

For
Endorsement

PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT IN THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION

NOVEMBER 2025



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GMS SECRETARIAT

Southeast Asia Department
Asian Development Bank
6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City
1550 Metro Manila, Philippines
<https://greatermekong.net/>

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	–	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	–	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
GMS	–	Greater Mekong Subregion
GMS-2030	–	Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program Strategic Framework 2030
Lao PDR	–	Lao People’s Democratic Republic
M&E	–	monitoring and evaluation
PPP	–	private–public partnership
SOP	–	standard operating procedure
SMEs	–	small and medium-sized enterprises
SWG	–	sector working group
TA	–	technical assistance



Mutual Benefits and Synergies. Establishing a common understanding of shared goals and mutual benefits is essential for effective public-private dialogue. (Photo by iStock).

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES



Nam Theun 2 Hydropower Plant, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). Developed under a build-own-operate-transfer model, the Nam Theun 2 plant exports 95% of its electricity to Thailand, contributing significantly to cross-border energy trade. Revenues generated from the project support the Government of Lao PDR's efforts to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development.

Background

The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Program, established in 1992, encompasses Cambodia, the People's Republic of China (specifically Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region), the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam. To realize its vision of a prosperous, integrated, and harmonious subregion, the GMS Program has adopted a three-pronged strategy: (i) increasing connectivity through sustainable development of physical infrastructure and the transformation of transport corridors into transnational economic corridors; (ii) improving competitiveness through efficient facilitation of cross-border movement of people and goods and the integration of markets, production processes, and value chains; and (iii) building a greater sense of community through projects and programs that address shared social and environmental concerns.

With support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the GMS Program has implemented numerous high-priority subregional projects aimed at fostering economic cooperation and development across various sectors, including agriculture, energy, environment, health, human resource development, information and communication technology, tourism, transport, and urban development. Since its inception, the GMS Program has channeled over \$27 billion in investments, achieving significant progress in enhancing connectivity and cooperation among GMS countries.

The GMS Economic Cooperation Program Strategic Framework 2030 (GMS-2030) was endorsed by GMS governments in September 2021 and provides a new setting for the development of the subregion for the next decade. GMS-2030 blends continuity of approach—based on decades of previously successful strategies, actions plans, and projects—with significant changes in selected areas to reflect current global and regional forces that may impinge on GMS development prospects. It promotes a series of innovative approaches in key cross-cutting areas, one of which is to “embrace private sector solutions to leverage the knowledge, technical resources, and capital of domestic, regional, and global private sectors across GMS Program operations.”¹

There is a global consensus that the private sector plays a key role in achieving sustainable development, and GMS governments are fully aware of how critical the private sector is for the success of the GMS Program. The private sector's potential as a driver of inclusive economic growth remains largely unutilized, and, to varying degrees, GMS countries share common constraints on private sector development.

“ The private sector is central to achieving the GMS vision of a prosperous, integrated, and sustainable subregion.

These have been reflected in the implementation of the GMS Program so far, which has seen limited private sector participation. GMS-2030 suggests a series of measures to strengthen the role of the private sector in the GMS Program for consideration by GMS governments.

Objectives

The primary objective of this strategy paper is to outline an actionable strategy for enhancing private sector engagement in the GMS Program. The strategy is to be fully aligned with the vision and objectives of GMS-2030 and with national economic and social development strategies and plans of each GMS country. By leveraging private sector expertise, resources, and innovation, the GMS Program aims to achieve sustainable economic growth and to address regional development challenges more effectively. This paper seeks to provide a road map for integrating the private sector into the GMS Program, thereby fostering dynamic and innovative solutions to regional issues.

Specifically, the paper aims to:

- **Leverage private sector expertise.** Utilize the knowledge, technical resources, and capital of the private sector to address regional challenges and promote sustainable economic growth.
- **Increase private sector participation.** Enhance private sector involvement at various levels of the GMS Program, from policy formulation and project development to implementation and evaluation.
- **Strengthen institutional frameworks.** Transform GMS institutions so they can incorporate private sector engagement, ensuring a structured and coordinated approach to collaboration.

¹ ADB. 2021. *The Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program Strategic Framework 2030*. September. p. 19.

2 Private Sector Engagement in the Greater Mekong Subregion

The strategy paper is grounded on the findings and recommendations of the *Scoping Study on Enhancing the Role of Private Sector in the GMS Program*, undertaken by the GMS Secretariat and completed in March 2024.² This study included: (i) an assessment of the current status of private sector development in GMS countries, highlighting constraints and challenges; (ii) a review of past and ongoing engagement

of private sector in the GMS Program; (iii) an identification of good practices and lessons learned from other regional cooperation initiatives; (iv) a framework for deepening engagement with the private sector in the GMS Program at the institutional, sectoral and thematic, and project levels; and (v) a set of indicative entry points to enable the GMS Program to strengthen the role of the private sector.



Electric ferry at the Tha Chang Pier. ADB financed Thailand's first electric ferry fleet for mass rapid transport in Bangkok—the first system of its kind in Southeast Asia—promoting clean mobility and sustainable urban transport.

² Greater Mekong Subregion Program. 2024. *Scoping Study for Enhancing the Role of Private Sector in the GMS Program*.

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT IN THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION PROGRAM



Waste-handling crane control room. The construction and operation of a network of municipal waste-to-energy plants in primary and secondary cities across Viet Nam was supported by ADB through a loan facility agreement with a private company. These plants utilize advanced clean technologies to convert waste into energy, contributing to sustainable urban development.

The GMS Program has traditionally focused on supporting government-led initiatives, resulting in limited public–private dialogue. The primary clients of the GMS Program are its country governments, which has led to activities primarily oriented toward public sector interests rather than engaging the private sector comprehensively. The current engagement can be summarized at three levels:

Institutional. The leading body for engaging with private sector within the GMS Program is the GMS Business Council. Initially established as the GMS Business Forum in 2000, it became permanent in 2015 and it reports annually to the Ministerial Conference and the Economic Corridors Forum of the GMS, as well as to the GMS Summit of Leaders every 3 years. It is mandated to represent private sector interests in the GMS and to engage with GMS governments, and it has been doing so by providing support for initiatives such as having: (i) held high-level and sector-level business forums; (ii) established business associations in specific sectors, such as the GMS Freight Transport Association; (iii) promoted access to finance to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); and (iv) enhanced private sector participation in the GMS regional investment framework.

Since it was formed, the GMS Business Council has received knowledge support and financial assistance from ADB and other development partners. However, this support has been limited and has not enabled the GMS Business Council to generate and maintain momentum for its activities. The absence of a sound and sustainable financing modality has been the main obstacle to the GMS Business Council becoming a significant advocate on behalf of the private sector in the GMS. Increasingly, the activities it has become more detached from the rest of the GMS Program and engagement with the GMS Secretariat and GMS national secretariats has weakened. Furthermore, membership of the GMS Business Council has not encompassed new economic sectors and different types of enterprises, with participation mostly being left to the original national chambers of commerce and industry federations. For some countries, national representation and participation at GMS Business

Council meetings has not been sustained, raising questions about these countries' commitment to the organization. The GMS Business Council currently involves only a small segment of the region's private sector and lacks the necessary breadth and depth to advocate effectively for the broader private sector community.

The GMS Program produces a wide range of knowledge products, including research reports, policy briefs, and technical studies. However, limited communication and dissemination activities by the GMS Secretariat, GMS national secretariats, and the GMS Business Council have meant that the insights contained in these knowledge products have not been shared with the private sector to facilitate better-informed decision-making and foster a collaborative environment for addressing regional issues.

Sectoral and thematic. The GMS working groups and task forces are focused on specific sectors and thematic areas and provide a platform for policy development and project implementation. Private sector participation in these groups has been sporadic and limited to sharing experience and knowledge solutions on topics and challenges discussed by governments. The GMS Secretariat and GMS national secretariats and government line agencies have not developed partnerships with carefully selected private sector entities to facilitate collaborative problem-solving. Participation of the GMS Business Council in these working groups and task forces has been constrained by its limited membership.

Project. Through the regional investment framework, the GMS Program assists GMS countries to create a pipeline of priority projects aimed at regional development. However, the private sector's involvement in identifying and prioritizing these projects has been minimal. Private sector participation has been largely restricted to financing a small proportion of the listed projects, and no formal process for soliciting private sector input on project selection and development exists. Although sector-focused project roundtables have been organized under some working groups, discussions have been informed exchanges of information rather than collaborative, with only a limited focus on the elements required for preparing projects suitable for private sector financing and participation.

Conclusion. Existing public–private engagements within the GMS Program are often confined to formal investment forums where stakeholders present their views but do not actively collaborate on joint approaches to regional issues. The program has yet to fully develop mechanisms for structured and continuous public–private dialogues that facilitate collaborative problem-solving and innovation.

While the GMS Business Council has the potential to act as a conduit for communication and collaboration between the private sector and GMS member governments, the GMS

“Despite its importance, private sector participation in the GMS Program remains limited—this strategy aims to change that.”

Program currently lacks strong connections to key private sector representative groups such as trade organizations, chambers of commerce, and business associations. These groups are essential for ensuring broad and representative engagement of the private sector. Additionally, there is an absence of direct engagement with specific private sector companies that could contribute significantly to dialogue and offer innovative solutions to regional challenges.

To fully leverage private sector capabilities, the GMS Program must develop and implement strategies that promote structured, continuous, and outcome-driven engagement with the private sector. This should include involving private sector in policy formulation, capacity building, and project design and implementation. It should involve leveraging existing mechanisms, such as the GMS Business Council, high-level business forums, project roundtables, and working groups, while also establishing new platforms and initiatives to facilitate deeper and more meaningful private sector involvement.



Driving the EV Transition in Asia. ADB supports BANPU’s shift to clean energy through financing e-tuktuks in Bangkok and expanding battery production in PRC, accelerating Asia’s electric mobility ecosystem.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR EXPECTATIONS FROM ENGAGING IN THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION PROGRAM



Enabling compliance, empowering innovation. Businesses must comply with various government regulations and legal requirements. In turn, the private sector expects a conducive business environment—characterized by clear policies, regulatory transparency, and opportunities for collaboration and innovation (image by Shutterstock).

In any public–private engagement, it is crucial to identify the expectations of each side. An overview of such expectations can help to identify and prioritize the correct actions to enhance the role of the private sector in the GMS Program.

Public Sector Expectations

The expectations of the GMS Program’s public sector stakeholders, including GMS governments and ADB, are rooted in the need to leverage private sector expertise, resources, and innovation to achieve regional development goals.

Leveraging Private Sector Expertise

- **Innovation and technical solutions.** Governments expect the private sector to bring innovative solutions and cutting-edge technologies that can address complex regional challenges. For instance, private companies can offer advanced infrastructure development technologies, sustainable agricultural practices, and digital health solutions.
- **Value for money.** The private sector is seen as a source of efficiency and cost-effectiveness. By engaging private companies in public projects, governments aim to achieve better value for money, ensuring that public funds are used effectively and efficiently.

Resource Mobilization

- **Investment and capital.** One of the primary expectations of the public sector is the mobilization of private capital for regional projects. Governments look to the private sector for finance for large infrastructure projects, renewable energy installations, and other capital-intensive initiatives.
- **Technical resources.** The private sector is expected to contribute technical resources and expertise that can enhance the quality and sustainability of development projects.

Enhanced Competitiveness and Economic Growth

- **Job creation and economic activity.** Public sector stakeholders anticipate that private sector engagement will lead to job creation, increased economic activity, and overall economic growth in the region.
- **Market development.** By involving the private sector, governments aim to develop and diversify markets and to foster a more dynamic and competitive economic environment.

“ Public Sector Expectations:

- Leverage expertise for innovative and cost-effective solutions.
- Mobilize resources to support development.
- Boost competitiveness and economic growth through job creation and increased economic activity.

Private Sector Expectations

Private sector expectations revolve mainly around the need for a conducive business environment, clear policies, and opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

Clarity and Direction in Government Policies

- **Consistent regulatory frameworks.** The private sector seeks greater consistency in how GMS governments address core business issues such as taxation, trade regulations, labor laws, and environmental standards. Inconsistent policies across the region can create barriers to investment and business operations.
- **Predictability and stability.** Businesses require a stable and predictable policy environment to make long-term investment decisions. Clear and consistent government policies reduce risks and uncertainties for the private sector.

Support for Core Business Issues

- **Infrastructure development.** Reliable infrastructure, including transportation networks, energy supply, and digital connectivity, is crucial for business operations. The private sector expects governments to prioritize and invest in infrastructure development.

- **Access to finance.** Businesses, especially SMEs, need access to affordable finance. Governments can facilitate this by creating favorable conditions for lending and investment.
- **Skilled workforce.** The availability of a skilled and educated workforce is essential for business growth. The private sector expects governments to invest in education and vocational training programs to develop the necessary skills in the labor market.
- **Knowledge sharing and best practices.** The private sector values opportunities for knowledge sharing and collaboration. Forums, workshops, and roundtables that bring together public and private stakeholders can facilitate the exchange of best practices and foster a collaborative environment.

Opportunities for Collaboration and Innovation

- **Public-private partnerships (PPPs).** The private sector is interested in engaging in PPPs to collaborate on large-scale projects that can benefit from combined public and private sector strengths. Such partnerships can provide opportunities for innovation and shared risk. The regional investment framework can be key to attracting private sector players to PPP opportunities in the GMS.
- **Technical and advisory roles.** When governments listen, businesses are often willing to share insights and demonstrate technical solutions that may not have been considered by governments. Private companies can offer advisory services and pilot projects to showcase innovative approaches.

“ Private Sector Expectations

- A stable and consistent regulatory framework to guide investment decisions.
- Investment in infrastructure, skilled workforce, and favorable conditions for lending and investment.
- Engagement through PPPs, advisory roles, and knowledge sharing to foster innovation.



Private sector as partner in addressing complex regional challenges. ADB supports VinFast's rollout of EV charging stations across Viet Nam, advancing clean transport and helping the country meet its net-zero emissions goal by 2050.

OUTCOME-DRIVEN DIALOGUE



Sustainable and Inclusive Feed Supply Chain Project, Cambodia. Through a loan and guarantee, De Heus TMH expanded its feed operations and deepened its support for local farmers. The project exemplifies private sector-led agricultural development, enhancing productivity, strengthening rural livelihoods, and fostering inclusive growth in Cambodia's agribusiness sector.

For both public and private sectors, the ultimate goal of engagement in the GMS Program is to achieve tangible outcomes that contribute to regional development and economic growth. This requires a shift from traditional, informational engagement to more collaborative, outcome-driven dialogue.

Mutual Benefits and Synergies

- **Shared goals.** Establishing a common understanding of shared goals and mutual benefits is essential for effective public–private dialogue. Public and private partners must recognize the value that each brings to the table and work toward aligned objectives.
- **Collaborative platforms.** Creating platforms for continuous and structured engagement, such as sector-specific roundtables, scenario-based workshops, and high-level business forums, can facilitate deeper collaboration and more meaningful outcomes.

“Eleven practical entry points will transform how the public and private sectors work together across the GMS.”

Structured and Effective Dialogue

- **Focus on solutions.** Public–private dialogue should focus on identifying and implementing solutions to regional challenges. Clear objectives for each engagement must be set and discussions should be action oriented.
- **Regular feedback and follow-up.** Continuous engagement and feedback mechanisms are crucial for maintaining momentum and ensuring that agreed-upon actions are implemented. Regular follow-up on progress and outcomes helps to build trust and accountability.

Enhanced Communication and Transparency

- **Transparent processes.** Transparency in decision-making processes and project implementation builds trust and encourages private sector participation. Clear communication of goals, processes, and outcomes is essential.
- **Effective communication strategies.** Developing clear communication strategies to keep stakeholders informed and engaged is vital for sustaining public-private collaboration. This includes using various channels, including social media, newsletters, and regular updates.

ACTIONS FOR ENHANCING PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION IN THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION PROGRAM



Thailand Provincial Solar Power Project. Developed as a public-private partnership under Thailand's Very Small Power Producer program, the project enables private renewable energy producers (up to 10-megawatt capacity) to supply clean electricity to the national grid, promoting decentralized and sustainable energy development.

Following several rounds of consultations, members of the GMS Program have drawn up 11 entry points to enhance private sector engagement. The entry points are activities that mostly leverage and build upon institutions and initiatives that are already existing or have been tried by the GMS Program over the years.

Table 1 identifies each entry point as well as the leading stakeholder within the GMS Program who would assist its implementation. A suggested implementation plan for each entry point is set out in Schedule A.

Table 1: Entry Points for Enhancing Private Sector Engagement in the Greater Mekong Subregion

Entry Point	Title	Goal and Rationale	Leading Stakeholder
1	Building the capacity of the GMS Secretariat	Strengthen institutional coordination and readiness for structured private sector engagement	GMS Secretariat
2	Enhancing the role of the GMS Business Council	Reform and empower the GMS Business Council to lead private sector engagement, innovation support, and communication	GMS Business Council
3	Strengthening engagement through sector working groups (SWGs)	Mainstream private sector perspectives and partnerships within GMS sector planning and reform processes	SWGs
4	Private sector roundtables	Convene sector-specific, recurring dialogues to identify investment and policy opportunities	SWGs
5	High-level business forums	Institutionalize annual public-private forums to align regional priorities and attract investment	National secretariats
6	Scenario-based workshops	Use future-oriented planning to develop practical strategies across stakeholders	GMS Secretariat
7	Innovation competitions	Catalyze creative solutions to regional challenges through structured, inclusive competitions	GMS Business Council
8	Innovation funding	Establish sustainable financing for high-impact, scalable innovations aligned with GMS priorities	GMS Secretariat
9	Business network development	Build a dynamic, cross-border network of business associations and chambers to strengthen engagement	GMS Business Council
10	Marketing and communication	Promote visibility and impact of GMS initiatives to foster broader engagement and alignment	GMS Secretariat
11	Knowledge generation and sharing	Create and manage a regional platform for insights, lessons, and policy solutions	GMS Secretariat

GMS = Greater Mekong Subregion.

Source: Asian Development Bank.

Stakeholder Roles in Delivering Private Sector Engagement

- To use the 11 entry points, each stakeholder must clearly understand and embrace its role in the process. The success of this strategy depends not on isolated initiatives but on coordinated and complementary efforts across institutions at regional, sectoral, and national levels.
- Each stakeholder brings unique capacities to this process, whether by setting strategic direction, anchoring policy dialogue, convening partners, mobilizing finance, or amplifying engagement. As these roles are fulfilled in an iterative and mutually reinforcing manner, the overall architecture for private sector participation in the GMS will become more resilient, inclusive, and outcome oriented.
- Table 2 summarizes the primary functions of the core institutional stakeholders involved in implementing the strategy.

Interdependencies

- **GMS Secretariat and sector working groups (SWGs).** To ensure that funding for innovations and scenario workshops are aligned with sector priorities, the secretariat and working groups must coordinate closely. To ensure that there is effective cross-sector coordination and linkages.

- **National secretariats and the GMS Business Council.** These must work closely together to ensure effective public–private engagement for business forums, and to strive for strong national linkages, particularly between central and local levels of government and businesses.
- **GMS Business Council and other entities.** The GMS Business Council’s success in innovation and knowledge initiatives will depend on content contributions and strategic alignment with both national and regional entities.

Implementation and Monitoring

- **Schedule A** sets out an implementation road map with goals and recommended actions for implementing the 11 entry points contained in this strategy paper.
- **Schedule B** contains a monitoring framework that should be applied to the overall process of pursuing the entry points.

Table 2: Stakeholder Roles in Delivering Private Sector Engagement in the Greater Mekong Subregion

Stakeholder	Primary Functions	Entry Points
GMS Secretariat (ADB)	Coordinates regional implementation, manages overall strategy and monitoring and evaluation, mobilizes development partners, supports institutional capacity	1 (secretariat capacity), 8 (innovation funding), 10 (marketing and communication)
Sector working groups	Integrate private sector input into sector plans, host dialogues and workshops, lead scenario analysis and the search for sector-specific solutions	3 (sector working group engagement), 4 (roundtables), 6 (scenario-based workshops)
National secretariats	Align regional strategies with domestic reforms, convene national stakeholders, support national-to-regional coherence	5 (high-level business forums)
GMS Business Council	Serves as the primary channel for private sector input and leadership; manages networks, innovation, and communication from the business side	2 (business council role), 7 (innovation competitions), 9 (business networks), 11 (knowledge sharing)

GMS = Greater Mekong Subregion.

Source: Asian Development Bank.

SCHEDULE A

IMPLEMENTATION ROAD MAP



Operationalizing private sector engagement in the GMS. The implementation road map translates strategic priorities into concrete actions—clarifying responsibilities, timelines, and support mechanisms to guide private sector engagement across the Greater Mekong Subregion (image from Shutterstock).

Part 1: Introduction and Purpose

This road map for implementing the GMS private sector engagement strategy translates the attached strategy paper’s principles and priorities into concrete actions by recommending who does what, when, and with what support. It is intended to serve as an internal planning guide for:

- GMS member governments (especially national focal points and line ministries),
- the GMS Secretariat and SWGs,
- the GMS Business Council and other private sector representatives, and
- ADB and other development partners.

The road map also offers a shared reference point for coordination, financing, and monitoring, and is aligned with the monitoring and evaluation framework presented in Schedule B. It is designed to be phased, adaptable, and responsive to learning, in keeping with the strategy’s principles of systems thinking and iterative engagement.

Phased Implementation Road Map (2025–2030)

The road map is organized into three overlapping phases, each building toward greater institutionalization and impact. These phases do not represent rigid time blocks, but rather a framework for sequencing support and aligning actors around shared milestones.

Each phase is elaborated in subsequent sections through sector-specific actions and stakeholder assignments.

“**Phased implementation from 2025 to 2030 ensures that early pilots mature into permanent regional mechanisms.**”

Phase	Timeframe	Key Milestones	Primary Activities	Expected Outputs
Phase I: Foundations	2025–2026	Strategy endorsed by GMS ministers	Convene working groups with private sector participation	Institutional roles clarified
		National focal points confirmed	Restructure GMS Business Council governance	GMS Business Council reform initiated
		Private sector engagement frameworks launched	Identify priority sectors for initial activities	Sector engagement platforms launched
			Initiate sector roundtables	
			Develop resource mobilization plan	
Phase II: Consolidation	2027–2028	Pilot programs implemented	Operationalize pilots in priority sectors	Sector pilots completed
		Tools developed and disseminated	Launch sector-specific platforms, e.g., environmental, social, and governance tools; digital access for small and medium-sized enterprises	Knowledge products generated
		Monitoring underway	Conduct regional business forums	Early investment leveraged
			Begin baseline and performance monitoring	
Phase III: Scale-Up and Mainstream	2029–2030	Regional tools institutionalized	Scale Up successful models across GMS	Strategy embedded in GMS regional cooperation
		Strategy adapted	Institutionalize private sector engagement within GMS governance	Cross-border investment frameworks strengthened
		Financing mechanisms expanded	Revise the strategy based on monitoring and evaluation and learning	Adaptive governance system operational

Part 2: Financing the Implementation Road Map

Financing the Implementation Plan

Implementing the GMS private sector engagement strategy will require a flexible, multisource financing approach. The GMS Program currently lacks a unified institutional budget, and the GMS Business Council operates without direct core funding from ADB or GMS member states. Therefore, financing must be strategically aligned, catalytic, and blended, drawing on multiple actors and instruments.

Funding Needs and Use Cases

Financing will be needed to support:

- coordinating and convening roundtables, SWGs, and forum dialogues;
- seed support for pilot projects in selected sectors;
- tool and platform development, including knowledge management systems and innovation sandboxes (allowing new technologies, products, services, or business models to be tested);

“ Building the capacity of the GMS Secretariat is the foundation for lasting private sector engagement.

- capacity building and inclusion, private sector dialogue training and resources, small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) participation, gender-smart procurement, and possibly digital literacy (if new digital solutions are introduced); and
- monitoring evaluation implementation, learning loops, and data collection.

Part 3: Entry Point Implementation Guidance

This part provides an implementation guide for each of the 11 entry points. For each, the strategic goal is defined, quick-start actions are identified, roles of key stakeholders are identified, financing needs are noted, and timelines are suggested. Each entry point is situated within the broader GMS framework by articulating actions across regional, sectoral, and institutional levels.

Entry Point 1: Building the Capacity of the GMS Secretariat

Strategic Goal

Enhance the GMS Secretariat’s capacity to convene, coordinate, and sustain structured, outcome-driven public-private engagement across the subregion—anchored in regional priorities and responsive to evolving private sector needs.

Quick-Start Action

Establish a dedicated private sector engagement unit within the GMS Secretariat, supported by a tailored training and resourcing plan, and deploy this unit to co-facilitate with ADB GMS sector focals at least two GMS SWGs during the first year.

Strategic Financing Instruments and Approaches

Instrument	Proposed Use	Next Steps
Technical assistance (TA) grants (ADB)	SWG reform, pilot design, innovation sandbox, training programs	Align TA across regional departments; prioritize early wins
GMS Innovation Fund (to be proposed)	Multidonor facility for high-impact regional pilots and digital tools	Concept development and donor outreach required
Blended finance instruments (ADB and other development partners)	Risk sharing for pilots involving private sector investment	Early-stage project identification and structuring underway
Private sector cost sharing	Digital platform codevelopment, innovation sandbox trials, investment in corridor logistics	GMS Business Council and private partners to lead models
Transaction-linked fees (GMS Business Council)	Self-sustaining revenue to support convening and coordination	Feasibility study needed; ADB to advise on options under legal and institutional frameworks
Development partner alignment	Leverage bilateral or philanthropic TA for capacity building and policy reform	GMS Secretariat to map existing partner pipelines

Key Stakeholder Actions

Stakeholder	Immediate Actions (2025–2026)	Medium-Term Actions (2027–2030)
GMS Secretariat	Establish unit with clear terms of reference; recruit and assign focal points; conduct internal capacity needs assessment; initiate staff training in public–private dialogue facilitation, public–private partnership (PPP) structuring, and dialogue design	Lead support to SWGs; manage monitoring tools and knowledge-sharing platform.
National focal points	Coordinate with the GMS Secretariat on staffing needs, agenda alignment, and national private sector engagement priorities	Serve as interface between regional dialogue and national implementation; participate in feedback loops.
ADB (Office of Markets Development and PPP; Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department)	Provide TA for staff training, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and design of stakeholder engagement models	Provide advisory support; align TA pipelines with initiatives led by the GMS Secretariat
Development partners	Offer secondments, funding, and capacity-building inputs, review resourcing plan	Cofinance with ADB platform development and regional engagement mechanisms.
GMS Business Council	Participate in design of SOPs; provide feedback on events facilitated by the GMS Secretariat and coordination quality	Collaborate on regular reporting and private sector satisfaction reviews.

Financing Needs

Activity	Notes
Capacity assessment and SOP design	One-time TA support from ADB
Training modules on PPP, public–private dialogue, monitoring and evaluation (M&E)	Over 12 months
Staffing budget (1–2 full-time focal points)	May be covered under ADB regional programming
Knowledge management system upgrade	Modular tool to support coordination and reporting

Suggested Timeline

Date	Action
First quarter (Q1) 2026	GMS Secretariat unit created; focal points assigned
Q2 2026	Training begins; SOP toolkit developed
Q3 2026	Deployed to two SWGs
2027–2030	GMS Secretariat support mainstreamed across all private sector engagement initiatives

“ Building the capacity of the GMS Secretariat is the foundation for lasting private sector engagement.”

Regional, Sectoral, and Institutional Actions

Coordination Level	Required Actions
Regional	Formally embed the secretariat's private sector engagement support role in the GMS governance framework; ensure alignment with GMS-2030
Sectoral	Assign secretariat focal points to two pilot SWGs to lead private sector facilitation and build implementation protocols
Institutional	Document and publish engagement cases facilitated by the secretariat; build secretariat M&E functions into regional dashboards that will be added to the GMS Secretariat website

Entry Point 2: Strengthening the Role of the GMS Business Council

Strategic Goal

Reposition the GMS Business Council as the principal subregional liaison point for convening structured public-private dialogue and for representing the collective voice of the private sector in the GMS. This includes organizing business roundtables and high-level forums; coordinating input to GMS strategies; and ensuring inclusive engagement of businesses across sectors and business groups including SMEs, young and emerging entrepreneurs, and women-led enterprises.

Quick-Start Action

Launch a reform initiative to institutionalize the GMS Business Council as the anchor platform for private sector engagement across the GMS Program. This will include formalizing its role as a public-private dialogue facilitator, establishing a dedicated secretariat or focal point for convening business dialogue, and developing mechanisms for input into regional strategies and monitoring processes.

Key Stakeholder Actions

Stakeholder	Immediate Actions (2025–2026)	Medium-Term Actions (2027–2030)
GMS Business Council	Formalize the mandate of the GMS Business Council as the regional public-private dialogue convenor; establish focal points in each country; host first regional business roundtable	Institutionalize annual regional business forum; manage structured consultations and issue tracking
GMS Secretariat	Embed the GMS Business Council within governance and feedback loops; codevelop operational guidelines with the GMS Business Council and GMS working groups and M&E links	Ensure the GMS Business Council outputs feed into sectoral strategy updates and regional decision-making
ADB (Office of Markets Development and PPP; Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department)	Provide TA to design operating model and dialogue facilitation protocols; support development of public-private dialogue toolkit	Cofinance multiyear public-private dialogue platforms and digital feedback channels for business community input with other stakeholders
National focal points	Nominate liaison officers; align national chamber activities with the GMS Business Council agenda; identify priority reform themes	Use the GMS Business Council dialogue outputs to shape national policy debates and investment promotion efforts
Development partners	Support resource mobilization and technical assistance for multisector forums	Fund high-level forums, issue-specific roundtables, and public-private dialogue monitoring systems



Engaging key Stakeholders. Immediate and medium-term actions from stakeholders are critical to drive progress and achieve shared goals (image by Shutterstock).

Financing Needs

The GMS Business Council lacks an external or sustainable funding mechanism outside its membership fees. This requires further discussion as the role of the business council becomes clearer following adoption of this strategy paper. The funding requirements include the following:

“ A revitalized GMS Business Council will give the private sector a true voice in shaping regional cooperation.

Activity	Notes
Operationalization of the GMS Business Council secretariat	Staff, meeting infrastructure, facilitation
Dialogue platforms	During a piloting phase, after adoption of the strategy, business roundtables in two or three sectors or corridors
Communication and stakeholder outreach	Website, newsletters, media engagement, translation services
Youth, women, and SME inclusion mechanism	Built into broader public-private dialogue structure as a standing working group

Suggested Timeline

Date	Action
Q1 2026	Mandate clarified and institutionalized; secretariat established
Q2-Q4 2026	Pilot roundtables launched in two strategic sectors or locations
2027-2028	Annual regional business forums convened with government participation
2029-2030	Feedback mechanisms fully integrated into the GMS strategy review and sectoral planning

Regional, Sectoral, and Institutional Actions

Coordination Level	Required Actions
Regional	Formalize the GMS Business Council's mandate as the convener of private sector engagement under the GMS framework
Sectoral	Ensure SWGs use the GMS Business Council dialogues to take account of and implement private sector insights
Institutional	Institutionalize annual reporting by the GMS Business Council to the Senior Officials' Meeting and ministerial levels, with M&E links.

Entry Point 3: Strengthening Engagement Through Sector Working Groups

Strategic Goal

Mainstream structured private sector engagement across GMS SWGs, enabling them to drive more responsive, innovative, and market-relevant policy and project design through inclusive, recurring, and solution-focused dialogue platforms.

Quick-Start Action

Pilot the creation of private sector task groups within two SWGs (priority sectors to be identified) and conduct structured consultations and scenario-based workshops to identify sector-specific reform and co-investment opportunities.

Key Stakeholder Actions

Stakeholder	Immediate Actions (2025–2026)	Medium-Term Actions (2027–2030)
SWGs	Create private sector task groups within SWG structures; identify focal points within each GMS member and the SWG lead appointed by ADB, identify initial reform priorities; coordinate pilot workshops	Institutionalize private sector advisory roles; embed co-creation of sector strategies with other stakeholders
GMS Secretariat	Develop templates, SOPs, and facilitation tools for engagement between SWGs and the private sector; support pilot implementation	Consolidate workshop outcomes; feed into regional learning and cross-sector reporting
National focal points	Nominate sector liaison officers; support domestic private sector recruitment for SWG participation	Facilitate integration of private sector feedback into national sector strategies and action plans
ADB and other development partners	Provide TA for facilitation, logistics, and analytical support for scenario-based workshops	Support mainstreaming of models across remaining SWGs
GMS Business Council	Help identify sector-relevant firms and associations; promote SWG opportunities through GMS Business Council channels	Coordinate sector-specific task forces and follow-up on private sector recommendations

Financing Needs

Activity	Notes
SOPs, training, and pilot facilitation	TA-based, two sectors in year 1
Scenario workshop design and implementation	Includes toolkits and cross-border planning
Participation subsidies for SMEs and women-led firms	Inclusive engagement support
Institutional support for the GMS Secretariat facilitation	Coordination and documentation costs

Suggested Timeline

Date	Action
Q1 2026	SOPs and toolkit finalized; SWG pilots launched
Q2–Q3 2026	Scenario-based workshops implemented
2027–2028	Expansion to remaining SWGs; task group structures integrated
2029–2030	Permanent private sector advisory panels formalized

Regional, Sectoral, and Institutional Actions

Coordination Level	Required Actions
Regional	Promote consistency in private sector task group design and dialogue protocols across SWGs
Sectoral	Integrate workshop outputs into sectoral programming, corridor-level initiatives, and regional investment framework updates
Institutional	Develop feedback mechanism linking SWG private sector task groups with the GMS Secretariat's M&E and strategy refresh cycles

Entry Point 4: Expanding Private Sector Roundtables at the Sector Level

Strategic Goal

Institutionalize sector-level roundtables as regular mechanisms for structured, outcome-oriented dialogue between public and private actors, aimed at identifying and codeveloping investment opportunities aligned with GMS strategic priorities with other stakeholders.

Quick-Start Action

Launch quarterly sector-specific roundtables in at least two priority sectors (e.g., agriculture and tourism), with structured agendas, professional facilitation, and clear follow-up procedures.

Key Stakeholder Actions

Stakeholder	Immediate Actions (2025–2026)	Medium-Term Actions (2027–2030)
GMS Secretariat	Develop roundtable SOPs and templates; support convening and documentation; provide coordination platform	Integrate outcomes into regional reporting; support cross-sector knowledge sharing.
SWGs	Identify sector priorities and key stakeholders; host pilot roundtables; manage outcomes and action plan development	Institutionalize roundtables as semiannual forums linked to sector workplans and reviews
National focal points	Support stakeholder mapping; facilitate participation of national agencies and private sector actors	Align roundtable outputs with national reform agendas and sector strategies
GMS Business Council	Assist in identifying industry participants; cohost sessions with other stakeholders; disseminate summaries through council channels	Facilitate private sector follow-up and monitor responsiveness to roundtable outcomes
Development partners	Provide logistical support, technical inputs, or cofinancing for priority roundtable topics and pilots	Engage in action planning and pilot design; align support with investment opportunities identified

Business Opportunities in GMS Tourism, October 2023, Thailand. The GMS Secretariat organized the private sector roundtable on regional tourism projects to increase the level of interest and engagement of private sector to invest in tourism projects in the GMS. This was one of the planned series of roundtables with the private sector.



Financing Needs

Activity	Notes
Roundtable SOPs and facilitation toolkit	One-time TA to standardize format
Facilitation, translation, and hosting	Varies by location and complexity
Stakeholder mapping and outreach support	Conducted jointly with the GMS Business Council
Coordination and reporting tools	Modular database and knowledge product templates

Suggested Timeline

Date	Activity
Q1 2026	First two pilot roundtables launched in agriculture and tourism
Q2–Q3 2026	Roundtables expanded to energy and transport sectors
2027–2028	Standardized across remaining SWGs; linked to corridor-level investment planning
2029–2030	Fully institutionalized and self-sustaining through private–public co-hosting models

Regional, Sectoral, and Institutional Actions

Coordination Level	Required Actions
Regional	Align roundtable topics with regional GMS priorities and the regional investment framework; share summaries across sectors.
Sectoral	Use roundtables to refine pipeline priorities, identify cofinancing partners, and advance sector reforms.
Institutional	Build roundtable metrics into GMS M&E framework; ensure recurring feedback is documented and published.

Entry Point 5: High-Level Business Forums

Strategic Goal

Institutionalize high-level business forums as flagship events that align regional political leadership with private sector vision, promote cross-border investment partnerships, and generate actionable commitments toward inclusive and sustainable development in the GMS.

Quick-Start Action

Redesign and relaunch the GMS High-Level Business Forum as an annual event with a rotating thematic focus, professional facilitation, and structured post-forum action plans linked to corridor and sector priorities.

Key Stakeholder Actions

Stakeholder	Immediate Actions (2025–2026)	Medium-Term Actions (2027–2030)
GMS Secretariat	Establish annual planning cycle; develop agenda template and participation guidelines; oversee forum logistics	Institutionalize feedback mechanisms; publish annual outcomes and progress scorecards
National secretariats	Secure national leadership participation; coordinate private sector nominations; align forum with domestic investment agendas	Host rotating forums or side events; promote national project pipelines at forums
GMS Business Council	Curate business participation; lead private sector contributions to agenda setting; present annual business priorities report	Facilitate business-to-business and business-to-government networking sessions
ADB and other development partners	Provide financing and strategic guidance for thematic content (e.g., digital, climate, regional infrastructure)	Use forums as platforms to launch co-investment initiatives or donor coordination tracks
Private sector leaders	Share use cases and investment success stories; co-design corridor-based opportunities or thematic roundtables	Monitor and follow up on private sector commitments and investment dialogues



58th ADB Annual Meeting, May 2025. Delegates exchange views and discuss matters of interest at the event “Catalyzing Private Sector Development in Asia and the Pacific—What Role for Multilateral Development Banks?” held on the margins of the 58th ADB Annual Meeting.

Financing Needs

Activity	Notes
Planning and facilitation (annual)	Includes consultant support, agenda setting, and reporting
Travel grants and SME participation	Supports inclusive access and diversity of perspectives
Event technology and media production	Includes hybrid format platforms and communication assets
Follow-up action plan design	Supports continuity and stakeholder accountability

Suggested Timeline

Date	Activity
Q4 2025	First relaunch of the GMS High-Level Business Forum (pilot format)
2026–2027	Thematic focuses on energy transition and digital trade corridors; future forums may spotlight digital economy integration and e-commerce as priority themes for cross-border investment partnerships.
2028–2029	Institutionalized in the GMS event calendar; multilateral and regional co-sponsorships
2030	The GMS Business Forum becomes an anchor event for public-private coordination

Regional, Sectoral, and Institutional Actions

Coordination Level	Required Actions
Regional	Define annual themes based on GMS strategic priorities; align forum outputs with the Senior Officials' Meeting and ministerial agenda.
Sectoral	Use forums to showcase progress in sector strategies; launch flagship initiatives (priority sectors to be identified).
Institutional	Assign post-forum reporting responsibilities to the GMS secretariat and GMS Business Council; publish forum communiqués and outcome trackers.

Entry Point 6: Scenario-Based Workshops

Strategic Goal

Use scenario-based planning as a structured method to anticipate future risks and opportunities, build regional resilience, and codevelop practical strategies that align public and private interests in addressing shared GMS development challenges with other stakeholders.

Quick-Start Action

Launch two scenario-based workshop pilots focused on critical cross-border issues (to be identified), involving public and private stakeholders across at least two GMS countries per workshop.

“Scenario-based workshops will help GMS countries anticipate risks and design resilient, future-ready strategies.”

Key Stakeholder Actions

Stakeholder	Immediate Actions (2025–2026)	Medium-Term Actions (2027–2030)
GMS Secretariat	Design workshop templates and training for facilitators; coordinate issue scoping with SWGs and the GMS Business Council	Curate cross-sector learning; publish synthesis reports; integrate lessons into policy cycles
SWGs	Identify priority topics and corridor-level scenarios; lead participant recruitment and planning	Embed scenario planning into sector reviews and regional investment framework updates; co-lead follow-up with other stakeholders
GMS Business Council	Promote workshops to private sector; co-design scenarios; mobilize corporate case studies and subject matter experts	Facilitate continued engagement on workshop follow-up through GMS business platforms
National focal points	Ensure national-level stakeholder alignment and endorsement; support logistics and content validation	Institutionalize scenario methods into national policy reviews and consultation formats
ADB and other development partners	Provide technical assistance, simulation tools, and facilitator training; fund pilot implementation and evaluation	Use workshop outputs to inform TA and investment programming; scale up successful operations via corridor initiatives

Financing Needs

Activity	Notes
Design of templates and facilitation training	Modular design; reusable across sectors
Workshop delivery (two pilots)	Includes facilitator fees, materials, travel
Post-workshop documentation and follow-up	Cofinanced by SWGs with other stakeholders
Simulation software and technology	Optional for advanced modeling scenarios

Suggested Timeline

Date	Activity
Q2 2026	Workshop themes confirmed and facilitators trained
Q3–Q4 2026	First two workshops implemented with post-event action plans
2027–2028	Additional workshops held, covering new sectors and locations
2029–2030	Scenario planning institutionalized into policy dialogue cycles

Regional, Sectoral, and Institutional Actions

Coordination Level	Required Actions
Regional	Align scenarios with regional risk priorities (e.g., supply chain resilience, climate shocks); create regional repository of outcomes
Sectoral	Use scenario workshops to develop adaptive investment and regulatory road maps; embed these into sector strategy updates
Institutional	Train a pool of GMS-affiliated facilitators and institutionalize scenario planning in regional planning toolkits



Entry Point 7: Innovation Competitions

Strategic Goal

Foster a culture of innovation across the GMS by using structured innovation competitions to bring to the surface private sector solutions to regional challenges, drive entrepreneurial growth, and align emerging ideas with GMS development priorities.

Quick-Start Action

Launch an inaugural regional innovation challenge in partnership with the GMS Business Council, targeting SMEs and startups with scalable solutions for digital trade, sustainable agriculture, and green logistics. Innovation challenges should prioritize the digital economy and cross-border e-commerce solutions, given their growing role in regional competitiveness and market integration.

Key Stakeholder Actions

Stakeholder	Immediate Actions (2025–2026)	Medium-Term Actions (2027–2030)
GMS Business Council	Develop and disseminate competition guidelines; lead outreach to business networks and incubators; convene evaluation panel	Institutionalize annual GMS innovation competitions; establish innovation success case library
GMS Secretariat	Provide technical and coordination support; align competition themes with the GMS strategy; monitor outcomes	Track impact metrics; ensure winners are integrated into broader GMS program or pipeline
Development partners	Cofinance prizes and project incubation with other stakeholders; promote regional participation through joint events	Support scale-up or replication of successful innovations; provide ongoing mentorship
National focal points	Publicize competition within national innovation ecosystems; connect winning ideas to national programs	Integrate innovation outputs into domestic development strategies and PPP pipelines
Private sector	Participate in challenges; sponsor competitions; mentor or partner with startups and innovators	Support commercialization or pilot implementation of selected innovations.

Financing Needs

Activity	Notes
Competition framework and platform development	One-time cost for competition templates, guidelines, and digital portal
Prize pool and project support	Mix of grants, seed funds, and incubation packages
Outreach, events, and marketing	Includes regional roadshows, media, and SME support
Monitoring, evaluation, and learning	To track uptake, implementation, and scale-up potential

Suggested Timeline

Date	Activity
Q2 2026	Competition design finalized and launched
Q3–Q4 2026	Judging, selection, and awards; begin project incubation
2027–2028	Expand to thematic series or corridor-specific challenges
2029–2030	Institutionalized within the GMS strategy cycle and annual reporting

Regional, Sectoral, and Institutional Actions

Coordination Level	Required Actions
Regional	Align competition themes with regional development goals and corridor strategies; publish regional innovation insights
Sectoral	Integrate winning innovations into SWG pipelines or pilots (e.g., transport, agri-value chains)
Institutional	Embed innovation competitions in the GMS Business Council’s mandate; link evaluation results to innovation funding criteria

Entry Point 8: Innovation Funding

Strategic Goal

Establish a sustainable, transparent funding mechanism that supports high-impact innovations addressing regional challenges in the GMS, while strengthening private sector collaboration and incentivizing scalable solutions through grants, cofinancing, and incubation.

Quick-Start Action

Launch a donor roundtable to establish seed funding commitments and governance structure for a GMS innovation fund, with the first pilot call targeting climate-smart, green growth and low-carbon investment, and digital innovation proposals aligned with GMS strategic priorities.



Fueling innovation across the GMS. A dedicated GMS Innovation Fund will turn bright ideas into bankable solutions (image by Shutterstock).

Key Stakeholder Actions

Stakeholder	Immediate Actions (2025–2026)	Medium-Term Actions (2027–2030)
GMS Secretariat	Convene funding design task force; align fund objectives with the GMS strategy; initiate donor and partner engagement	Manage M&E of funded projects; integrate learnings into sector planning and reporting
GMS Business Council	Promote funding opportunities to innovators; assist with outreach and matchmaking; host funding events and calls	Build innovation portfolio and success stories; co-manage screening and mentoring processes
Development partners	Finance fund; support governance structure; sponsor challenges and thematic tracks	Provide technical assistance and scale up finance for top-performing innovations
Private sector sponsors	Contribute corporate social responsibility or venture-style funding; act as mentors or anchors for innovation pilots	Explore equity-style participation or strategic partnerships with successful ventures
National focal points	Promote fund access at the national level; recommend aligned domestic priorities; nominate local incubator partners	Report on fund impact at national level; finance follow-up phases for national relevance

Financing Needs

Activity	Notes
Fund design and legal and governance framework	TA-supported
Initial seed capital (multi-donor pool)	For first 2 years, 15–20 projects
Communication, outreach, and events	Includes promotional materials, workshops, helpdesk
Incubation support via partner institutions	Coaching, infrastructure, and advisory services

Suggested Timeline

Date	Activity
Q4 2025	Innovation fund design completed and approved
Q2 2026	First call for proposals launched; selection begins
2027–2028	Full fund operations with annual funding cycles
2029–2030	Institutionalized as blended finance instrument for regional innovation

Regional, Sectoral, and Institutional Actions

Coordination Level	Required Actions
Regional	Coordinate fund governance across GMS partners; include fund performance and results in dashboards on the GMS Program website
Sectoral	Align innovation funding with sector strategy implementation (e.g., agriculture, digital economy, clean energy)
Institutional	Position the GMS Business Council as the secretariat of fund management functions; build fund reporting into the GMS M&E system



Borderless business synergy. A dynamic business network will connect associations, entrepreneurs, and investors across borders (image by Shutterstock).

Entry Point 9: Business Network Development

Strategic Goal

Establish a dynamic, inclusive, and cross-border business network within the GMS that strengthens the GMS Program's ability to leverage private sector expertise, foster collaboration, and mobilize regional investment through structured engagement.

Quick-Start Action

Undertake a regional mapping of key business associations and industry groups, and launch a dedicated online platform and event series to connect them to GMS planning and investment processes.

Key Stakeholder Actions

Stakeholder	Immediate Actions (2025–2026)	Medium-Term Actions (2027–2030)
GMS Business Council	Lead the mapping of business associations and chambers; establish engagement protocols; host launch of business network series	Coordinate and maintain network; use for targeted feedback, innovation calls, and roundtables
GMS Secretariat	Support design of engagement strategy; provide digital infrastructure and knowledge platform linkage	Use network to strengthen regional M&E and private sector reporting functions
National focal points	Collaborate in identifying national associations; encourage alignment with national PPP and SME agendas	Facilitate regular participation from domestic business associations in regional initiatives
Development partners	Offer support for mapping, digital platform development, and coordination of cross-border business forums	Use network to disseminate tools, funding opportunities, or capacity-building programs
Private sector groups	Participate in mapping and onboarding; propose events, working groups, or sector-specific collaborations	Actively contribute to GMS activities via platform forums, working groups, or pilot projects

Financing Needs

Activity	Notes
Business mapping TA and directory development	One-time effort with national coordination
Online platform and customer relationship management system	Interactive and searchable; linked to the GMS Secretariat site
Network events and cross-border forums (years 1 and 2)	Includes logistics, facilitation, and match-making activities
Staff and coordination Support	Dedicated coordinator within the GMS Business Council or GMS Secretariat

Suggested Timeline

Date	Activity
Q2 2026	Mapping completed and business network directory published
Q3 2026	Platform launched and first regional networking event held
2027–2028	Sector-specific clusters operational (e.g., logistics, agri-tech, renewable energy)
2029–2030	Network integrated into all regional consultation and innovation activities

Regional, Sectoral, and Institutional Actions

Coordination Level	Required Actions
Regional	Use network to deepen engagement across GMS corridors; link to regional strategy updates and forums
Sectoral	Tailor engagement around sectoral needs and opportunities (e.g., energy firms for electric vehicle corridors, food processors for agri-value chains).
Institutional	Position the network as a permanent feature of the GMS Business Council's structure, tied into regional public-private dialogue and knowledge management

Entry Point 10: Marketing and Communication

Strategic Goal

Position the GMS Program as a visible, compelling, and action-oriented regional platform for private sector collaboration by implementing an integrated marketing and communication strategy that raises awareness, builds trust, and drives participation.

Quick-Start Action

Appoint a communication focal point within the GMS Secretariat, launch a GMS private sector engagement brand identity, and roll out the first wave of social media and email campaigns targeting priority stakeholder groups.

“Strategic communication will make the GMS story visible, relatable, and inspiring to business.”

Key Stakeholder Actions

Stakeholder	Immediate Actions (2025–2026)	Medium-Term Actions (2027–2030)
GMS Secretariat	Lead the design and execution of a comprehensive marketing and communication plan; coordinate stakeholder input; manage digital tools	Institutionalize regular content cycles, media engagement, and analytics reporting
GMS Business Council	Support content generation, particularly success stories and events; co-manage dissemination through business networks	Develop sector-specific promotional toolkits and support ongoing storytelling campaigns
National focal points	Promote regional messages at the national level; link communication to domestic reforms, PPPs, and investment efforts	Align communication strategies to domestic priorities; contribute translation and localization
Development partners	Provide funding and expertise for content design, dissemination, and strategic messaging	Co-brand select outreach efforts; use the GMS as a platform to showcase co-funded initiatives
Private sector	Provide testimonials, data, and branding support; amplify content through their own networks	Participate in campaign design and review; serve as program ambassadors

Financing Needs and Timeline

Activity	Notes
Branding and strategy development	Includes core messaging, visual identity, and templates
Platform upgrades (social media, newsletters)	Covers content management system, email tools
Content production (videos, infographics, etc.)	Modular content for campaigns and regional events
Campaign delivery and paid media	Includes social advertisements, influencer outreach, and localization
Staffing (focal point or consultant)	Hosted in the GMS Secretariat or GMS Business Council

Suggested Timeline

Date	Activity
Q4 2025	Communication strategy approved; core messaging and branding package developed
Q1 2026	Launch GMS private sector engagement media campaign and first set of promotional assets
Q1 2026	Full rollout of campaign toolkits and local language adaptations
2029–2030	Communication embedded in all regional GMS events and institutional reports

Regional, Sectoral, and Institutional Actions

Coordination Level	Required Actions
Regional	Standardize messaging across platforms and projects; align with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and ADB outreach norms
Sectoral	Customize sector-specific content with working group input (e.g., energy investments, agri-tech)
Institutional	Assign permanent communication focal point; integrate metrics into M&E and donor reporting

Entry Point 11: Knowledge Generation and Sharing**Strategic Goal**

Position the GMS Program as a knowledge-driven regional platform by creating a dynamic and inclusive system for generating, organizing, and sharing practical insights, lessons, and policy solutions that support private sector engagement and sustainable development across the subregion.

Quick-Start Action

Launch a redesigned GMS knowledge portal in coordination with the GMS knowledge network, integrating private sector engagement content, and begin curating a cross-sector library of knowledge products, best practices, and event outputs.

“ Clear roles for every stakeholder—GMS Secretariat, GMS Business Council, and national focal points—will turn commitment into coordination.

Key Stakeholder Actions

Stakeholder	Immediate Actions (2025–2026)	Medium-Term Actions (2027–2030)
GMS Secretariat	Develop and manage knowledge platform; lead curation and formatting of uploaded content; align taxonomy with GMS–2030 priorities	Publish annual knowledge digests; ensure platform integration with regional strategy reviews
GMS knowledge network and academic partners	Provide research, editorial inputs, and quality control for content development	Serve as peer reviewers and hosts of regional learning events
SWGs	Contribute case studies, technical papers, and workshop summaries; define themes and formats for shared knowledge	Use platform to archive and share implementation progress, innovation results, and lessons
GMS Business Council	Encourage business case contributions; promote knowledge tools through business networks	Institutionalize business-to-business knowledge exchange formats and insights into the portal
Development partners	Develop knowledge products; support learning events and cross-institutional exchange	Use the GMS platform to disseminate tools and project outcomes; support regional benchmarking efforts.

Financing Needs and Timeline

Activity	Notes
Portal upgrade design	Can be phased with donor financing
Content development and editorial support	Includes briefs, reports, multimedia, and case studies
Knowledge events (virtual and in-person)	Sector-themed webinars, annual knowledge summits
M&E integration and platform analytics	Supports user tracking and reporting



Suggested Timeline

Date	Activity
Q2 2026	Platform upgraded and relaunched; first knowledge batch uploaded
Q3–Q4 2026	Knowledge-sharing calendar initiated with 2–3 regional learning events
2027–2028: Active platform usage tracked; content submission integrated into all GMS activities	Active platform usage tracked; content submission integrated into all GMS activities
2029–2030	Portal becomes central to monitoring impact and cross-sector collaboration

Regional, Sectoral, and Institutional Actions

Coordination Level	Required Actions
Regional	Link platform to ASEAN, ADB, and other regional systems; use it for coordination, impact tracking, and decision support
Sectoral	Archive working group outputs; promote peer-to-peer learning and sector synthesis across GMS economies
Institutional	Assign knowledge officers in key institutions; integrate knowledge use into planning and reporting requirements

SCHEDULE B

MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK



Integrated and Sustainable Livestock Value Chain Project, People's Republic of China. An investment specialist inspects an ADB project that supports antibiotic-free pork production through financing hog farms and a meat-processing plant. The project showcases private sector innovation and sustainability.

Purpose and Guiding Principles

Purpose

This schedule outlines an M&E framework for the GMS private sector engagement strategy. The framework’s purpose is to:

- track implementation progress across strategic pillars, sectors, and cross-cutting themes;
- inform adaptive management, including revisions to entry points, tools, and institutional mechanisms;
- provide transparency and accountability to GMS countries, ADB, the GMS Business Council, and development partners; and
- ensure that cross-cutting commitments to gender equity, climate resilience, and innovation are embedded in delivery.

Guiding Principles

The M&E framework aims to be:

- pragmatic and “light touch” (to minimize the reporting burden, especially on private sector partners);
- flexible and iterative (to allow for indicators and baselines to be refined as pilots and tools evolve);
- collaborative (to allow for public and private stakeholders to monitor through roundtables and forums); and
- use oriented (to emphasize learning and use of findings in decision-making, not just compliance).

Structure of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The framework is structured around five monitoring domains that mirror the strategy’s architecture. Each domain should include quantitative indicators, qualitative narratives, and stakeholder feedback mechanisms.

Domain	Focus	Monitoring Lead	Reporting Frequency
Institutional implementation	Progress in reforming coordination mechanisms, SWGs, and the GMS Business Council	GMS Secretariat, national focal points	Biannual
Sectoral entry points	Implementation status of actions under five priority sectors	SWGs, ADB	Annual
Cross-cutting themes	Gender equity, climate resilience, and innovation mainstreaming	Cross-cutting task teams, ADB	Annual
Financing and sustainability	Mobilization of TA, cofinancing, and private sector contributions	ADB, GMS Business Council	Annual
Learning and feedback	Stakeholder satisfaction, pilot outcomes, and iteration of tools	Business forums, roundtables	Annual

Monitoring and Evaluation Implementation and Learning Loops

The M&E framework will be implemented through an integrated cycle of data collection, reflection, adjustment, and reporting, linked to the strategy’s coordination architecture and stakeholder engagement platforms.

Roles and Responsibilities

The M&E framework will rely on a tiered model: sector-specific M&E at the working group level, country-level reporting from focal points, and regional synthesis by the GMS Secretariat.

Actor	Monitoring Role
GMS Secretariat	Consolidate indicator data, produce an annual progress report, support knowledge management, convene reflection dialogues
National focal points	Coordinate data collection at the national level, including alignment with national programs, focal point activity, and pilot tracking
ADB	Oversee M&E of ADB-administered TA and pilots; provide quality assurance for data and support capacity development
GMS Business Council	Report on business engagement metrics; compile feedback from private actors; monitor outputs led by the council (e.g., roundtables, reports)
SWGs	Track implementation progress in their sectors; integrate M&E into pilot oversight and annual workplans



Monitoring and evaluation. The M&E framework must be implemented through a continuous cycle of data collection, reflection, adjustment, and reporting to effectively support the strategy. This process is essential to ensure alignment with the coordination architecture and active stakeholder engagement (picture from iStock).

Feedback and Learning Mechanisms

The strategy’s implementation model emphasizes continuous learning. To that end, M&E findings will be integrated into the following processes:

- Annual GMS Business Forum: a dedicated “Strategy Implementation” session will include a presentation of key M&E findings and private sector feedback.
- Sector roundtable reviews: each working group will conduct an annual reflection session to assess progress, challenges, and adaptive actions.
- Midterm review (2027): an independent review of progress across all five domains, with stakeholder interviews, outcome harvesting, and recommendations for adjustment.
- Final review and scaling-up (2030): a comprehensive results review to inform the next-phase strategy and investment planning.

Data Systems and Tools

Initial M&E efforts will rely on existing secretariat systems, but the following upgrades are envisioned (subject to funding):

- A strategy M&E dashboard will be integrated into the GMS knowledge portal, with visual reporting (using charts, graphs, tables, and icons, to visualize data and key insights) and filtering by sector, corridor, and theme.
- A shared monitoring template toolkit will be prepared for use by national and sector actors.
- An annual stakeholder engagement survey (covering both public and private sectors) to assess process quality, value added, and alignment with needs.



Monitoring and evaluation framework. Monitoring progress is not about compliance—it is how the GMS learns, adapts, and scales (image from Shutterstock).

Risks and Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation Strategy
Low reporting compliance or data gaps	Emphasize simplicity and value add of reporting; provide TA to strengthen M&E capacity; integrate with TA deliverables
Indicators not aligned with reality of pilots	Allow iterative indicator refinement; document the change and rationale for changes from the pilot
Data not used for decision-making	Embed reflection spaces (forums, working groups); publish findings in clear and straightforward language and format

Potential Key Performance Indicators for Each Entry Point

Entry Point	Sample Key Performance Indicators	Lead for M&E	Monitoring
1. GMS Secretariat capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated private sector engagement unit established in the secretariat Number of SWGs with assigned private sector engagement focal points Frequency and quality of private sector participation in SWGs Satisfaction score from private sector participants 	GMS Secretariat	Annual reports from the GMS the secretariat tracking private sector engagement staffing, SWG links, and feedback from private sector attendees
2. GMS Business Council role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GMS Business Council mandate formalized in GMS governance Number of national focal points appointed Number of business roundtables and forums hosted Level of private sector satisfaction and engagement 	GMS Business Council	GMS Business Council to maintain logs of meetings, roundtables, and member engagement; annual survey to assess business satisfaction
3. SWG engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of SWGs with functioning private sector task groups Policy or reform recommendations emerging from SWGs Level of investment mobilized through SWGs Diversity and number of firms engaged 	SWGs	SWGs report participation, policy proposals, and results in sector reviews; ADB may support with TA for evaluations
4. Sector roundtables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of sector roundtables held annually Action items generated and tracked from each roundtable Private sector follow-up engagement rates Public-private cofinanced pilots resulting from roundtables 	GMS Secretariat with SWGs	Event documentation, follow-up surveys, and implementation tracking of proposed reforms or pilots
5. High-level business forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual business forum held with regional participation Level of political and business leader participation Number of cross-border investment deals initiated Forum outputs integrated into GMS decision-making 	GMS Secretariat with ADB support	Post-event reporting on participation and outcomes; integration of outputs into GMS strategic planning monitored by the secretariat

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Entry Point	Sample Key Performance Indicators	Lead for M&E	Monitoring
6. Scenario-based workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of scenario-based workshops delivered Diversity of sectoral and geographic participation Strategies or reforms influenced by scenario results Frequency of scenario updates in GMS planning 	GMS Secretariat	Workshop attendance, documentation of scenarios developed, and follow-up with sectors applying insights
7. Innovation competitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of competitions launched and completed Number of SMEs and startups participating Number of innovations piloted or scaled-up post competition Gender and youth participation rates 	GMS Business Council and national chambers	Competition registration data, outcome reports on winners, and gender and youth participation logs maintained by the GMS Business Council.
8. Innovation funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation fund operational with governance structure in place Total funding committed and disbursed Number of innovations funded and outcomes reported Ratio of leveraged private to public funds 	ADB (Office of Markets Development and PPP; Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department) with the GMS Business Council	Fund administrator tracks financial flows, reports project milestones, and publishes annual performance summaries
9. Business network development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business network platform established and maintained Number of member associations and firms engaged Frequency of network-hosted events or discussions Referrals of networked firms to GMS activities 	GMS Business Council with private sector associations	Membership lists, event calendars, and qualitative reports on collaboration or referrals between members
10. Marketing and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication strategy finalized and implemented Reach and engagement metrics (website, social, newsletters) Frequency and diversity of success stories published Stakeholder recall or brand recognition metrics 	GMS Secretariat communication unit	Digital analytics tools (website, social media); regular reviews of story dissemination and stakeholder engagement surveys
11. Knowledge generation and sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GMS knowledge platform upgraded and live Number of new knowledge products uploaded annually Usage metrics from business and government actors Integration of knowledge into SWG reports and decisions 	GMS Secretariat knowledge management team	Platform back-end analytics for usage; periodic content audits and surveys of usefulness to SWGs and focal points

Private Sector Engagement in the Greater Mekong Subregion

The paper outlines a strategic approach to strengthen private sector engagement in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Program, leveraging private sector expertise, resources, and innovation to address regional development challenges and drive sustainable growth. Practicable entry points are proposed to improve public-private dialogue and cooperation, with the GMS Secretariat leading efforts and the GMS Business Council and sector working groups supporting them. By fostering dynamic partnerships and innovative solutions, the strategic paper aims to create a collaborative and outcome-driven environment that aligns with the GMS Strategic Framework 2030, ensuring inclusive and sustainable development for the subregion.

About the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program

The Greater Mekong Subregion is made up of Cambodia, the People's Republic of China (specifically Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region), the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam. In 1992, with assistance from the Asian Development Bank and building on their shared histories and cultures, the six countries of the GMS launched a program of subregional economic cooperation—the GMS Program—to enhance their economic relations. The GMS Program covers the following priority sectors: agriculture, energy, environment, health cooperation, tourism, transport, trade and investment, and urban development.



GMS SECRETARIAT

Southeast Asia Department
Asian Development Bank
6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City
1550 Metro Manila, Philippines
<https://greatermekong.net/>