

MACEDONIA SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION SUPPORT PROJECT (SDISP)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

OPERATIONAL AUDIT FOR THE GRANT PROGRAM FOR ENHANCING THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND BUSINESS COMMUNITY

I. BACKGROUND

The Skills Development and Innovation Support Project (SDISP) development objective is to improve transparency of resource allocation and promote accountability in higher education, enhance the relevance of secondary technical vocational education, and support innovation capacity in Macedonia.

The Project would support the Government of Macedonia's (GOM) initiatives geared to:

- increase graduates' competitiveness on a regional and international level;
- increase labor market relevance of graduates' skills;
- make innovation a source of productivity improvement, competitiveness, increased exportability of goods, and sustained economic growth; and
- increase universities and private enterprises engagement in, and their benefit from, R&D efforts and technology adoption opportunities.

The Project would support interventions which foster education and skills relevant to the job market, and enhance the innovation capacity and activity of firms in Macedonia. It will also address key missing elements of the Macedonian innovation system and ailing aspects of the research sector that are likely to be vital for improving the competitiveness of the enterprise sector and Macedonia's longer term economic growth prospects. It will also help improve absorption of EU funds earmarked for innovation activities.

The Project's direct beneficiaries include students, teaching and management staff from technical vocational education and training institutions who would receive a new curriculum and practical training facilities, as well as training on management, planning, and process improvement capacity; students and staff of universities, research institutions and enterprises will benefit from: (i) the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and financing reform in higher education (HE); (ii) grants promoting R&D and innovation; and (iii) technology commercialization, global know-how absorption, and industry- university collaboration fostered by the National Technology Transfer Office (NTTO).

Specific information/background regarding the assignment

The Ministry of Education and Science through the Skills Development and Innovation Support Project (World Bank Loan 8332 MK), started the implementation of a grant program to support joint projects between secondary vocational schools and enterprises aimed at improving the practical training of students and their employability skills.

The overall objective of this program is to increase the number of secondary vocational school students that benefit from practical training in/or provided by small and medium-size enterprises (SME) and large sized firms, as well as increase the quality of the practical training by providing financial support for implementation of the various models of engaging vocational schools/enterprises in practical vocational training and identifying the most successful models.

More specifically, the overarching purpose is to increase the number of students who, through exposure to highly quality practical training, acquire technical and socio-economic skills (including entrepreneurship skills) to better prepare them for the world-of-work and therefore improve their employability after graduation.

The grant program is designed and anticipates various models, each belonging to the specific Grant pillar that defines particular approach of engagement, including but not limited to the following:

Grant Pillar 1: Work Based learning aimed at gaining competencies and knowledge at the workplace.

Grant measure 1.1: Setting up a school company within the VET school through business guidance and mentoring (business mentoring relationship);

Grant measures 1.2: Involvement of students in the in-house training courses at employers place;

Grant measure 1.3: Placement of students in practical training in companies;

Grant Pillar 2: Work related learning aimed at learning from studying or experiences in or related to the world of work

Grant measure 2.1: Establishment of problem based learning courses of a small scale

Grant measure 2.2: Establishment of the summer camps learning programs within the schools;

This specifically developed Operational Manual for the Grant Program further provides the detailed information as well as rules and procedures that should be followed by the stakeholders for application, award of grants on competitive basis and implementation of the grants under each of the Grant pillar measures. The key instrument for implementing the grants is the Agreement signed between the Ministry of Education and Science on the one hand and a TVET School and participating business on the other.

In the first year of the implementation of the Grant program (2016), as a result of the first call for applications, in total of app. 100 applications has been received by the Ministry by respective TVET schools and business community. As it is the first year of implementation the Ministry decided to introduce a piloting phase of the project implementation and selected 10 applications (2 applications per Grant measure) to be implemented in the 2016/2017 school year. The pilot phase supported by operational audit subject to this TOR, comprehensive impact evaluation of the program and performance audit, both subject to different procurement procedures are intended to provide sufficient information to the Ministry for successfulness of the respective measures that would contribute to further redesign of the Grant program.

More details on the Grant program are provided in the Operational manual for implementing the Grant program for enhancing collaboration between schools and business community which would be provided by the Ministry of education and science to the interested applicants.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The objective of the assignment is to complete the operational audit of the implemented school-grant projects during the overall period of the implementation of the Grant program (foreseen to be implemented 2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2018/2019).

More specifically, the Consultant Company shall:

- propose and agree with the MOES on the operational audit methodology to be applied and design the respective tools for its implementation; The consultant must use several qualitative and quantitative techniques to complete the work including review of documents and processes, direct observation, individual interviews, focus groups etc. This audit will be used to appraise the implementation of the grant program against its design.
- identify and agree with the MOES the sampling strategy for selection of grant beneficiaries that would be assessed each year;
- Review the processes and appraise the implementation of the grant program against its design as defined in the Operational Manual for the program including but not limited to assessment of the:
 - ✓ process of dissemination of the information for the Grant program and suggest the areas that need to be adjusted/improved;
 - ✓ application process and its compliance with the procedures established in the Operational Manual.
 - ✓ overall contract management processes including provision of the activities anticipated in the grant agreement, financial management procedures, procurement management procedures, reporting obligations and monitoring and evaluation practices and suggest the areas/processes that need to be adjusted/improved;

The consultant will work under the overall guidance of the SDISP Project Director. The consultant will work closely with the Coordinator for the Grant program and Monitoring and Evaluation specialist at the SDIS PMU.

IV. DELIVERABLES:

The consultant company shall prepare and deliver the following reports:

1. Work plan
2. Defined samples and methodology to be applied.
3. Operational Audit Report on the Grant program for each year during the implementation of the program (foreseen to be implemented in 2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2018/2019).

All reports shall be provided in English and Macedonian language.

V. QUALIFICATIONS

The requested qualifications of the Consulting Firm are the following:

- The company should have a strong orientation to assessment of business processes in each of the development and implementation phases;
- Experience in carrying out process evaluations and assessments for nation-wide programs, preferably in human development programs over the last 10 years;
- Experience in conducting functional analysis will be considered an advantage;
- Experience in the implementation of government programs, including experience in capacity building of public and private sector institutions
- Demonstrated experience in providing intellectual leadership in the field of financial reporting, providing direction to complex policy and institutional development work, outstanding organization skills, including experience in managing large projects
- Knowledge of WB procedures and experience in managing activities implemented by WB projects will be considered an advantage;

The requested Experience and Qualifications of Consultant's Staff are:

I. Team Leader

- University degree (advanced degree would be an advantage)

- Experience as a team leader or Project manager;
- At least five years of experience in managing teams, supervising and coordinating all technical aspects of a contract,
- Knowledge of WB procedures and experience in managing activities implemented by WB projects will be considered an advantage;
- Excellent knowledge of monitoring and evaluation processes
- At least five years of experience in working with public administration and public administration reforms;
- Understanding of the Macedonian education, social, legal and/or economic system would be an advantage;
- Well-developed interpersonal, mediation and team leadership skills as well as demonstrated capacity to function as a member of a multi-disciplinary team;
- Excellent drafting and reporting skills;
- Excellent knowledge of English language
- Knowledge of Macedonian language will be an advantage.

II. Operational Evaluation Expert

- At least university degree in Social Sciences;
- Excellent analytical and reporting skills;
- Proven successful expertise in Operational Monitoring & Evaluation.;
- Proven experience in monitoring and evaluation of projects in the education/social sector (Experience with the educational/social system in Macedonia will be considered an advantage)
- Well-developed interpersonal, mediation and team leadership skills as well as demonstrated capacity to function as a member of a multi-disciplinary team;
- Excellent knowledge of the English language;
- Knowledge of Macedonian will be an advantage.
- Previous experience in working on WB funded projects will be considered an advantage

III. Organizational Expert

- At least university degree in Social Sciences;
- Proven successful expertise in Organizational Development; .
- Awareness of the government policy issues in general and the policy issues facing the social sector;
- Proven experience in implementing functional analysis in public administration bodies (preferably in social and education);
- Well-developed interpersonal, mediation and team leadership skills as well as demonstrated capacity to function as a member of a multi-disciplinary team;
- Excellent knowledge of the English language;
- Knowledge of Macedonian will be an advantage.

- Previous experience in working on WB funded projects will be considered an advantage

VI. CONTRACT ARRANGEMENTS

- The consultancy is to be performed each year during the lifetime of the Grant program initially anticipated to cover three (3) years period i.e. 2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2018/2019.
- The commencement of services is expected to be in November 2016.
- The Contract will be lump sum. Payments shall be based on deliverables.