**REQUEST FOR CONSULTANCY SERVICES**

**Service Contract (SC)**

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| **“Research on skills development provision in all sectors in Moldova, with a special focus on Entrepreneurship, Agrifood and digitalization/ICT”** |

Project: “Opportunities through Technologies and Innovation in Moldova” funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, implemented by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation in Moldova

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Project: “Solutions for Youth to Advance” funded by the Austrian Development Agency, implemented by Center for Entrepreneurial Education and Business Support (CEDA)

Location: Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

Estimated duration: 2 months.

**Deadline to submit Application: 15th of September 2023**

Interested candidates should send their CV and a copy of the documents required to the following

e-mail address: info@optimproject.md

**1. Background**

The OPTIM Project – “Opportunities through Technologies and Innovation in Moldova” – is a market systems development (MSD) project aiming at contributing towards the creation of improved economic opportunities for Moldovan women and men, with particular focus on excluded groups, through addressing the constraints of the economy in a sustainable and inclusive manner. OPTIM is a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation. OPTIM’s objective is to create business development opportunities and provide them with access to higher value markets and know-how, to contribute to the development of digital solutions that lead to economic gains, to provide training and access to efficient and affordable financial services, and, just as importantly, make it possible to train, learn and/or improve qualified staff.

The “Solutions for Youth to Advance” project, implemented by CEDA highlights the particular disadvantages and needs of young people in the labour market of the Republic of Moldova such as the insufficient understanding by (Vocational Education and Training) VET students and potential applicants of VET based career paths, the persisting gender disparities in accessing VET institutions, the large proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET), the impediments encountered by people with special needs when choosing a VET institution, and the rigidity of continuous vocational education and training (CVET) providers that subsequently are proposed by the National Employment Agency (ANOFM) for the unemployed.

Private sector companies consistently identify low or non-appropriate skill levels amongst the labour force as one of the key constraints to business growth. Both projects are looking for a firm that can conduct research focused on identifying and mapping Formal and Non-formal Training Providers (TPs) in Moldova. While the mapping should be broad and investigate sectors prioritized by the national economy, the research should pay particular attention to three major areas: Entrepreneurship, Agrifood and digitalization / ICT, as these sectors have been identified by the project as having potential to create employment for the youth and are expected to grow fast in the next few years in Moldova.

**2. Objective of mapping of the Non formal TPs**

The purpose of the mapping assignment is to provide an assessment of formal and non-formal skills supply mainly for the sectors prioritized by the national economy, Entreprepreneurship, Agrifood and ICT/digitalization sectors. The purpose is to identify for each of the target sectors what skills are supplied at the present time by training providers, and the systemic constraints preventing the private non – formal training market to improve their performance and offer related with the target sectors. The analysis will focus also on the interaction between the private sector (employers) and public/private training providers, analyse the channels used for this interaction, and will include the analyses of the main constraints for the existing collaboration between the private sector and the training providers. The research will examine whether equal opportunities in education and training are offered to active population.

The results and recommendations of this mapping will serve as a basis for future interventions for both projects to improve the supply of formal and non-formal training programs to meet market demand and increase employability.

**3. Expected Output:**

The research should assess skills supply in all sectors in the Republic of Moldova by the private and non - private training market, with a focus on:

* Agrifood, including all operations related to processing, preserving, preparing, and packaging agricultural and food products carried out in industrial production units.
* Digitalization / ICT, including IT services, Call Centers, and Telecommunications.
* Entrepreneurship, including all operations related to this, skills assessment.

For all selected sectors, research will include A) Assessment of training providers and their programs; and B) Analysis of the current situation; C) Autonomy; D) Career guidance/ transition into the labour market; E) Social inclusion/ equal opportunity, and F) Conclusions and recommendations.

A) Assessment of public and private formal/non – formal training providers and their programs.

* Map all types of formal/non-formal training providers (national and regional level), including non-formal private skill providers such academies, institutes, NGOs, on-the-job-training providers, etc.
* Describe the training programs/learning methodologies provided by private providers, the occupations and qualification levels, and numbers of graduates from these programs; determine how many of the graduates found employment (or were already employed while attending the training) and the average time required to find employment upon completing the training.
* Determine the level of economic viability of skill training providers and their capacity to develop/add on new skill training programs/learning methodologies.
* Describe the approach training providers follow to develop new programs/learning methodologies.
* Identify possible shortcomings on providing training programmes suitable to the needs of socially disadvantaged youth (including women) by private non-formal training providers and efforts of positive discrimination to balance these gaps.

B) Analysis of the constrains of the current situation:

* Evaluate and analyse existing co-operation between formal/non-formal training providers and private businesses (and underlying reasons for success or lack of cooperation).
* Analyse channels used by the private sector to fulfil their demands for qualifications.
* Complete an in-depth analysis of why training providers are not able to meet demand for skills by the private sector.
* Identify any bottlenecks in the regulatory framework (if any) preventing the providers to adapt their programs and respond better to market demand.
* If and how training providers assess the current skills needs of the labour market and anticipate the future skills needs of the labour market.
* The type of information sources, the type of data (quantitative, qualitative? Data on the need for occupations or for changing skills needs within occupations) and methodologies (labour market information, tracer studies, employers’ surveys, focus groups, other) they use to collect and analyse this information.
* In how far they interact with the private sector to collect this information
* In how far is the information being fed-back into the development of new training programmes, the updating of existing training programmes and the up-dating and up-skilling of teaching staff?

C) Autonomy

* In how far have training providers autonomy to modify the content and methodology of their training programmes (e.g. percentage of the curricula that can be adapted locally)
* In how far are training providers free to generate their own financial resources, purchase training supplies, apply changes to training facilities? E.g. when it comes to disability inclusion: can they easily make changes to facilities or purchase assistive devices?
* In how far are training providers free to enter into partnerships, e.g. Public-private, private-private / public-public partnerships (e.g. for organising dual training / work-based learning, shared programmes with other providers.
* How much autonomy do training providers have to hire and lay off staff – or to change the job descriptions of staff?
* Do they have the autonomy or do they receive support for organising professional development for their training / non-training / management staff (and if yes, do they do it?).

D) Career guidance/ transition into the labour market

* If and how training providers provide any career guidance /career information for potential students.
* If and how training providers support students in finding jobs – and if yes, how do they cooperate with the private sector to this end?

E) Social inclusion/ equal opportunity

* Are teaching / non-teaching staff sensitised about different forms of discrimination, inclusion/exclusion (e.g. different types of disability, gender equality, migrant/ refugee status) or harassment / gender-based violence?
* Are there budgets to provide reasonable accommodation for persons with specific needs?
* Are gender concerns included into budgeting? (Is there awareness, that gender equality may need budgeting, e.g. for needs relating to the safety or reproductive health of females

F) Research conclusions and recommendations on how to improve the provision of demand-oriented formal/ non-formal training programmes.

The section should address specifically these points:

* List of formal/non-formal TPs including where they’re based, the sectors they cover (number and type of courses), number of staff, contact details.
* Recommend ways to improve existing or open new channels of co-operation channels between the private sector and training providers to improve delivery

of skills training and to enhance employment opportunities.

* Recommend sector specific and where possible interventions common to both sectors how training providers could be supported to adapt their skill programs to meet market demand.
* Recommend changes and updates to occupations and qualification levels coming from non - formal training providers to meet market demand.
* Provide advice on how training providers can be responsive to the needs of socially excluded and marginalized youth, advice on the feasibility of commercially viable training programmes for socially disadvantaged youth.

**Methodology**

The consultant is expected to use a wide range of methods but shall use at least the following methods as appropriate:

* Desk Review: the consultants will review and analyse relevant secondary sources documents.
* Direct Interviews: the consultant will conduct interviews with training providers from each sector, and other key stakeholders.

**4. Deliverables**

The Consultant will provide an analytic report (20 pages + annexes), elaborating the issues mentioned above.

3 weeks after contract signature the Consultant will submit an inception report outlining findings from the literature review and including a workplan of activities for the next few months.

6 weeks after contract signature the Consultant will submit a draft report that will be shared for comments and feedback.

8 weeks after contract signature the Consultant will submit a final report incorporating the feedback provided by OPTIM and CEDA. The final report should include but not be limited to the following:

* Executive Summary that includes main findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
* A description of methodology used.
* Scope and possible limitations of the research.
* Main findings and the analysis.
* Conclusions, based on the findings and their analysis.
* The recommendations, clearly linked to the conclusions.
* Report shall refer to the sources used, like different reports, literature, websites, interviews, etc.

The Annexes of the report shall include:

* List of documents and bibliography
* Contact list of people interviewed according to the requirements expected in the outputs.

The Consultant will present the findings and recommendations in a de-briefing workshop with OPTIM and CEDA.

**5. Consultant profile**

The ideal candidate/team for this position will be assessed according to the following requirements:

* Proven experience in conducting similar research is an advantage.
* Solid knowledge about labour markets and familiarity with youth employment in Moldova.
* Previous experience in skills development.
* Excellent communication in English, both in speaking and writing.
* Excellent knowledge of Romanian.
* Strong analytical skills – gender and social equity analytical skills are an asset.

**6. Management and reporting**

For the duration of the contract, the Consultant will report to an Intervention Coordinator to whom the Consultant will be accountable. The Intervention Coordinator may accompany the Consultant in several meetings with stakeholders and will be kept informed during the research process. The Consultant will work closely with the Intervention Coordinator for the inception of the study and periodically meet according to a monitoring and reporting plan which will be agreed upon during inception meetings.

* The responsible body representing OPTIM’s and CEDA’s Project is the Intervention Coordinator of the project, but the Intervention Coordinator will be the partner for managing the completion of this assignment.
* The scope of the work of the Consultant does not foresee using the premises of the project but does not exclude the possibility when the need arises.
* Besides the expected reports mentioned in point 3 of this ToR, the Consultant is expected to weekly communicate online with the IM informing, up-dating on the timetable of next activities and when possible, coordinating joint ones.
* In addition to the expected reports, the Consultant should provide biweekly notes to the IM with a progress report (to be further elaborated together) on the planned activities and a final debriefing power point presentation of the findings.
* OPTIM and CEDA will share with the Consultant all available reports and other secondary data on labour market and the target sectors.

**7. Documents to be included in the offer submission**

1. **Technical proposal**. Maximum 5 pages in .doc or .pdf.

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| Describe briefly: |  |
| The reasons why you are the best candidate to successfully fulfil the service requested | Free format |
| The methodology or activities you would use to successfully fulfil the service or activities requested | Free format |

1. **Financial proposal**

The proposed fee is maximum €7.000,00 and shall include all the taxes.

c) Latest CV of consultants involved in the assignments of maximum 3 pages each, highlighting previous relevant experience including at least 3 references. In addition, if applying as an organization, documentation of relevant previous experience and contacts of at least three relevant references.

**8. Candidate assessment and selection**

The selection of the Consultant will be evaluated based on a cumulative analysis of the fulfilment of the evaluation criteria. The contract will be awarded to the Consultant getting the best technical-economic combination based on the evaluation criteria below:

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| Evaluation Criteria | Maximum points |
| Proven experience researching labour markets in Moldova | 20 |
| Previous experience researching skills development in Moldova | 20 |
| Previous experience in the target sectors of agri-food and digitalization / ICT | 10 |
| Quality of planning, methodology and activities suggested for completing the service | 20 |
| Quality of proposed CVs | 20 |
| Value for money of the proposed budget | 10 |
| **Total** | **100%** |