

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (CONSULTING SERVICES – FIRMS SELECTION)

Country: Republic of Moldova

Name of Project: MSME Competitiveness Project

Contract Title: Support to ODA in development and implementation of an Export Readiness Program

Reference No.: MD-CEP-474893-CS-QCBS

Loan No.: IBRD 9423-MD

Credit No.: IDA 7174-MD

1. The Republic of Moldova has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the MSME Competitiveness Project and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services.
2. The consulting services (“the Services”) include **implementation of a system** to conduct quick 360-degree firm-level assessment from the perspective of export readiness and provide tailored consultancy support to participating Moldovan MSMEs as well as an **assistance to the 250 selected Moldovan MSMEs** in reaching export-readiness and world-class standards for their products and services, ensuring they meet the requirements for regional and European market integration.
3. The detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) for the assignment ***are attached to this request for expressions of interest.***
4. The Public Institution “Project Implementation Unit of the World Bank Competitiveness Enhancement Project” acting as Project Implementation Unit of the MSME Competitiveness Project now invites eligible consulting firms (“Consultants”) to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services.

The shortlisting criteria are:

- Company’ proven experience in carrying out firm-level business reviews and similar consultancy in export readiness development programs, or in other business development support programs. The lead Consultant should have at least ten (10) years of experience.
- • Experience in SME’ support programs, including having export readiness screening / evaluation tools and instruments successfully applied in previous similar or alike programs. This shall be documented by at least two (2) contracts finalized in the last four (4) years. For ongoing projects, copies of acceptance documents of the delivered programs shall be provided.
- Track record of working effectively with the private sector at both working and senior level, and with government agencies in delivering, inter alia, export missions or other export promotion programs.
- Demonstrated ability to undertake results focused consultancy with the aim of deriving real business benefits for and embedding sustainable skills in participating companies, and an understanding of key requirements challenges exporting companies are facing.
- Experience of working on the ground with exporters and potential exporters in emerging or developing countries. Experience of, and a presence in Southeast Europe would be advantageous.
- Association with local companies and individual experts with experience in business consultancy and business development support programs is mandatory.

- Prior working experience with international development finance organizations is an asset.

Qualification of Key Experts

Key experts represent specific knowledge and/or expertise required for the successful project implementation. Although the Consultant will form project implementation team at its discretion, the Consultant shall provide the following key experts with proved competencies:

- Key expert 1. Project Manager
- Key expert 2. Economic Expert
- Key expert 3. International Business Expert
- Key expert 4. Trade Expert
- Key expert 5. Marketing Expert
- Key Expert 6. Legal expert

Key Experts will not be evaluated at the shortlisting stage.

The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to Section III, paragraphs, 3.14, 3.16, and 3.17 of the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers" **November 2020** ("Procurement Regulations"), setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.

Consultants may associate with other firms to enhance their qualifications, but should indicate clearly whether the association is in the form of a joint venture and/or a sub-consultancy. In the case of a joint venture, all the partners in the joint venture shall be jointly and severally liable for the entire contract, if selected.

A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the ***Quality and Cost-Based Selection*** method set out in the Procurement Regulations.

Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours. **09:00 to 17:00 hours.**

Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by mail, or by fax, or by e-mail) by **September 10, 2025**.

Attn: Mr. Aureliu CASIAN, PIU Executive Director

Public Institution "Project Implementation Unit of the World Bank Competitiveness Enhancement Project"
acting as Project Implementation Unit of the World Bank MSME Competitiveness Project

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E-mail for submission of the clarifications: piu@mded.gov.md

E-mail for submission of the EoIs: procurementmgf@gmail.com

Only the notification of EoI submission must be sent to piu@mded.gov.md

Web site: <http://uipac.md>

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Support to ODA in development and implementation of an Export Readiness Program (Consultancy Services)

A. Background

The Government of the Republic of Moldova (GoM) is pursuing a policy agenda to support export-led economic growth. In this regard, an improved business environment is essential to foster sustainable private sector growth. Significant regulatory and institutional weaknesses in the business environment have been identified by the recently conducted Investment Climate Assessment as major obstacles to the private sector's ability to perform efficiently and grow, and they also negatively affect investor confidence. The presence of cumbersome regulations undermines the competitiveness of private Moldovan enterprises and prevents increased investment by increasing the cost of doing business, and ultimately providing fertile ground for corruption, favoritism, and the informal economy.

During the implementation of the CEP II, supported activities have resulted in approximately \$215 million in new exports, more than 1,000 jobs, an estimated \$15 million in savings to the private sector associated with the implementation of the electronic one-stop-shop for permits, as well as other reforms.

In order to sustain the results of the CEP II and other programs implemented and to support the continued implementation of reforms to improve business environment and facilitate export promotion, GoM is currently implementing a new project, the Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises (MSME) Competitiveness Project, which takes a more comprehensive approach to business competitiveness with funding from the International Development Association and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

B. Project Description

The MSME's project development objectives (PDO) are: (i) to reduce the regulatory burden, increase access to finance, increase the export competitiveness of Moldovan enterprises, and (ii) in case of an Eligible Crisis or Emergency, to respond promptly and effectively to it.

The PDO will be achieved through a set of activities that aim to: (a) digitize government-to-business services and inspections, streamline permissive documents, and enhance national quality infrastructure to reduce the regulatory burden enterprises face; (b) support access to finance for enterprises through credit guarantees and enhance the capacity of the Credit Guarantee Fund (CGF), and (c) support the development of MSMEs and enhance their export competitiveness; d) support project management; e) support the government's response in case of an emergency.

The project consists of the following components:

Component 1 – Regulatory reform and Digitization. This component supports GoM in reducing the regulatory burden on businesses by further digitization both at the national and local levels, enhancing and digitizing inspection services, improving interoperability and integrated service delivery for businesses, simplifying the regulatory environment, and improving the National Quality Infrastructure System (hereinafter NQI).

Component 2 – Access to Finance. This component aims to support the CGF under the Organization for Entrepreneurial Development¹ (hereinafter ODA) in providing financial guarantees to MSMEs, to deliver more effective programs and assistance that have positive spillovers for the growth of MSMEs and export-oriented sectors to expand the business, enter new markets, start new export activities, and introduce new technologies needed for productivity gains.

Component 3 – MSME Development and Export Competitiveness, focusing on supporting firms through matching grants, export readiness, supplier linkages, and export promotion programs. The objectives of this component are linked with GoM’s goals of simplifying the rules for MSME operation, supporting business establishment, growth and internationalization, enabling more efficient support programs for MSMEs, as well as facilitating the inflow of investments.

Breaking it down by key activities: (i) enable local firms to export through matching grants program, integrated in ODIMM’s export readiness, internationalization, European Green Deal, and linkages programs for maximum efficiency; (ii) strengthen export readiness program for MSMEs at ODA to bring MSMEs to export readiness (iii) enhance export promotion activities of the Investment Agency and (iv) enable local linkages with foreign manufacturing firms.

Component 4 – Contingency Emergency Response (CERC). This is an unfunded contingency component that can be activated in case of a relevant emergency event. Following an eligible crisis or emergency, the Borrower may request the World Bank to reallocate Project funds to support an emergency response. Once triggered, this component will draw from the uncommitted loan resources under the Project to address the emergency.

The project implementation is delegated to the Project Implementation Unit (PIU), an autonomous legal entity established by Government Decision No. 895 on August 25, 2005. The PIU will act as the “Client” for the proposed assignment and will handle contract signing and processing the payments. The contract will be implemented in collaboration with ODA.

C. Background & overall objectives of the assignment

The Organization for Entrepreneurship Development (ODA) supported by the World Bank MSME financed Project is launching an Export Readiness Program (ERP) aimed at strengthening the capacity of Moldovan Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises to integrate into international markets value chains. This initiative is part of ODA’s existing programs and builds upon previous work under the World Bank Competitiveness Enhancement Project (CEP II).

The Export Readiness Program was designed to target 450 companies with export potential. However, given the limited project timeline, considerable number of participants and the implementation period, the current assignment is foreseen to target 250 MSMEs. The remaining part of the Program will be subject of continuation under phase II following the results of the MSME Project’ mid-term review mission at the end of 2025.

Thus, phase I of the program is planned **to run for 20 months, starting in November 2025, and will support up to 250 Moldovan MSMEs** with export potential. A minimum of 25% of these firms will

¹ Public institution under the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization with the mission to support the development of the entrepreneurial environment, including small and medium enterprises.

be guided to apply for matching grant schemes under ODA to further support their internationalization process.

The Program is structured as a multi-phase Export Accelerator, focused on helping Moldovan MSMEs become export-ready and connect with international buyers. The program aims to address critical gaps in export capability through structured interventions such as diagnostic screening, tailored technical support, training, and facilitation of market linkages.

The program is structured around four interconnected phases:

1. **Export Readiness Screening** - conducting 360-degree quick assessments of selected MSMEs to evaluate their export potential, segment firms by readiness level, and identify capacity-building needs.
2. **Capacity Building** - delivering foundational and sector-specific training on export-related topics, including regulatory compliance, logistics, pricing strategies, sustainability, and market entry strategies.
3. **Strategy Development & Technical Support** - providing coaching and consultancy to develop actionable Export Development Plans (EDPs) and supporting MSMEs in aligning their products/services with international standards.
4. **Market Linkages & Export Activation** - facilitating B2B engagements, trade missions, and targeted buyer outreach to connect export-ready MSMEs with global supply chains.

The program also aims to strengthen ODA's institutional capacity by setting up mechanisms and tools for screening firms and tracking their export development journey.

The program will focus on Moldovan MSME with export potential and willing to export for the first time or willing to expand their export operations and customers. Among potential eligible companies will be MSMEs from the following sectors, but not limited to:

1. **Manufacturing** – SMEs with demonstrated production capacity and potential for scalable supply to international markets.
2. **Fresh fruits and vegetables** – producers with the potential of meeting phytosanitary and quality requirements for international markets.
3. **Agri-food processing** – value-added food producers ready to adapt to global market requirements.
4. **Wine and non-alcoholic beverages** – SMEs with export growth ambitions and capacity.
5. **Cosmetics and pharmaceutical ingredients** – SMEs capable of complying with international safety, quality, and labeling standards.

Other high-potential sectors including apparel, light manufacturing, and other sectors to be identified in the Consultant's proposed methodology based on market demand, readiness potential, and alignment with ERP objectives.

The main objectives of the Export Readiness Program are:

- **Enhancing entrepreneurial skills** - the program will provide business development training and capacity-building initiatives tailored to Moldovan SMEs, equipping them with the knowledge to expand their market presence and integrate into international supply chains.

- **Fostering an entrepreneurial environment** - the initiative will create a supportive ecosystem for Moldovan exporters by promoting new business models, integrating export value chain approaches, and encouraging the implementation of modern techniques that enhance competitiveness.
- **Providing targeted assistance and expertise** - Moldovan SMEs will receive tailored consulting support to align their products, processes, and quality standards with foreign buyer expectations. The program will assist firms in achieving compliance with EU export regulations and sustainability standards under, *inter alia*, the European Green Deal.
- **Establishing buyer linkages** - the project will create preconditions for direct engagement between Moldovan SMEs and international buyers, through B2B matchmaking, supplier engagement forums, and trade missions, increasing access to international supply chains.
- **Access to global expertise** - the program will connect Moldovan SMEs with international trade and export specialists, ensuring they receive guidance on scaling operations, improving supply chain efficiency, and implementing best practices for global competitiveness.

A key feature of the program is the hands-on technical assistance provided to participating companies. The best international and local consulting expertise will be engaged to work directly with firms, helping them meet buyers' expectations and enhance their performance in line with export markets requirements.

In this framework and considering the important number of expected beneficiaries, ODA is seeking the services of a foreign consulting firm or a consortium of such firms, associated with local company (ies) with experience in business advisory. The consortium shall demonstrate its experience with a proven track record in export promotion, SME development, and trade facilitation programs to support the implementation of the Export Readiness Program.

D. SCOPE OF WORK

Overview of the Assignment

Against this background, ODA, supported by the MSME Project, intends to engage a Consulting Firm **to implement a system to conduct quick 360-degree firm-level assessment from the perspective of export readiness** and provide tailored consultancy support to participating Moldovan MSMEs.

The key objective of the consultancy is to ***assist 250 selected Moldovan MSMEs in reaching export-readiness*** and world-class standards for their products and services, ensuring they meet the requirements for regional and European market integration. This will be done by addressing key operational deficiencies, aligning firms with international buyer standards, and supporting their participation in export promotion activities.

The approach will be participatory and consultative, focusing on facilitation, direct engagement with company management, and on-site assistance to help MSMEs meet international buyer expectations. The transfer of knowledge, skills, and expertise will be at the core of the project, ensuring firms can independently apply improvements and sustain business benefits beyond intervention.

The program will include the following key activities:

- a) **Conducting business reviews and assessments of up to 250 Moldovan MSMEs**, evaluating their export potential, compliance with international procurement criteria, and areas for improvement required by international buyers.

- b) **Developing short- and medium-term Export Development Plans (EDP)** in collaboration with participating companies, ensuring clear action points for achieving export-readiness and market competitiveness.
- c) **Providing one-on-one consultancy support to selected MSMEs**, offering tailored coaching and technical assistance to help firms implement improvements and meet international buyer expectations.
- d) **Organizing sectorial training workshops to transfer knowledge on export compliance**, EU market access requirements, supply chain integration, and best practices in business optimization.

The impact of the program will be measured by improvements in export performance, compliance with international standards, and successful integration of Moldovan MSMEs into export markets. Additionally, the program will encourage sustainability by building local business consulting expertise and integrating local institutions and business support organizations into the delivery process.

To conduct reviews and assessments, the consulting firm or consortium of such firms should propose proven tools, instruments or methodology that have been successfully applied in similar programs. The methodology should include the following characteristics:

- A holistic evaluation of MSMEs to ensure long-term development while addressing immediate needs required by international buyers.
- Clear indicators and benchmarks aligned with international operational performance standards.
- A participatory and interactive approach, ensuring that companies actively engage in the review process and take ownership of improvements.
- The ability to be transferred to local public and private institutions, ensuring that the impact and methodology remain sustainable within Moldova's business support ecosystem.

ODA welcomes innovative and improved approaches to the methodology based on the Consultant's experience with similar export readiness programs.

In responding to this tender, the Consultant should clearly indicate which components of the assignment will be delivered by international, regional, and local personnel, ensuring an optimal balance of expertise and cost-effectiveness.

The Consultant is also required to submit a contingency plan, outlining how they will ensure continuous service delivery in case of security risks, health-related disruptions, or any other potential operational challenges.

The **expected timeline** is as follows - **November 2025** - validation of the initial selection of companies (Program Beneficiaries) to participate in the program and commencement of firm-level business reviews.

E. SPECIFIC TASKS

Task 1: Business Reviews and Assessments

In coordination with ODA, at the **first phase** of the program the Consultant will focus on reviewing and validating the **initial selection of MSMEs** to participate followed by a **quick 360-degree assessment** of each firm's export readiness, and compliance with international market requirements and buyers expectations.

The **initial selection of MSMEs** will be conducted in coordination with ODA and will include the following:

- Assist ODA in preparing the public call and establishing the application and selection criteria for applicants from among small and medium-sized enterprises wishing to participate in the Program.
- The methodology will outline the approach for selecting and evaluating the beneficiary MSMEs.
- Support ODA in implementing and completing the evaluation and selection process for the participating firms.
- In addition to evaluating the company profiles, the selection process may include, *inter alia*, the screening of applicants and the selection of up to 250 firms to participate in the Program, based on the “first come, first served” principle.
- To ensure a structured and transparent process, the application and evaluation of companies will be conducted in three rounds, with roughly 85 firms selected in each round.

The **360-degree assessment** will be conducted by the Consultant’s expert assessors, who will engage directly with company management and operational teams to:

- Evaluate export readiness by assessing, *inter alia*, personnel capacities and skills, operational efficiency, production capacity, export value chain resilience, and adherence to international quality standards.
- Assess regulatory and compliance gaps related to EU and international export standards.
- Benchmark firms against best practices for supplier integration into European and global value chains.
- Facilitate interactive discussions with MSMEs to ensure participation and buy-in for improvement recommendations.

Each assessment will take approximately three working days per company and involve two or three assessors depending on complexity, ensuring detailed coverage of all business functions. The process will conclude with an Analysis Report, which will provide:

- A baseline assessment of the company’s export readiness.
- Key recommendations on how the MSME can align with international buyer expectations.
- Actionable insights to inform the development of Export Development Plans (EDPs).

Tentative Implementation Timeline:

First round: Selection of participants and business assessment from the export readiness angle of **80 companies** (completed within the first **4 months** of contract signing).

Second round: Selection of participants and business assessment from the export readiness angle of **80 companies** (completed within **8 months** of contract signing).

Third round: Selection of participants and business assessment from the export readiness angle of **90 companies** (completed within **13 months** of contract signing).

Task 2: Export Development Plans (EDPs)

Following the export readiness assessment, the Consultant will assist participating MSMEs in developing **customized Export Development Plans (EDPs)** that outline strategic steps for **export-readiness and value chain integration**. Each EDP will:

- Define short-term (6-12 months) and medium-term (12-24 months) priorities.
- Identify specific operational improvements, process optimizations, marketing mix improvements and compliance measures.
- Detail ODA's role in providing support and linking MSMEs to relevant financial and technical assistance programs.

The EDPs will be developed in collaboration with company management, ensuring realistic, achievable, and measurable goals. While some improvement areas will be firmly outlined at the outset, others will be refined based on ongoing progress and additional needs identified during implementation.

Tentative Implementation Timeline:

First round: Development of EDPs for **80 companies** (within **7 months** of contract signing).

Second round: Development of EDPs for **80 companies** (within **12 months** of contract signing).

Third round: Development of EDPs for **90 companies** (within **16 months** of contract signing).

Task 3: Individual Business Development Consulting

A targeted consulting and coaching component will be integrated to support MSMEs in implementing their Export Development Plans. The Consultant will provide **one-on-one advisory services and coaching to firms**, focusing on:

- Improving compliance with EU and international buyer standards
- Improving internal processes, and export promotion operations.
- Enhancing products, pricing, distribution and communication strategies, market entry approaches and financial planning.

Key aspects of this task:

- A total of **30 selected MSMEs** will receive tailored consulting support based on the complexity of their business needs.
- Each MSME will receive up to **6 days** of in-depth tailored support from the Consultant.
- The Consultant will outline a **structured methodology** for delivering business development consulting, ensuring an efficient and results-oriented approach.

Implementation Timeline:

- Tailored consulting support for **30 companies** (within **18 months** of contract signing).

Task 4: Training Workshops for MSMEs

It is expected that the Consultant also considers general group training workshops as a means of task delivery to build MSMEs' capacity in key export-related areas. A minimum of 8 workshops will be conducted throughout the project's implementation.

Each workshop will cover, *inter alia*, essential topics such as:

- EU and international regulatory compliance for exporters;
- Requirements of European Green Deal and sustainability standards;
- Buyer expectations and market positioning strategies, including pricing, distribution and communication strategies, market entry approaches aligned to financial capability.
- Export financing mechanisms, including ODA's programs;
- Market Linkages and export activation tools.

ODA would welcome any views from the Consultant on ways in which this process might be most effectively and efficiently managed based on their experience of participating in similar programs.

Task 5: Transfer of Expertise & Capacity Building

A critical element of the program is ensuring long-term sustainability by building the capacities of ODA, Invest Moldova agency staff, local institutions and consultants to continue supporting MSMEs after the program ends. The program would also like to see international experts engaging with local experts to strengthen local capacity to conduct business assessment and coaching.

The Consultant shall ensure:

- Strengthening ODA's and Invest Moldova Agency capacity by setting up a mechanism for the export readiness screening of local firms.
- Support in establishing knowledge-sharing framework to ensure that local experts and stakeholders can conduct future business assessments and advisory services.
- Training at least 20 local experts (from ODA, Invest Moldova Agency and from local business consulting community) to apply diagnostic tools, business review methodologies, and export-readiness consulting approaches.
- Establishing a mechanism for screening and tracking MSME progress, which will remain functional within ODA's ongoing export support programs.

Implementation Timeline - Completion of expert training and knowledge transfer is expected *by month 20 since contract signing*.

Table 1. Summary of Task' implementation schedule

Task	Number of MSMEs/Participants	Completion Timeline
Task 1: Business Assessments of the export readiness	250 MSMEs	Month 13
Task 2: Export Development Plans (EDPs)	250 MSMEs	Month 16
Task 3: Individual Business Consulting / Coaching	30 MSMEs	Month 18
Task 4: Training Workshops	At least 8 workshops	Throughout the project
Task 5: Transfer of Expertise	At least 20 Local experts (ODA, Invest Moldova Agency and business consultants)	Throughout the project

F. LEVEL OF EFFORT (APPROXIMATE)

The total consultancy effort required under this program will depend on the capabilities, needs, and export-readiness levels of the 250 Moldovan MSMEs expected to participate in the program. The Consultant must ensure that its technical and financial proposal accommodates the minimum number of firms and the required consulting effort across the five specific tasks outlined in the Scope of Work.

The level of effort for the program includes:

- 250 MSMEs undergoing **quick 360-degree business reviews** and assessments.
- 250 MSMEs receiving Export Development Plans (EDPs).
- 30 MSMEs receiving individualized business development consulting and coaching.
- At least 8 training workshops delivered throughout the program.
- 20 local experts trained to ensure sustainability of export-readiness support.

To ensure successful implementation, the Consultant must propose a sufficient level of effort in terms of:

- Expert days required per business assessment and EDP development.
- Consulting days allocated per MSME for one-on-one business development support.
- Trainer days required to design and deliver general workshops.
- Time allocation for training and knowledge transfer to local experts and ODA staff.

The Consultant's proposal should demonstrate its capacity and ability to meet these targets, ensuring that each MSME receives the appropriate level of support to achieve export-readiness.

Consultants that do not accommodate the minimum number of MSMEs and consulting days expected, as outlined in the Request for Proposal (RFP), will be evaluated as non-responsive.

G. TIMELINE

The assignment is expected to be implemented within a **maximum of 20 months**, tentatively starting in **November 2025 and concluding by June 2027**. The project will follow a phased approach, ensuring progressive engagement, implementation, and knowledge transfer for sustainable impact.

A **tentative timeline** with key deadlines is outlined below:

1. **Within 4 months** following contract signing:
 - Completion of **export readiness reviews and assessments** for the first **80 MSMEs**.
 - Submission of **export readiness assessment reports for 80 MSMEs** outlining key findings and recommendations.
2. **Within 7 months** following contract signing:
 - Development and agreement on **Export Development Plans (EDPs) for the first batch of 80 MSMEs**.
 - Submission of the **Export Development Plans (EDPs) for 80 MSMEs**.
3. **Within 8 months** following contract signing:
 - Completion of **export readiness reviews and assessments** for the second batch of **80 MSMEs**.
 - Submission of the **export readiness assessment reports for 80 MSMEs**.
4. **Within 12 months** following contract signing:
 - Development and agreement on **Export Development Plans (EDPs) for the second batch of 80 MSMEs**.
 - Submission of the **Export Development Plans (EDPs) for 80 MSMEs**
 - Delivery of **3 training workshops** for MSMEs in key export-related areas
5. **Within 13 months** following contract signing:
 - Completion of **export readiness reviews and assessments** for the third batch of **90 MSMEs**.
 - Submission of the **export readiness assessment reports for 90 MSMEs**
6. **Within 16 months** following contract signing:
 - Completion of **Export Development Plans (EDPs) for the remaining 90 MSMEs**.
 - Completion of **one-on-one business development consulting** for 15 selected MSMEs.
 - Delivery of **3 training workshops** for MSMEs in key export-related areas.
7. **Within 18 months** following contract signing:
 - Completion of **one-on-one business development consulting** for the remaining 15 MSMEs.
 - Delivery of the remaining **2 training workshops** for MSMEs in key export-related areas.
 - Training of at least **20 ODA, Invest Moldova agency and local experts** to ensure sustainability and future program replication.
8. **Within 20 months** following contract signing:
 - **Final evaluation and program impact assessment** to measure improvements in MSME export readiness and market integration.

- Submission of the **Final Report**, including recommendations for ongoing MSME export support programs.

The **specific timing of individual activities** will be further discussed and agreed upon with ODA's project team and the Consultant as the program rolls out, ensuring flexibility to accommodate participant needs and market dynamics.

H. LOCATION

The assignment will take place in the Republic of Moldova, with activities being implemented across the country to ensure widespread participation of MSMEs from various regions.

Given the nature of the program, extensive in-country travel will be required to:

- Conduct on-site 360-degree quick assessments at MSME facilities.
- Provide individual business development consulting at company premises.
- Organize training workshops and networking events in strategic business hubs.
- Facilitate engagement with local institutions, buyers, and export support organizations.

The Consultant must ensure logistical preparedness and efficient resource allocation to deliver services in both urban and rural areas, allowing equal access to the program for all targeted MSMEs.

I. REPORTING AND DELIVERABLES

The Consultant will be working under the overall supervision of the ODA Internationalization department.

Deliverables / Specific Outputs Expected from Consultant

In support of and/or in addition to providing individual consultancy support for up to 250 local companies and other tasks detailed above, the contracted Consultant will be expected to provide the following deliverables:

1. An inception report to be presented ***within 1 month*** following signing of the contract detailing: (i) any adjustments to the agreed work plan, timeline and associated milestones, (ii) any adjustment to the proposed methodology for the quick 360-degree business reviews and the export development plans, (iii) expertise linked to specific improvement areas which its organization could provide, how this could be delivered in terms of modules, time involved etc. to meet differing requirements, and how this delivery would be managed, including the response times to requests for support.
2. Individual reports to be presented ***within 4 months*** following signing of the contract on the results of the initial selection of 80 participants as well as quick 360-degree export readiness business reviews of each of the 80 companies, including clear benchmarks of the level of performance across the business, which will be required for monitoring and evaluation purposes at the program level, as well as for working with the individual companies, and agreed priority areas for improvement as a basis for discussing Export Development Plans.
3. The Export Development Plans developed and agreed with each of the 80 companies to be presented ***within 7 months*** following signing of the contract. It should include also a brief individual scope of work for each consultancy project, setting out what would be covered, what

the recipient company had to prepare and what would be the expected outcome/stage reached at the end of the project.

4. Individual reports to be presented ***within 8 months*** following signing of the contract on the results of the (a) initial selection of the 80 participants; (b) quick 360-degree export readiness reviews of 80 companies evaluated, including clear benchmarks of the level of performance across the business, which will be required for monitoring and evaluation purposes at the program level, as well as for working with the individual companies, and agreed priority areas for improvement as a basis for discussing Export Development Plans.
5. ***Within 12 months*** following signing of the contract the Consultant will submit (a) Export Development Plans developed and agreed with each of the 80 companies, which should include also a brief individual scope of work for each consultancy project, setting out what would be covered, what the recipient company had to prepare and what would be the expected outcome/stage reached at the end of the project and (b) three training workshops for local MSMEs in key export-related areas.
6. Individual reports to be presented ***within 13 months*** following signing of the contract on the results of the (a) initial selection of the 90 participants; (b) quick 360-degree export readiness reviews of 90 companies, including clear benchmarks of the level of performance across the business, which will be required for monitoring and evaluation purposes at the program level, as well as for working with the individual companies, and agreed priority areas for improvement as a basis for discussing Export Development Plans.
7. ***Within 16 months*** following signing of the contract the Consultant will submit (a) Export Development Plans developed and agreed with each of the 90 companies, which should include also a brief individual scope of work for each consultancy project, setting out what would be covered, what the recipient company had to prepare and what would be the expected outcome/stage reached at the end of the project and (b) three training workshops for local MSMEs in key export-related areas and (c) one-on-one business development consulting for the 15 MSMEs.
8. ***Within 18 months*** following signing of the contract the Consultant will submit a report on (a) one-on-one business development consulting for the 15 MSMEs; (b) two training workshops for local MSMEs in key export-related areas and (c) training of at least 20 ODA, Invest Moldova Agency and local experts and assessors to ensure sustainability and future program' replication.
9. Final report (including company specific information) at the end of the program phase (***20th month***) on the consultancy work carried out, its composition and effectiveness, any particular issues arising from working with local manufacturing companies and their capability to become or add more value as exporters and suppliers, and any recommendations for future action at both the individual company and program level, which could be used for keeping partners, up-to-date with progress.

(!) Beside this the Consultant will provide monthly progress updates or status reports to keep ODA informed of ongoing activities and potential issues. There will be also review meetings with the ODA team at key project stages. Specific timelines would be discussed and agreed with the Consultant when the specific work program of each company has been finalized.

Acceptance of deliverables

Acceptance of deliverables shall be based on satisfactory delivery of the required outputs in terms of completion, correctness, timeliness, quality & organization, as described in this TOR. Should the quality of performance be deemed unsatisfactory, the Client has the right to terminate the contract. The approval of the deliverables is the responsibility of ODA.

J. QUALIFICATION

This assignment will require an experienced foreign consulting firm or a consortium of such firms, associated with local company(ies) with experience in business advisory. The consortium shall demonstrate its experience with a proven track record in export promotion, SME development, and trade facilitation programs to support the implementation of the proposed Export Readiness Program.

The Consultant shall furnish documentary evidence (including information about the completed contracts and contact information of clients to whom similar services have been provided) to demonstrate that it meets the following experience requirements:

- Proven experience in carrying out firm-level business reviews and similar consultancy in export readiness development programs, or in other business development support programs. The lead Consultant should have at least ten (10) years of such experience.
- Experience in SME' support programs, including having export readiness screening / evaluation tools and instruments successfully applied in previous similar or alike programs. This shall be documented by at least two (2) contracts finalized in the last four (4) years. For ongoing projects, copies of acceptance documents of the delivered programs shall be provided.
- Track record of working effectively with the private sector at both working and senior level, and with government agencies in delivering, *inter alia*, export missions or other export promotion programs.
- Demonstrated ability to undertake results focused consultancy with the aim of deriving real business benefits for and embedding sustainable skills in participating companies, and an understanding of key requirements challenges exporting companies are facing.
- Experience of working on the ground with exporters and potential exporters in emerging or developing countries. Experience of, and a presence in Southeast Europe would be advantageous.
- Association with local companies and individual experts with experience in business consultancy and business development support programs is mandatory.
- Prior working experience with international development finance organizations is an asset.

Qualification of Key Experts

Key experts represent specific knowledge and/or expertise required for the successful project implementation. Although the Consultant will form project implementation team at its discretion, the Consultant shall provide the following key experts with proved competencies:

- Key expert 1. Project Manager
- Key expert 2. Economic Expert
- Key expert 3. International Business Expert

- Key expert 4. Trade Expert
- Key expert 5. Marketing Expert
- Key Expert 6. Legal expert

For proposed key experts the CVs need to be submitted, demonstrating the minimum qualifications requirements, as detailed below:

Key expert 1: Team Leader / Project manager

The Team Leader is responsible for the liaison with ODA and beneficiaries; s/he must ensure the internal coordination and guidance of all experts of the project and coordination of the project with external counterparts. The Team Leader must also ensure the availability of suitable experts in accordance with the Project Work Plan. The Team Leader shall ensure that all reporting obligations are fulfilled in a timely manner to a high-quality standard.

Qualifications and skills

- Master's degree in economics, law, or business management or any other relevant area for the project.
- Ten (10) years of professional experience in project management, particularly related to entrepreneurship development, including SME support for public and / or private clients.
- Experience as team leader in at least 2 (two) projects concerning implementation and delivering export readiness or other business development programs.
- Excellent understanding of the export supply chain, including SME's expectations and needs, including in the context of export promotion.
- Understanding of general business environment and changes after the COVID pandemic and war, including in Moldova, which would be an asset.
- Previous experience with international organizations would be an asset.
- Fluency in English, both written and spoken. Knowledge of Romanian would be an asset.

Key expert 2: Economic Expert

The Economic expert is responsible for all economic and impact analysis-related tasks included in this project.

Qualifications and skills

- Master's degree in economic science.
- Professional experience as an economic analyst working in public and/or private sector.
- At least ten (10) years of experience in the field of economic analysis, with particular expertise in conducting financial analysis, analysis of investments, advising in developing business development plans and / or other related projects.
- A proven track record in carrying out firm-level business reviews under similar business development programs and expertise with applying successfully methodology(ies) and tools.
- A track record of working effectively with the private sector at both working and senior level, and with government agencies in delivering supplier or other business development programs.

- Previous experience with international organizations and public sector reform projects would be an asset.
- Previous experience with international organizations would be an asset.
- Fluency in English, both written and spoken. Knowledge of Romanian would be an asset.

Key expert 3: International Business Expert

The International Business Export expert is responsible for all export, logistics and international business-related tasks included in this project.

Qualifications and skills

- Master's degree in economics or international business, or marketing, or other related field.
- Professional experience in international business operations management working in public and/or private sector.
- At least ten (10) years of experience in an export management role, with particular expertise in conducting market analysis, developing and implementing strategic export strategies.
- A proven track record in carrying out firm-level business reviews and expertise with applying successfully methodology (e.g. questionnaires) and tools for assessing company' export readiness under SME support' programs.
- A track record of working effectively with the private sector at both working and senior level in delivering business development programs.
- Extensive experience and proven track record in carrying out firm-level B2B commercial operations.
- Knowledge of global trade regulations and compliance with sector standards for groups of SMEs subject of this ToR.
- Experience of working on the ground with firms in emerging or developing countries. Experience of, and a presence in, Southeast Europe would be advantageous.
- Previous experience with international organizations would be an asset.
- Fluency in English, both written and spoken. Knowledge of Romanian would be an asset.

Key expert 4: Trade Expert

The Trade expert is responsible for all export, logistics and international trade-related tasks included in this project.

Qualifications and skills

- Master's degree in economics, international trade or sales, or other related field.
- Professional experience in export or international trade management working in public and/or private sector.
- At least ten (10) years of experience in an international trade management function, with particular expertise in trade facilitation, developing and implementing export sales strategies and plans.

- A proven track record working in import/export operations, understanding and applying the rules and regulations that govern international trade, such as tariffs, quotas, sanctions, customs procedures, trade agreements, etc.
- Strong knowledge and extensive experience of logistics, planning and coordinating the movement of goods on time and at the lowest possible cost, working with various transportation modes, handling the documentation, packaging, labeling, insurance, and warehousing of the shipments.
- A track record of working effectively with the private sector at both working and senior level in delivering business development programs.
- Extensive experience and proven track record in carrying out firm-level B2B international trade operations.
- Knowledge of global trade regulations and compliance with sector standards for groups of SMEs subject of this ToR.
- Experience of working on the ground with firms in emerging or developing countries. Experience of, and a presence in, Southeast Europe would be advantageous.
- Previous experience with international organizations would be an asset.
- Fluency in English, both written and spoken. Knowledge of Romanian would be an asset.

Key expert 5: Marketing Expert

The Marketing expert is responsible for marketing related tasks included in this project, specifically those related to Project' (beneficiary') overall marketing efforts. He/she will be an integral part of the development and execution of marketing plans to reach targets from product development, product placement, pricing and promotion to brand awareness.

Qualifications and skills

- Master's degree in marketing, communications or a related field.
- Professional experience as a marketing specialist (expert) working in private sector with at least ten (10) years of expertise in conducting market analysis and development of the marketing strategies with export focus for companies.
- Professional experience in developing and understanding finance and budgets to include research and development appropriations, expenditures and profit-loss projections.
- A track record of working effectively with the private sector in identifying the company's potential customers, creating and managing advertising campaigns.
- Proven experience and in-depth knowledge of traditional and digital marketing and market research methods.
- A proven track record in carrying out firm-level business reviews and expertise with applying successfully methodology(ies) and tools to assess company' marketing policies for deficiency identification and correction under similar SME's support programs.
- A proven track record of planning and implementing significant improvements in exporting and/or ready for export companies.
- Experience of working on the ground with exporters in emerging or developing countries. Experience in Southeast Europe would be advantageous.

- Previous experience with international organizations would be an asset.
- Fluency in English, both written and spoken. Knowledge of Romanian would be an asset.

Key expert 6: Legal Expert

The Legal expert is responsible for legal related aspects included in this project. His/her obligations will include ensuring that beneficiaries comply with global trade laws, manage export/import regulations, and negotiate international business agreements effectively.

Qualifications and skills

- Master's degree in law, focusing on international trade law will be an advantage.
- Professional experience as a legal officer (expert) with in-depth knowledge of international trade law and regulations working in the private sector with at least ten (10) years of expertise in dealing with disputes resolution on international trade cases.
- Proven experience and professional expertise in negotiating trade deals, resolving disputes, and ensuring compliance with both international and domestic trade laws. Strong analytical and problem-solving skills.
- A track record of working effectively with the private sector in international contracts, dispute resolution, intellectual property.
- A proven track record in carrying out firm-level assessments and expertise with applying successfully tools to assess the company's legal preparedness to conduct international trade operations.
- A proven track record of planning and implementing significant improvements in exporting and/or ready for export companies.
- Experience of working on the ground with exporters in emerging or developing countries. Experience in Southeast Europe would be advantageous.
- Previous experience with international organizations would be an asset.
- Fluency in English, both written and spoken. Knowledge of Romanian would be an asset.

K. SPECIFIC INPUTS, ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES & CONDITIONS OF WORK

ODA will be responsible, among others, for conducting and completing the evaluation / selection process of the participating firms.

ODA will be responsible for the preparation of the call and setting up the application / selection criteria for applicants to the ERP program. ODA will appoint a Project team lead by a Leader to coordinate and decide on all issues related to the technical aspects of the assignment. Responsibility for approving the deliverables, and other requests related to the assignment rest with ODA. The Consultant will provide technical support for the smooth and correct implementation of the above activities.

The PIU will be responsible for procedural aspects of the selection process, contract signing / administration and financial management, including payment for services expected under the Contract, general project management duties and coordination with ODA, the Consultant and other stakeholders.

Logistics (except transportation), such as visit and meeting arrangements will be provided by ODA project team and in-country coordinators on behalf of the Consultant in line with their indicated availability, to minimize travelling time between companies, etc.

The Consultant is expected to consider and include in their technical and financial proposal all the other necessary facilities, e.g. office space, office equipment, supplies, telecommunications, transportation and other logistical requirements for completing the work as described in these Terms of Reference.

The Consultant will translate the deliverables and any necessary materials into Romanian language as applicable and ensure interpreters during the meetings with firms as needed.

To prevent possible disputes, the intellectual property for material developed solely for this program and financed by the program will lie with ODA. However, tools and techniques developed by the Consultant for use in their general business will not fall into this category.

The working languages of the program will be English and Romanian.

L. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

In addition to the foregoing provisions, the following conditions and understandings shall apply:

- i. During the course of the performance of Consultant's duties, any correspondence with any party shall be cleared through and coordinated with the ODA Project Leader (PL) and PIU.
- ii. Copies of all documents, materials or work product received or produced in connection with this assignment shall be provided to ODA Project Leader (PL) and PIU. All documents, materials or work products received or produced under these Terms of Reference above constitute property of ODA and upon request shall be delivered to ODA.
- iii. Certain knowledge and information (whether oral or written, in documents, materials, or work product) that is not already within the public domain that the Consultant acquires from ODA, its staff or by virtue of Consultant's assignment shall for all time and purposes be regarded as strictly confidential and shall be held in confidence by consultant. Such knowledge and information shall not be directly or indirectly disclosed by consultant to any person whatsoever without written permission from an authorized person of ODA.

M. CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

All data and information received from ODA for the purpose of this assignment are to be treated confidentially and are only to be used in connection with the execution of these Terms of Reference. All intellectual property rights arising from the execution of these Terms of Reference are assigned to ODA. The contents of written materials obtained and used in this assignment may not be disclosed to any third parties without the express advance written authorization of ODA.