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**GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE**

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**RE-ADVERTISEMENT**

**INDIVIDUAL CONSULTING SERVICES**

**EXPRESSION OF INTERESTS FOR CONSULTING SERVICES FOR UPDATING QUALITY STANDARDS AND LICENSING PROCESSES FOR LODGING ESTABLISHMENTS IN SIERRA LEONE**

Sierra Leone possesses pristine beaches and islands, mountains and rich biodiversity, interesting wildlife, friendliness and rich cultural capital among people and its special place in the world history of anti-slavery movement as ‘the land of the free.’ The Government of Sierra (GoSL) has officially prioritized tourism in the newly formulated National Development Plan 2019 - 2023. The new National Tourism Policy states the goal of tourism in Sierra Leone is to “*generate foreign exchange, encourage even development, promote tourism-based rural enterprises, generate employment, accelerate rural-urban integration and foster socio-cultural unity among the various regions of the country through the promotion of domestic and international tourism*.” (GoSL, 2017). Its National Ecotourism Policy states the goal of receiving 20,000 international and 30,000 domestic ecotourism visits to sites by 2025 (GoSL, 2017).

The Government of Sierra Leone and the World Bank are implementing the Sierra Leone Economic Diversification Project (SLEDP), one of the components of which takes an integrated destination approach to improving the performance of Sierra Leone’s tourism sector. This includes facilitating the reduction of barriers to business success, assisting existing tourism providers with market access, and improving the quality of selected tourism products to place the country’s tourism sector on a sustainable and inclusive growth trajectory. This will be achieved through a mix of institutional and policy reforms, market development, national marketing enhancement, re-branding, building B2B linkages, and strategically developing tourism products in selected areas.

Accommodation quality is one of the most important factors in the visitor experience. Visitors typically spend more time and money in their accommodation than anywhere else during their trip. The lodging experience significantly affects tourists’ perception of the destination, as well as their likelihood of recommending the country and coming back for a return visit. Sierra Leone has a lodging licensing and standards system, but it is outdated. There is a need to update the licensing standards and processes to better align them with regional and international best practices as well as the Sierra Leonian context.

**II. Objective of the assignment**

The objective of this consultancy is to enhance the capacity of the National Tourist Board (NTB) to effectively implement quality accommodation standards in Sierra Leone. The consultant will work with the National Tourist Board (NTB) to review ECOWAS licensing standards and processes for lodging establishments, make recommendations for any adaptations needed for the Sierra Leone situation and develop an implementation manual including a costed action plan, and work with the NTB to ensure effective implementation of the updated standards.

**III. Scope of Work and Approach**

The consultant will review new ECOWAS and existing NTB accommodation standards and licensing processes and evaluate current implementation processes (including the time and cost of these processes) noting any gaps or areas where efficiencies could be improved. The consultant will also review the recently completed Circular Economy Guidelines for the tourism sector to identify areas that could be included in the standards. The consultant will identify and highlight three or four examples of international good practice from elsewhere in Africa as options for improving efficiencies of standards role out in Sierra Leone. The consultant will also hold a stakeholder meeting to hear accommodation providers views on how the implementation could be improved.

Based on the information collected, the consultant will make recommendations for improvements to the standards and implementation process. Based on feedback received from NTB and the Hotel Association the consultant will finalize the standards and draft two implementation handbooks (including all necessary forms and templates): one for the auditing institution and the other for lodging establishments.

The handbooks should be simply written and attractively laid out. Evaluation and scoring processes should be objective. Evaluation forms should be mobile friendly so they can be completed and submitted via a tablet.

Finally, the consultant will hold a series of training sessions for the accommodation standards evaluators and the hotel sector to ensure the new standards are fully understood and MoTCA, NTB and the Hotel Association are capacitated to implement the standards.

1. **Reviewing existing lodging establishment licensing standards and processes**

The consultant will review licensing standards and processes for at least four categories of accommodations: hotels, guest houses, self-catering and ecolodges. The consultant may also identify recommend new categorization of establishments if needed.

* The consultant will review existing lodging standards, national construction guidelines, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines, Circular Economy Guidelines, the ECOWAS harmonized standards and international examples from elsewhere in Africa. The consultant will include case studies of at least three examples that were drawn upon in the report annex.
* The consultant will hold initial meetings with institutions involved in the current lodging establishment licensing system to better understand their roles, responsibilities, and perspectives.
* The consultant will conduct site visits to a full range of lodging establishments (including both those that are currently licensed and those that are not) and meet with owners/managers whenever possible. This will allow the consultant to better understand the local context, as well as the constraints in the current system that have led to relatively low uptake levels.
* Based on the document review, meetings, and site visits, the consultant will recommend improvements to the standards themselves and to the implementation process that consider international best practice. The standards should cover the areas of health & sanitation (taking into consideration COVID-19 (see following section), safety, security, environment, social sustainability, gender, and comfort, among others.
* A normative approach will be taken to reduce subjectivity of evaluations. There will be three possible answers to each criterium on the standard: “present” “not present” or “not applicable”.
* The consultant will prepare and hold training workshops for MoTCA and NTB staff in how to implement the new standards. These will include at least one mock assessment.
* The recommendations should include:
  + Suggested roles and responsibilities of each participating institution
  + A process flow mapping, including lengths of time allocated to each step in the process
  + Frequency in which licensing should take place
  + Costs/fees to be paid by lodging establishments (taking into consideration the cost of steps and procedures already required for a lodging establishment to operate in Sierra Leone so as ensure these standards do not impose an undue burden on them).
  + Who will perform the audit (considering the possibility of third-party auditors)
  + Training/capacity building needs for auditors and participating institutions
  + Staffing, equipment/software, and funding requirements to implement the new licensing system
  + Possibility of using innovative processes, including the use of mobile technology and digitization
  + Safeguards to put in place to reduce the potential for unlawful payments or charges in connection with the inspection of establishments.
  + Possible updated that would need to be made to relevant legal frameworks
  + Outreach efforts to be made to ensure that all lodging establishments are familiar with modifications to the licensing process
  + Process for lodging establishments to submit appeals
  + Potential incentives for compliance
  + Potential penalties for non-compliance
  + Mechanisms for quality control within the licensing period if complaints are lodged
* Policy meetings will be held with EPA, fire, health, safety and NTB to consider, discuss and agree on the implications of the proposed changes. These will be facilitated by the MoTCA with the support of the consultant.
* A full day workshop will be facilitated by the consultant to work with the private sector to review the recommended changes to the licensing standards and processes. Based on feedback, adjustments to the documents should be made.
* A full day workshop will be facilitated by the consultant and public sector involves in lodging licensing to finalize the standard and process.

1. **Ensuring COVID-19 accommodation health and Safety protocols**

As a supplement to the lodging standards, the consultant will review and improve existing or adapt new recommended COVID-19 health and safety protocols for the accommodation sector: hotels, guest houses, self-catering and ecolodges. These will cover the arrival, stay, restaurant services, excursions and all other aspects of the guests stay.

* The consultant will review the existing COVID-19 protocols for accommodation properties in Sierra Leone and hold a series of meetings to hear how these are being implemented
* The consultant will compare these standards with international best practice from the World Travel and Tourism Council and UNWTO.
* The consultant will draft a short brochure/web page documenting suggested improved protocols for the transport, accommodation and provision of services to guests.
* These standards will indicate the procedure for notifying authorities when a guest is unwell and suspects COVID-19.
* The improved protocols will consider environmental risks of single-use plastic and the risks of cleaning chemicals on hotel staff.
* The consultant will review the protocols with government (transport, health, tourism, environment) and hoteliers and other private sector stakeholders (associations) and make revisions as necessary
* The consultant will organize a virtual or socially distanced workshop to discuss the new standards and finalize the recommendations
* The consultant will finalize the protocol brochure and list of “do’s and don’ts” for tourists and prepare a series of short video (2-5 min) to raise awareness of the standards and new protocol processes for hoteliers and for arriving tourists
* The consultant will hold at least 4 socialization and train-the-champion virtual or in-person trainings including government trainers, hotel schools, tourist associations, private trainers and hoteliers to assist with the adoption of the protocols.

Outputs from A will include final protocols, COVID-19 training brochure for accommodation providers, video for hoteliers and tourists. List of tourists do’s and don’ts.

1. **Drafting of Implementation Handbooks for the Auditing Institution and Lodging Establishments and a Costed Action Plan**

The consultant will prepare two separate technical handbooks/manuals to guide both the accommodation standards auditing institution and lodging establishments through the licensing process. They will contain all relevant templates and forms to be filled out during the process.

* The auditors’ handbook will provide a road map for the implementing institution to apply the new standards. It will contain the full list of approved standards, with additional guidance on what the auditor should look for specifically and how information can be obtained/verified for each. Cases where exceptions may apply should be specified. Additionally, the handbook will provide detailed explanations of all structures, processes, and procedures involved in the process. It should cover all of the issues specified in section A.
* The lodging establishment handbook will help accommodation owners and operators understand how to implement the standards and prepare for audits. For each standard, there will be an explanation of the rationale and how to implement each. Rules regarding a ‘non applicable’ score will be noted. Resources and examples of how to comply will be cited along with the process and rules around inspection and grievance redress.
* Once the handbooks are drafted, at least three workshops will be held with lodging establishment owners and operators to introduce the handbook and receive feedback to help finalize the document. The workshop will also serve to build awareness of the new licensing system.
* The agreed-to evaluation forms will be prepared in mobile-ready format so that auditors can undertake audits (offline) using a tablet rather than paper survey forms. The consultant will recommend the necessary software for this process. Purchase of agreed-to software will be financed separately if required.
* Finally, a three-day training will be designed and run for auditors to familiarize them with the new standards and processes and ensure consistent implementation. At least one test Audit will be completed by each auditor. Successful submission of a correct audit will result in the certification of the auditor to use the new process. Purchase of needed tablets for the auditing will be financed separately.

**Timeline and Deliverables**

| **Deliverables** | **Delivery Dates** |
| --- | --- |
| Inception report, including review of existing and international best practice | 3 weeks after contract signing |
| Recommended licensing standards and processes document draft | 7 weeks after contract signing |
| Validation workshop | 8 weeks after contract signing |
| Licensing standards and processes document final | 10 weeks after contract signing |
| Draft implementation handbooks for auditors and lodging establishments | 14 weeks after contract signing |
| Validation workshop | 16 weeks after contract signing |
| Final implementation handbooks for auditors and lodging establishments | 18 weeks after contract signing |
| Training/capacity building for auditors | 20 weeks after contract signing |
| **Total** | **20 weeks** |

Validation/comments on deliverables will be provided within 14 days from receipt of the report.

1. **Reporting**

The consultants will be report to Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs (MoTCA) and the National Tourist Board (NTB) and the SLEDP Project Coordination Unit.

1. **Consultant Qualifications**

* He/ She must have a master’s degree in Tourism Management, Economics, sociology, development studies Monitoring and Evaluation, or any relevant field
* At least 8 years’ experience in management and/or development of the tourism sector
* Previous experience in carrying out at least 2 similar assignments in the past 5 years, related to the development and/or implementation of tourism standards, classifications and inspections
* Experience with accommodation standards in Africa is essential
* Knowledge of the Sierra Leone tourism sectors is a plus
* Strong analytical and report writing abilities
* Excellent written and verbal communication skills in English;
* Positive references for the completion of similar assignments

**Mode of Application**

Note: The Consultant will be selected in accordance with Individual Consultant (IC) method set out in the World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers Procurement in Investment Project Financing Goods, Works, Non-Consulting and Consulting Services Fourth Edition November 2020. The evaluation shall be based on the relevant qualifications and experience of the individual Consultant. All applications in writing should be accompanied by up-to-date Curriculum Vitae and supporting documents (Note: do not send originals) with the names and addresses of three referees, one of which should be the last or current employer 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: **sleconomicdiversification@gmail.com**

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 applications) the post for which application is made.

Closing Date:

The Closing Date and time for receipt of applications is 2nd February 2022 at 16:00pm.

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