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REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (REOI)

Quality and Cost Based Selection – (QCBS)

**CONSULTANCY FIRMS**

Assignment Title**:** **Consultant for Information Technology System for the 100M MSME Initiative : development of “100M MSME Support” AI-Driven Platform for African MSMEs and Startups**

Procurement No: **34/AUDA/DIIT/ITEFA/QCBS/2024**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The African Union (AU), established as a unique Pan African continental body, is charged with spearheading Africa’s rapid integration and sustainable development by promoting unity, solidarity, cohesion and cooperation among the peoples of Africa and African States, as well as developing a new partnership worldwide. Its Headquarters is located in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia.

The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) is a programme of the African Union adopted in 2001 in Lusaka, Zambia, aimed primarily at poverty alleviation and promoting economic growth and sustainable development in Africa. As a consequence of the integration of NEPAD into the structures and processes of the African Union, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) was established by the Decision of the 14th AU Assembly of February 2010 as the technical body of the African Union, in replacement of the NEPAD Secretariat.

NEPAD Agency has transformed into the African Union Development Agency. The African Union reforms aim to streamline and improve effectiveness and efficiency in delivering the implementation of AU decisions, policies and programmes across all AU organs and institutions. One of the recommendations of the reforms are to transform the technical body of the AU, the NEPAD Agency, into the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD).

The decision was made during the 31st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of African Union Heads of State and Government in Nouakchott, Mauritania, African Heads of State and Government, in July 2018.

AUDA-NEPAD is an African-owned and led continental agency spearheading Agenda 2063. The decision on the African Union Development Agency is an affirmation by the Member States of their commitment to own an instrument that will champion development support to countries and regional bodies in advancing their priorities through the implementation of Agenda 2063.

1. **THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTING SERVICE**

The aim of the consultancy is to:

The main objective of the project is to empower African entrepreneurs, especially youth and women, to unlock their full potential, advance and have a profound impact on local and regional economies by serving as catalysts for sustainable development by offering technology driven web and mobile application platform to perform:

* Personalized advisory services tailored to entrepreneurs' needs.
* Efficient matching between entrepreneurs and financial stakeholders.
* Support in navigating regulatory environments and policy frameworks.
* Assistance in scaling up businesses for international expansion.

The new 100 million MSME platform is a Web, and Mobile application, led by Artificial Intelligence aimed at African MSMEs and startups operating in all sectors and regions of the continent.

1. **SCOPE OF THE ASSIGNMENT**

***The consultant will be responsible for the following tasks:***

1. **Platform Development:**

* Design and develop the platform’s architecture (both frontend and backend).
* Integrate RAG and LMM technologies.
* Implement the following modules:
  + Tailor-made consulting services
  + Matching algorithm for entrepreneurs and financial stakeholders
  + Support resources (training, workshops, policy assistance)
  + Export assistance for international business expansion

1. **Integration and Customization:**

* Integrate with external programs such as Afreximbank's MANSA certification and AUDA-NEPAD’s cross-border trade facilitation.
* Customize the platform to cater to diverse user needs and preferences.

1. **Testing and Deployment:**

* Conduct thorough testing (unit, integration, and end-to-end).
* Deploy the platform on AUDA-NEPAD’s preferred scalable cloud infrastructure.
* Implement monitoring, logging, and security measures.
* Maintain support to stabilize and optimize the solution deployed for a period of at least one year.

1. **Capacity Building Program**

* Provide training for AUDA-NEPAD staff and other stakeholders.
* Develop comprehensive documentation for developers and users.

1. **EXPECTED OUTPUTS:**
2. Fully functional Web and Mobile application to be used by customers, African 100M MSMEs, driven by AI technology.
3. Integration of RAG and LMM technologies.
4. Fully functional comprehensive support and advisory service module be operational and verified.
5. Fully functional matching service between entrepreneurs and financial stakeholders module be operational and verified;
6. Fully functional capacity building service be operational and verified.
7. Export assistance is expected to be developed and function in phase two but the envisaged solution shall cater for future expansion of the project towards export assistance service.
8. Conduct technical and functional for AUDA-NEPAD stakeholders and provide all Training materials and documentation.
9. Regular progress reports and final project report.
10. **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AT SHORTLISTING STAGE**

Interested Firms are requested to submit the following documents for AUDA-NEPAD consideration:

* 1. An Official signed Letter from an authorized official, expressing interest of the firm to participate in the Consultancy;
  2. An officially completed and signed Declaration of Undertaking downloadable from the website or see attached as **Annex 1 of this REOI**;
  3. General profile and background of the firm which should elaborate the following:
     1. Core Business of the firms;
     2. Names of authorized representatives of the firms (Power of Attorney);
     3. In the cases of Consortiums/Partnerships/Associations shall be required to submit Joint venture Agreements/Joint Association letters stating the lead firm; and
     4. Commercial Registration of the firms attaching Registration certificates.
  4. Experience of the Firm in handling consultancy services of a similar nature;
  5. Audited Financial Statements for the last 3 years (2021,2022,2023); and
  6. Availability of Professional Key Staff with Suitable Qualifications and experience in the field of assignment.

The detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) for the assignment can also be found at the following website: (<https://www.nepad.org/corporate-procurement#tenders>).

1. **Duration of the Assignment:** The duration of the assignment is expected to last 65 man-days in 5 months.
2. Consultants may associate with other firms in the form of a joint venture or a sub-consultancy to enhance their qualifications. Firms from African Union Members States and/or joint ventures will have an added advantage;
3. A Consulting firm will be selected in accordance with the “Quality Cost Based Selection (QCBS)” based on the method set out in the AU Procurement Guidelines. **This is an Expression of Interest (EOI) only, and therefore submission of Financial Proposals is not applicable at this stage;**
4. AUDA-NEPAD will shortlist 3-8 best qualified and experienced firms to submit detailed technical and financial proposals;
5. AUDA-NEPAD reserves the right to verify any information provided by prospective entities/individuals and false information will lead to disqualification. The AUDA-NEPAD Agency reserves the right to cancel the procurement process without stating any reason; and
6. Only Consulting Firms are eligible for this assignment if they fulfil the following eligibility criteria:
7. Have no conflict of interest in relationship to performance of this assignment;
8. Are not subject to, and not controlled by any entity or individual that is subject to, a temporary suspension or a debarment imposed by the Africa Union, World Bank or any other multilateral development bank and being listed on the website http://www.worldbank.org/debarr or respectively on the relevant list of any other multilateral development bank. Further, we are not ineligible under pursuant to a decision of the United Nations Security Council along with any of the sub-consultants, subcontractors, suppliers, or service providers for any part of the contract;
9. Have not been convicted by a final judgement or a final administrative decision or subject to financial sanctions by the United Nations or Country for involvement in a criminal organization, money laundering, terrorist-related offences, child labor or trafficking in human beings; this criterion of exclusion is also applicable to legal Persons, whose majority of shares are held or factually controlled by natural or legal Persons which themselves are subject to such convictions or sanctions;
10. Are not a shell company nor has their company been created specifically for this bid and are legally registered to operate a business under the Laws of their country; and
11. Are not being bankrupt, wound up or ceasing our activities, having their activities administered by courts, having entered receivership, reorganization or being in any analogous situation.
12. Are not involved in corruption: offering, giving, receiving or soliciting, directly or indirectly, anything of value to influence improperly the actions of another party; and
13. Comply with their national tax and social security laws.
14. Expressions of interest with supporting documents must be delivered in written form to the address below by email on or before **July 15, 2024; 14:00hrs (South African Time)**. All EOIs must be marked “**Consultant for Information Technology System for the 100M MSME Initiative : development of “100M MSME Support” AI-Driven Platform for African MSMEs and Startups”**as the subject line of the email;
15. EOIs can also be sent by email, addressed to the address below. Interested Consulting Firms may also obtain further information at the address below during office hours **09:00 - 17:00 South Africa Time** or send clarifications emails to [**manthatir@nepad.org**](mailto:manthatir@nepad.org)**; Telephone +27 (0)11 256 3645**; and
16. ***Privacy Policy****: AUDA-NEPAD Procurement office collects and uses your personal information for the “****Procurement Process****” when you intend to compete and deliver any service or goods for the organization either individually or as a firm based on your consent. Your personal data is our highest security and kept for a period strictly necessary for the purpose set out. This privacy notice supplements the AUDA-NEPAD standard privacy notice and should be read in conjunction with the same available on AUDA-NEPAD website.*

**The Chairperson, Internal Procurement Committee (IPC)**

African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)

230, 15th Road, P. O. Box 218 Midrand,

1685 Johannesburg, South Africa

**Email:** [**procurement@nepad.org**](mailto:procurement@nepad.org) **; and copy** **[manthatir@nepad.org](mailto:manthatir@nepad.org)**

The Attention of: Procurement Division

1. **ANNEX 1 – DECLARATION OF UNDERTAKING.**

**DECLARATION OF UNDERTAKING.**

{*Location, Date*}

To: **The Chairperson Internal Procurement Committee (IPC)**

AUDA-NEPAD

230, 15th Road, P. O. Box 218 Midrand,

1685 Johannesburg, South Africa

**Attention of**: Head of Procurement Division

1. I, the undersigned, offer to provide the services for {insert *Title and Procurement Number*} in accordance with your Request for Expression of interest dated {insert *Date*}
2. I declare that I:
3. Have no conflict of interest in relationship to performance of this assignment;
4. Am not subject to, and not controlled by any entity or individual that is subject to, a temporary suspension or a debarment imposed by the African Union, World Bank or any other multilateral development bank and being listed on the website ***http://www.worldbank.org/debarr*** or respectively on the relevant list of any other multilateral development bank. Further, are not ineligible pursuant to a decision of the United Nations Security Council;
5. Have not been convicted by a final judgement or a final administrative decision or subject to financial sanctions by the African Union, United Nations or Country for involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorist-related offences, child labour or trafficking in human beings; this criterion of exclusion is also applicable to legal Persons, whose majority of shares are held or factually controlled by natural or legal Persons which themselves are subject to such convictions or sanctions;
6. Am not being bankrupt, wound up or ceasing our activities, having our activities administered by courts, having entered receivership, reorganisation or being in any analogous situation;
7. Have not been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organization or any other illegal activity detrimental to the AUDA-NEPAD financial interests;
8. Have not been declared guilty of gross professional misconduct proven by any means which AUDA-NEPAD can justify;
9. Are not involved in corruption: offering, giving, receiving or soliciting, directly or indirectly, anything of value to influence improperly the actions of another party;
10. Comply with their national tax and social security laws.
11. I, the undersigned, certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief, that my CV correctly describes myself, my qualifications, and my experience. I understand that any willful misstatement described herein may lead to my disqualification or dismissal, if engaged;
12. I hereby declare that at any point in time, at AUDA-NEPAD’s request, I will provide certified copies of all documents to prove that I have the qualifications and the professional experience which are attached to this CV as photocopies;
13. By signing this statement, I also authorize the AUDA-NEPAD’s to contact my previous or current employers indicated in my CV, to obtain directly reference about my professional conduct and achievements.

We remain,

Yours sincerely,

Authorised Signature:

Name and Title of Signatory:

Name of Firm:

Address: