

Concept Paper Guidelines

SOCAR Midstream welcomes collaborations with professional, capable, and values-aligned implementing partners to deliver high-quality, sustainable Social Investment (SI) projects for communities across our operational regions.

To ensure transparency, consistency, and alignment with our Social Investment Strategy, all potential partners are required to submit a Concept Paper that demonstrates capability, strategic alignment, and measurable value.

This guidance outlines the mandatory components we expect in every Concept Paper submitted for consideration.

1. Organizational Profile

Implementing partners must provide concise information demonstrating credibility and capacity to deliver social impact:

- Legal status of the organization
- Mission and strategic focus
- Previous experience in similar thematic areas (environment, education & skills, social and economic development)
- Past performance delivering donor-funded or corporate social responsibility projects
- Expertise in working with local communities, vulnerable groups, and public institutions

What we look for:

Clear evidence that the organization has the experience, systems, and governance to successfully implement a high-quality SI project.

2. Project Summary

A short overview of the proposed idea including:

- Project title
- Target location(s)
- Target beneficiaries
- Duration
- Estimated budget range

What we look for:

A concise description that quickly conveys the essence, relevance, and ambition of the project.

3. Alignment With SOCAR Midstream Strategy

The Concept Paper must clearly show how the proposed project contributes to:

- SOCAR Midstream's Mission & Vision
- One or more of the three SI Priority Areas:
 1. Environment
 2. Education & Skills
 3. Social and Economic Development
- National priorities and SDG commitments identified by the Government of Azerbaijan
- SOCAR Midstream's Strategic Principles (innovation, partnership, responsible investment, sustainability, evidence-based design)

What we look for:

Demonstrated understanding of SOCAR Midstream's strategy and a clear linkage between the proposed project and national development goals.

4. Problem Statement & Needs Assessment

Concept Papers must be based on real needs validated through evidence.

Please include:

- A clear description of the development problem
- Why this issue matters for the target community
- Evidence from baselines, surveys, community consultations, or government statistics
- Alignment with local priorities and community needs

What we look for:

A strong, data-informed problem definition demonstrating that the project addresses a real and relevant need.

5. Proposed Solution & Theory of Change

Implementing partners must provide:

- A description of the intervention model
- How it addresses the identified problem
- The expected changes for beneficiaries

- A simple Theory of Change (ToC) outline:
 - Inputs → Activities → Outputs → Outcomes → Impact

What we look for:

A logical, realistic pathway to change, grounded in evidence or proven methodologies.

6. Implementation Approach

Concept Papers must include:

- Key activities and delivery approach
- Partnering arrangements (if any)
- Engagement with local authorities and community structures
- Safeguarding, Do No Harm, and health & safety considerations
- Gender, inclusion, and accessibility measures

What we look for:

A practical, culturally aware delivery plan that ensures safety, inclusion, and high-quality implementation.

7. Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Framework

The proposed MEL approach must outline:

- Key indicators (inputs, outputs, outcomes, impacts)
- Methods for data collection and reporting
- Learning and adaptation mechanisms
- Community feedback and accountability tools

What we look for:

A clear plan for measuring performance, evaluating success, and integrating lessons learned.

8. Risk Assessment & Mitigation Plan

All Concept Papers must assess key project risks, such as:

- Reputational risks
- Operational risks

- Sustainability risks

...and propose mitigation strategies.

What we look for:

Awareness of contextual risks and strong measures to manage or minimize them.

9. Sustainability & Exit Strategy

We expect partners to explain:

- How benefits will continue after project completion
- How local ownership and capacity will be strengthened
- How partnerships will support long-term sustainability

What we look for:

A clear plan for building durable solutions that outlast SOCAR Midstream's funding.

10. Budget Overview

A high-level budget must outline:

- Major cost categories
- Value for money
- Co-financing or in-kind contributions (if any)

What we look for:

Reasonable, transparent costing that aligns with proposed activities and market norms.

11. Communication & Visibility

Implementing partners should describe:

- How project results will be communicated
- How SOCAR Midstream's brand and contribution will be recognized
- How stakeholder engagement will be supported

What we look for:

A professional approach to visibility that builds trust and enhances transparency.

Submission Format Summary

Every Concept Paper must include:

1. Organizational Profile
2. Project Summary
3. Strategic Alignment
4. Problem Statement & Evidence
5. Proposed Solution & Theory of Change
6. Implementation Approach
7. MEL Framework
8. Risk & Mitigation Plan
9. Sustainability Strategy
10. Budget Overview
11. Communication & Visibility Plan

Our Commitment

SOCAR Midstream aims to work with implementing partners who share our values - integrity, safety, innovation, respect, empowerment, and accountability.

We welcome Concept Papers that demonstrate:

- Community-driven planning
- Clear social value
- Strong evidence and feasibility
- Inclusive participation
- Sustainable impact
- Transparency and high ethical standards

Questions or Submissions

Concept Papers and requests for clarification may be submitted to: scea@socarmidstream.az