

Sierra Leone Financial Inclusion Project (SLFIP)

(IDA Project No.: P166601)

Consulting Services: *Hire a firm to Develop a USSD Regulatory Policy Work for BSL*
SL-MOFED-255324-CS-CQS - Relaunch

(Date of Issue: 6th October, 2021)

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

I. BACKGROUND

The Government of Sierra Leone has received a loan of USD\$12M from IDA/World Bank to implement the Sierra Leone Financial Inclusion Project. The Project has a development objective to increase the interoperability of digital payments and access to financial services. The Project is an Investment Project Financing (IPF) and comprised of three components. Component 1 – Ensuring interoperability of digital payments; finances the hardware, software, and consulting services required to implement a switch successfully. Component 2 – Ensuring the viability of the payments system through increasing usage thereof by financing access points for the switch, including Point of Sale (POS) terminals, mobile wallets, and government payments. The component has a particular emphasis on increasing access in areas of the country with particularly low levels of financial inclusion, and in particular, rural areas. The component also supports other barriers to the usage of the payments system, including legal and regulatory barriers and financial awareness. Component 3 – Project Implementation Support; finances a project coordinator and oversight mechanisms for the project to ensure private sector stakeholder involvement.

II. GOAL OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The Government of Sierra Leone intends to utilize part of the loan to finance the engagement of a consulting firm to develop regulatory changes, framework and policy instruments, and also assist the National Telecommunications Commission (NATCOM), with devising open and affordable access to the Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) numbering resources used for mobile money and e-transactions

III. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this TOR are for a firm (experts) to support BSL and NATCOM through private and public sector dialogue, in the development of the regulatory changes, framework and policy instruments, to facilitate open access to the USSD numbering resources.. The experts shall examine the possibilities of using a common USSD number on different USSD platforms to perform mobile money and e-transactions

IV. DELIVERABLES

1. To develop the regulatory changes, framework, and policy instruments to facilitate open access to the USSD codes. This assignment shall include but not limited to the following:

- Evaluate the minimum session time allowed to complete a transaction
- Assess the synchronization of message in the event of session failure
- Conduct benchmarking of direct client payment to MNO per session or time-based fee by financial and telecommunications regulators in similar economies

- Outline different options of mobile money and e-transactions using USSD codes, indicating the merits and demerits
 - Classify the revenue sharing model (s) adopted by service providers and regulators in similar economies
 - Ascertain the extend of Quality of Service degradation of Operator's network
 - Appraise the degree of fairness in pricing and transparency
 - Identify different pricing models associated with USSD codes and services
 - Examine the risks associated with the use of USSD codes for mobile money and e-transactions
2. Evaluate the options and requirements for the establishment of a unified USSD platform (common infrastructure), outlining the cost implications of different options and requirements.
 3. Organize two (2) stakeholder evaluation workshops to discuss the aforementioned deliverables.

V. QUALIFICATIONS

The firm shall have, at a minimum, the following qualifications:

- At least three years in existence as a firm
- Proven experience delivering at least three similar assignments for Government, the private sector, or international development partners
- Have robust knowledge of USSD legal, regulatory, and policy work relating to digital payments/financial sector

The selected firm shall have at least two individuals, the project manager and counsel, dedicated to this task.

The firm's project manager shall have, at a minimum, the following qualifications:

- Masters degree in electrical and electronic engineering, telecommunications, telecommunications regulations or similar fields;
- At least cumulative 10 years of international work experience with legal, regulatory, and policy issues relating to financial sector and telecommunications, including USSD codes and digital financial services;
- At least 10 year's experience working in the financial and telecommunications sectors, engaged in creating laws, regulations, guidelines, and policy manuals;
- Experience in presenting technical findings and recommendations to senior government officials and other stakeholders;
- Excellent communication, facilitation, and negotiation skills;
- Experience in leading similar assignment in other countries in Africa; and
- Excellent technical writing skills.

The firm's legal counsel shall have, at a minimum, the following qualifications:

- Masters degree in law or related fields;

- At least cumulative 5 years of international work experience with legal, regulatory, and policy issues relating to the financial sector and telecommunications, including USSD codes and digital financial services;
- At least 5 years' experience in drafting financial sector laws, regulations, guidelines, and policy manuals;
- Experience in presenting technical findings and recommendations to senior government officials and other stakeholders;
- Experience in similar assignments in developing countries;
- Excellent communication, facilitation, and negotiation skills; and
- Excellent technical writing skills.

VI. DURATION, LOCATION, AND NATURE OF APPOINTMENT

The duration of the consultancy services is expected to be 70 days between firm's project manager and counsel over the course of three months. The firm shall provide a combination of remote and on-the-ground support to Bank of Sierra Leone (the ratio of which will be agreed upon with BSL during contract negotiations and subject to travel restrictions/safety concerns), working directly with the FSDP unit and its Manager, which has responsibility for the overall project implementation, as well as NATCOM designated personnel

VII. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The firm shall significantly interact with stakeholders, including the project team, and the broader financial and telecommunications sectors. The project stakeholders referred to are as follows:

- BSL senior management
- BSL FSDP
- BSL implementing units and departments
- Project Coordinator
- Project consultants, including Payment Switch Implementation Manager
- NATCOM designated personnel
- Other project implementing partners
- Switch Implementation Committee
- Steering Committee
- MoF's PFMU
- Government
- World Bank
- Private and public sector
- Others as deemed necessary by BSL

Selection Criteria

The short listing criteria are:

1. Firms experience relevant to the Assignment
2. Competency/qualification of the proposed Consultants relevant to the Assignment

Interested consultants must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (brochures, core business, years of experience in the business, description of similar assignments, experience in similar conditions, technical and managerial organization structure of the firm, number of key staffs, availability of appropriate skills among staff, general qualifications etc.) Consultants may associate to enhance their qualification.

This EoI will lead to the preparation of Short list of firms

Firms will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank's Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants by World Bank Borrowers (July 2016, Revised November 2017)

Mode of Application

All proposals submitted in hard copy should have an original and three copies

Team Lead
Project Fiduciary Management Unit (PFMU)
Ministry of Finance
Africanus House, 1st Floor
13A Howe Street
Freetown, Sierra Leone

Or

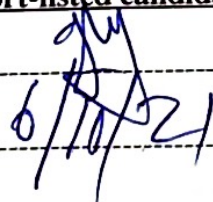
By E-mail: application should be sent as an attachment (including all supporting documents)
to: pfm2018@gmail.com cc: sandelo185@gmail.com

Closing Date:

20th October, 2021 at 4:00 pm GMT.
Only short-listed candidate will be contacted.

Signed -----

Dated -----

A handwritten signature in blue ink is written over the 'Signed' line. Below the signature, the date '01/10/21' is handwritten in blue ink over the 'Dated' line.