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**Sierra Leone Economic Diversification Project**

**CALL FOR PROPOSAL FOR ACCELERATORS TO PROVIDE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SERVICES TO SMES**

**Date Issued: 19th January 2022**

1. **BACKGROUND**

The Government of Sierra Leone and the World Bank are implementing the Sierra Leone Economic Diversification Project (SLEDP). The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to increase investment and growth of small and medium enterprises in non-mining productive sectors. The project will do so by strengthening the business enabling environment, facilitating strategic public investments to improve competitiveness and investments, supporting SMEs and entrepreneurs, and building capacity of public institutions and private sector operators.

Component 2 of the SLEDP aims to facilitate SME growth and stimulate entrepreneurship in high-growth productive sectors by addressing critical firm-level and sector-level constraints including (i) low access to information (ii) poor last mile infrastructure (ii) limited access to finance, (iii) weak capacity to scale businesses. Specific activities in this component to address these challenges include: public goods investment, SME and start-up acceleration, and early-stage financing.

In line with its PDO, the Project recognised that incubators and accelerators in particular play a key role in supporting the growth process of start-ups and SMEs and studies show that the survival rate for incubated companies is higher than that of other companies. Incubators and accelerators have also been proven to maximise the innovation potential of SMEs and start-ups and help them build the needed connections and collaborations to thrive.

In this context, the project is continuing its support to improving the SME Ecosystem and support business resilience in Sierra Leone by launching this second call for proposal for accelerators to accelerate SMEs with a focus on four priority areas:

1. Women economic empowerment
2. Maximizing finance for development
3. Building of government capacity
4. Increasing resilience and sustainability
5. **OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSIGNMENT**

The Project is seeking the services of 3 Accelerators to provide business development services, mentoring and coaching support to SMEs in one of three sectors: Tourism, Light Manufacturing, and Innovation. The aim of the acceleration programme is to support businesses with technical expertise and grant financing that supports their growth, expansion, and ability to create jobs that contributes to the project’s development objectives. The three cohort-based programmes will be for a 12-month period and will prioritise high growth businesses in the following sectors Tourism, Light Manufacturing, and Innovation. The program will be implemented in two -phases:

* A first phase (6 months) will focus on formalization, business model development, customer traction and investment readiness through BDS training, coaching, mentoring, peer learning, networking and linkage building;
* A second phase (6 months) of matching-grant competition, award and implementation (with a phased, performance based, disbursement)

1. **SCOPE OF ASSIGNMENT**

The project is seeking the services of a suitably qualify Accelerators to run one of 3 different cohorts of its business acceleration programme. An average size of 20 beneficiaries per acceleration programme is expected in this round. Each cohort would comprise of two phases i) diagnostic and initial TA phase (6 months) and (ii) grant implementation phase (6 months). The SMEs receiving grants must have completed a satisfactory level activity in phase 1 before recommendation to the second phase by the accelerator.

The specific assignment will include the following:

1. Working closely with the PCU and SMEDA to competitively select SMEs to be supported under the Project, based on criteria consistent with the objectives of the project.
2. Working with the SMEs and assess their needs and state of development / performance to determine what type of TA needed (e.g., product development, market validation, customer discovery, accounting, personal initiative, communication, mentorship, motivation etc.).
3. Accelerate SMEs to build required skills and expertise.
4. Provide technical assistance and support, based on the assessment in (ii) above.
5. Support the SMEs in their cohorts to apply for sub-grants (to be funded under the project) which could include purchase of goods (such as inputs and equipment), implementation of expansion plans, and any other more specialized technical support not able to be provided to the SMEs by the incubator/accelerator.
6. Development of investment proposals for the SMEs and link them with potential investors
7. Provide post technical assistance (TA) report for each of the companies clearly stating progress made during the TA programme

**Specific task of Accelerators**

The accelerators will work on supporting SMEs:

* To be investment ready
* Implementation of business expansion plans, growing sales, marketing and job creation.
* They will also work on supporting SMEs professionalise operations
* Create linkages with potential investors

1. **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

Accelerators wishing to participate in this Project must meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. Experience in developing and/or managing acceleration programs for growth- oriented businesses
2. Mentorship experience with SMEs
3. Experience and demonstrated capacity to mobilize investment and funding for incubated businesses
4. Demonstration of management (especially financial management systems), staffing capacity and logistics to execute large service contracts including sub-contractors
5. Quality and experience of staff involved in the support of SMEs
6. Networking capability.
7. Track record in supporting business resilience and continuity planning
8. **ACCOUNTABILITY**

The contract to be issued for this assignment will be performance based and payments will be directly linked to agreed milestones and delivery timelines with penalties for late completion.

1. **PROFILE OF ACCELERATOR**

Applicants are required to submit proposals including CV of key team members, detailed work plan for delivering the assignment and budget costed per SME *.*The detailed budget must be included separately, showing the gross (including   any taxes you are liable for) and net amount. Please outline division of tasks and time commitment if submitting as a team. Below are minimum requirements in your proposal:

* Minimum of 5 years’ experience running similar acceleration and incubation programmes for the sectors highlighted earlier
* Minimum 1-year experience providing technical support and mentorship programmes to SMEs in Sierra Leone
* Knowledgeable in the areas of business model development and implementation of growth strategies for one of the three sectors identified in scope of work.
* Evidence of experience for similar work should be referenced providing details of type of work, period of work and client details.
* Relevant qualifications of lead consultant: Master’s in business studies, entrepreneurship, or Finance
* Excellent command of English and additional local languages is a plus
* Firms interested in applying should also provide copies of business registration certificate, license, and company profile.
* Provide minimum of three reference clients with contact person, e-mail and phone number.

The Accelerator/Incubator will be selected by a panel based on an evaluation of the points above and the ability to meet the deadline.

1. **DURATION OF ASSIGNMENT**

Accelerators will be hired for 12 months to support one cohort of SMEs and pending a satisfactory (external and independent) performance review, may be hired for acceleration of additional cohorts in future.

1. **REPORTING**

Biweekly status call with the SLEDP Project Coordination Unit (PCU) team and the Small Medium Enterprises Agency (SMEDA) and weekly submission of activities report with detail progress update of each of the SMEs.

**Mode of Application**

Interested Accelerators must provide specific information which demonstrates that they are fully qualified to provide the services such as the following:

* The strategy and methodology
* Description of similar assignments undertaken, detail experience and the range of skills and experience amongst their personnel
* Capacity reference of entity
* At least two sample strategies and progress/final outputs/outcomes of similar work in the past
* Detailed breakdown of activities, timeline and budget

All Proposals should be submitted in writing and addressed to:

**The Head of Procurement**

Project Fiduciary Management Unit

Ministry of Finance

13a Howe Street Freetown

Tel: +23276672186

**or**

By E-mail application as attachment (including all supporting documents) to: **info@sledp.gov.sl**

Please indicate clearly on the envelop (in the case of hard copy application) or in the email subject heading and attachment (in the case of electronic proposal) the post for which application is made.

**Closing Date:**

The Closing Date and time for receipt of applications is **9th February 2022.**

**Only short-listed candidates will be contacted**

1. **ADDENDUM: QUALIFICATION OF INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANTS**

The assignment will cover several related but distinct areas (finance, supply chain, operations, marketing, HR, formalization and business legal services, product development and standards – health and safety, etc.), hence the exercise will require accelerators with consultants who have expertise in all of these aspects. Interested service providers are therefore expected to have a team which comprises experts in each of these areas.

The firm itself should fully demonstrate the experience, capacity and competencies already outlined above, first and foremost. In addition, consultants proposed by the firm are expected to possess the following, as a minimum:

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| Position Required Skills | |
| Assignment Implementation Lead/Manager | * A Masters level University Degree in business, business administration, commerce, or economics a must. Combinations of multiple relevant fields highly desirable. * At least 8 years’ experience in business development, private sector development and BDS delivery; financial sector and service delivery experience highly desirable. * At least three years’ experience in Sierra Leone, experience in the sub-region and international experience a must. Management experience strongly desired. * Several relevant trainings in BDS market systems, and private sector development a must * Experience in delivering and managing BDS programs for at least three reputable clients a must. |
| Specialist Expert in Light Manufacturing/Innovation/Tourism | * A Masters’ Degree in green industries or related field. Specialized in private sector trainings highly desirable. * At least 8 years’ experience in one of the sectors highlighted * At least five years’ experience in Sierra Leone. Experience in countries other than Sierra Leone will be an advantage. * BDS-related experience for businesses in the project’s priority sectors will be an advantage. * Experience in training, facilitation, coaching and mentoring businesses of varied sizes and capacities in Sierra Leone and the sub region highly desired. * Knowledgeable in the areas of business model development and implementation of growth strategies for businesses in the project’s priority sectors highly desired. * General work experience in senior management position in the private or NGO sector an added advantage. * Training and experience of a wide range of BDS topics (e.g. market intelligence, financial services, market systems, etc.) will be an added advantage. |
| Sales & Marketing Expert | * An MBA or Masters’ Degree in marketing, business, commerce, economics, or related field. * At least 8 years’ experience in marketing in multiple sectors including the sectors highlighted by the project * At least three years’ experience in Sierra Leone. Experience in countries other than Sierra Leone will be an advantage. * BDS-related experience for businesses in the project’s priority sectors will be an advantage. * Experience in training, facilitation, coaching and mentoring businesses of varied sizes and capacities in Sierra Leone and the sub region highly desired. * Knowledgeable in the areas of business model development and implementation of growth strategies for businesses in the project’s priority sectors highly desired. * General work experience in senior management position in the private or NGO sector an added advantage. * Training and experience of a wide range of BDS topics (e.g., market intelligence, financial services, market systems, etc.) will be an added advantage. |

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| Finance Expert | * A Masters’ Degree in finance, accounting or related field a must. Specialized finance and private sector trainings highly desirable. * At least 10 years’ experience in financial services, financial management or accountancy * At least five years’ experience in Sierra Leone. Experience in countries other than Sierra Leone will be an advantage. * BDS-related experience of two or more agro-processing value chains will be an advantage. * Experience in training, facilitation, coaching and mentoring businesses of varied sizes and capacities in Sierra Leone and the sub region highly desired. * Knowledgeable in the areas of business model development and implementation of growth strategies for the project’s priority sectors highly desired. * General work experience in senior management positions an added advantage. * Training and experience of a wide range of BDS topics (e.g., market intelligence, financial services, market systems, etc.) will be an added advantage. |
| Investment Readiness Expert | * An academic qualification in business administration, economics, accounting, finance, law, food science, or any relevant field to at least BSc/BA; advanced and market systems trainings highly desirable * Experience of at least 5 years in the provision of investment readiness support to businesses in a wide range of sectors, including development of business plans and/or investment outlays and pitching documents * At least four years of sustained experience in providing investment, BDS and financial growth support to multiple businesses with strong evidence of past or existing investees receiving technical support from expert * Specialization in and considerable experience in delivering such services to the project’s priority sectors strongly desired. * At least five years of relevant experience in Sierra Leone. Experience in countries other than Sierra Leone will be an advantage. * Experience in training, facilitation, coaching and mentoring businesses of varied sizes and capacities in Sierra Leone highly desired. * Knowledgeable in the areas of business model development and implementation of growth strategies for the sectors highlighted earlier in the call highly desired. * Experience in the financial sector and investment risk management highly desirable * Training and experience of a wide range of BDS topics (e.g. market intelligence, financial services, market systems, etc.) will be an added advantage. |