest in having access to more opportunities. The process helps achieve results.
- 2.33 One challenge posed by the scale of the operations is ensuring that benefit quality is not sacrificed. Establishing quality standards, however, is helpful in that regard.

G. MIF additionality

- 2.34 **Nonfinancial additionality.** The MIF will contribute its 20 years of experience with the public and private sectors testing, systematizing, and evaluating successful models for integrating poor and vulnerable youth into the workforce. This will be done at both the local and regional levels. Through Component I, the MIF will contribute all its experience to improve Forge's methodology and institutional capacity in order to expand the model in the region.

- 2.35 The MIF, through NEO, will also contribute its experience working at scale (with quality standards) and forming and weaving together public-private partnerships. The MIF's work with the public sector will bring credibility—which will be key for shaping public policies associated with the school-to-work transition—and experience working with partnerships.
- 2.36 Through its youth employment and entrepreneurship agenda, the MIF will contribute the knowledge generated through the operations it finances (e.g., studies, evaluations, methodologies, lessons learned, and strategic partners).
- 2.37 **Financial additionality.** Without the MIF's financial support, Forge could continue to implement its methodology on a small scale, but would be unable to lay the necessary foundation for regional expansion. The MIF contribution would represent a significant step forward with respect to tools and the number of beneficiaries and participating companies, which will be important in terms of replicating and transferring the model. Moreover, without this contribution, Forge would neither have the necessary funding to develop systematized methodologies at the regional level, nor would it be able to rigorously evaluate or refine the impact of the program's methodology.

H. Project outcomes

- 2.38 The project expects to achieve the following outcomes: (i) Forge centers meet process and product quality standards; (ii) at least two public-private partnerships are working to scale up and improve the quality of youth employment services; (iii) 60% of young people placed in jobs continue in them after six months; (iv) Forge places 60% of young people who complete its training program in formal sector jobs; (v) 77% of Forge youth have strengthened socioemotional skills; (vi) the network of companies develops three outputs; (vii) the methodology has been transferred to two public and/or private sector agencies; and (viii) 50% of network companies use Forge for their recruiting needs.

I. Project impact

- 2.39 The following indicators will be used to measure the project's impact: (i) 4,480 youth are placed in jobs and remain in them for a period of six months after completing Forge's two-year training cycle; (ii) 5,600 program graduates placed in jobs remain in them at least three months within a period of six months; (iii) 64% of youth placed in jobs six months after completing the two-year training cycle; (iv) 80% of program graduates remain in their jobs for at least three months within a period of six months; (v) 80% of youth are placed in jobs earning at least the minimum/agreed upon wage; (vi) 50% of youth are employed in jobs requiring greater responsibility or skill sets within two years of completing the program; and (vii) 30% of young people continue or continued to study independently or on-the-job.

J. Systemic impact

- 2.40 The project will help promote systemic change through the following: (i) the Forge model, introduced by the MIF, is brought to scale (for replication); and (ii) two key actors or institutions of the private or public sectors adapt or implement new practices based on projects or knowledge shared by the MIF.

III. MONITORING AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

- 3.1 **Baseline.** The baseline will be constructed along with the design of the monitoring and evaluation system during the first three months following disbursement under the project (regional). It will be established on the basis of the project's first cohort or last cohort of beneficiaries prior to the execution of the MIF project, whichever is most expedient, based on the information available. It will consider indicators related to gender, vulnerability, education level, employability, and job placement. The monitoring and evaluation system will be launched via a platform that can be operated at the regional level. The system will include core indicators of the MIF's youth employment and entrepreneurship agenda and key NEO indicators.
- 3.2 **Monitoring.** There will be ongoing monitoring of the project, the results of which will be reported to the MIF semiannually, via project status reports. The Bank will be able to access the platform with the corresponding permissions.
- 3.3 The project provides for two evaluations, a midterm and a final evaluation. In both cases, the evaluator will be hired by the IDB (Country Office in Uruguay) using funds from the contribution allocated to the regional chapter. Both evaluations will use as input the data from the monitoring and evaluation system (baseline) and will be performed on a participatory basis, to include the principal stakeholders involved in the project (e.g., organizations, young people, instructors and mentors, and companies). The midterm evaluation will be performed after 24 months of project execution or when 50% of the funds from the contribution have been disbursed, whichever occurs first. It will consider: the validity of the design of the project and the proposed model, including the planned interaction among the stakeholders; fulfillment of processes and analysis of the results achieved as of the evaluation date, with respect to the young people, Fondation Forge (in its various centers), and the companies; characterization of the beneficiaries and the scope of the planned results, depending on the young people's situation and conditions in the countries where the project is being executed. The technical quality of the tools designed during the project will be evaluated, including those used for evaluation, administration, and management, as well as for teaching. The evaluator will give his or her technical opinion regarding activities carried out to strengthen the network of companies, the integration of the program into NEO (and any ensuing benefits), the fundraising strategy, and the institutional sustainability strategy. The final evaluation will be performed at the end of the regional chapter's execution period, or when 85% of

the funds have been disbursed, whichever occurs first. The evaluator will issue an opinion regarding the scope and quality of the results achieved by the project, including those related to youth (employment, post-secondary education), the positioning and strengthening of Forge with a view to expansion, the regional network of companies, as well as the validity and effectiveness of the proposed model and the transfer to other organizations, and the prospects for expansion and replication.

- 3.4 Because the objective (of this project and beyond) is to replicate the model in several countries of the region, it is highly likely that an impact assessment will be carried out to assess the model's effectiveness. The impact assessment will analyze the career paths of the young beneficiaries in order to determine if a good quality first job has an impact on the quality of poor and vulnerable young people's career and education paths. Moreover, consideration could be given to conducting a social cost-benefit analysis for interventions of this kind. The impact assessment should take stock of the questions set forth in paragraph 1.16 hereof, with a view to closing knowledge gaps.
- 3.5 **Closing workshop.** The executing agency will, at the appropriate time, organize a closing workshop in order to evaluate, together with the other institutions involved, the outcomes achieved, to identify additional tasks for ensuring the sustainability of the actions begun by the project, and to identify and disseminate lessons learned and best practices.

IV. COST AND FINANCING

- 4.1 The project has a total cost of US\$7,863,661. Of this amount, US\$1,704,669 (22%) will be contributed by the MIF and US\$6,158,991 (78%) by Fondation Forge. The execution period will be 48 months and the disbursement period 52 months. The MIF's contribution will primarily be used at the regional level to systematize and expand the model at that level, and to help strengthen and expand the network of companies. A smaller amount of the MIF funding will be used at the local level, primarily to strengthen ties with local companies and to improve the model's implementation.

	MIF	Counterpart	Total
Project components			
Component I. Strengthening of the Training and Work model at the regional level	513,600	442,767	956,367
Component II: Youth job training and placement in quality jobs	574,990	4,180,711	4,755,701
Component III. Development and expansion of the network of quality companies	96,333	114,889	211,222
Component IV: Knowledge management and communication strategy	76,000	252,349	328,349

	MIF	Counterpart	Total
Execution and supervision components			
Coordination	178,762	1,168,276	1,347,038
Evaluation	60,000		60,000
Subtotal	1,499,685	6,158,991	7,658,676
% of financing	20%	80%	
Institutional strengthening (advisory services/training in financial management and/or procurement, if applicable)	32,000		32,000
Audits and ex post reviews	78,000		78,000
Impact evaluation account (5%)	74,984		74,984
Agenda account	20,000		20,000
Grand total	1,704,669	6,158,991	7,863,661

V. EXECUTING AGENCY

- 5.1 Fondation Forge¹⁰ Argentina, Fondation Forge Uruguay, Fondation Forge Peru, and Fondation Forge Mexico will be the executing agencies for the project and will sign the respective agreements with the Bank. Fondation Forge is a Swiss entity that operates exclusively in Latin America, where it has set up its centers. Established in 2005, it operates in Argentina, Uruguay, and Peru, and is initiating operations in Mexico. In the coming years, it plans to reach all of Latin America. Its mission is to help place youth from low-income families in quality jobs through an innovative job training and employment system. To this end, it seeks to: (i) enhance the beneficiaries' quality of life and encourage them to play a more active and efficient role in society at large; and (ii) develop an internationally recognized benchmark job training project and a model for similar endeavors.
- 5.2 The values guiding Fondation Forge's work are: ethics as the cornerstone of integral personal development (responsibility, respect, fair play, solidarity, honesty); knowledge as the most suitable tool for aspiring to ever-better job performance; and work as the preferred means for ensuring economic self-support, promoting personal and professional development, and improving society as a whole. Fondation Forge relies on support from individual donors and companies that operate in the region. Its main support comes from its founder and president, the sole owner of SwissJust. That corporation, which has been in business for 22 years, has operations in North America and Latin America, and has companies in 12 countries of the region—a testament to its commitment to the region, as well as its knowledge of the particular characteristics of local businesses and the situation of disadvantaged youth in the countries where it operates.

¹⁰ In Spanish, the executing agency's name means "forjar" or "to forge" (as in forge a future).

- 5.3 Because Forge has centers in all the countries where the project will be executed (the one in Mexico is in the process of opening), the MIF's contribution is not geared to covering execution costs other than those necessary to build operating capacity. Fondation Forge will establish an executing unit in each country where the project will be executed (in Uruguay, there will be a single unit for the regional level and the local chapter), and the structure needed to effectively and efficiently execute the project's activities and manage its resources. Fondation Forge will also be responsible for submitting project status reports. Details on the structure of the executing unit and the requirements for project status reports can be found in Annex VII in the technical files for this operation.

VI. PROJECT RISKS

- 6.1 **Employer commitment.** Forge has been successful in maintaining a high level of commitment from the companies in the network. However, as its network grows, Forge will need to maintain this same level of commitment if it is to ensure placement of program graduates in jobs. This risk is minimized by conducting loyalty activities with the companies in its network, by maintaining training quality, and by carrying out specific activities with the companies.
- 6.2 **External risks.** In the event of a change in the countries' growth rates and lower labor demand, the project will need to take steps to ensure that companies in the network give priority to including Forge youth in their selection processes.
- 6.3 **Sustainability and expansion.** An organization's growth process can often result in crises. In the case of Forge, the capacity and commitment of its founders, collaborators, and donors help to mitigate this risk.

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS

- 7.1 No secondary adverse environmental and social effects of any type are anticipated. The project will have an impact on vulnerable youth and their environment, so that the only social effect that can be anticipated is positive.

VIII. ACHIEVEMENT OF MILESTONES AND SPECIAL FIDUCIARY ARRANGEMENTS

- 8.1 **Results-based disbursements and fiduciary arrangements.** The executing agency will agree to the standard MIF arrangements concerning results-based disbursements, procurement, and financial management, as specified in Annex VIII. The fees of key personnel for this project and its objectives will be eligible for financing with resources from the MIF contribution, provided that their selection and hiring processes were carried out in accordance with IDB procurement policies and principles, ensuring a transparent, competitive, and efficient process, and that their work is directly linked to this project.

IX. ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

- 9.1 **Access to information.** The project's information is not confidential in nature according to the IDB's Access to Information Policy, with the exception of publication of the strategic and marketing plans of the entities.