

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR
CONDUCTING RAPID
RESEARCH ASSESSMENT ON
ENTREPRENEUR SUPPORT
ORGANIZATIONS IN THE
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
ECOSYSTEM

REF: ASSEK/CP/2024/05



1. INTRODUCTION

The Association of Startup and SMEs Enablers of Kenya (ASSEK) is an association dedicated to uniting and advocating for the interests of 120+ Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESO). The ESOs contribute significantly to the development and expansion of startups and SMEs to achieve a socio-economic breakthrough to support job creation and achieve developmental impact.

As a pivotal force in nurturing the startup and SME enablers ecosystem in Kenya, ASSEK plays a crucial role in representing all actors within the Kenyan entrepreneurship ecosystem. This is achieved through policy and advocacy for a conducive enabling business environment and the active promotion of nationwide networking among its members.

The Association's mission is to be the voice and support of startup enablers and their clients in Kenya and beyond through advancing innovation and entrepreneurship as a key driver of economic and social development.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Ministry of Investments Trade and Industry (MITI) has partnered with The Association of Startup and SMEs Enablers of Kenya (ASSEK) on the Kenya Industry and Entrepreneurship Project (KIEP), a cutting-edge government initiative funded by World Bank, that will focus on identified constraints and support innovation and productivity growth in the country, reflecting the importance that the government places on supporting programs that respond to the evolving economic opportunities, and support innovation and productivity in enterprises to boost job creation and growth.

Through the cumulative efforts of the Association initiatives and interventions, there is increased inclusion in the ecosystem, standardization of approaches, collaboration in attracting investment opportunities, job creation that are in line with the national and continental frameworks, continued value addition to local and international stakeholders enabling the innovation space in Kenya as well as policy-makers, enterprise support organizations (ESO's), financial supporters and more.

The partnership between the Ministry through the KIEP project and ASSEK aims to strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem, increase the firm-level innovation and productivity and develop technically skilled talent in the country.

It is against this backdrop that the Association would like to undertake a rapid research assessment of the Entrepreneur Support Organizations to identify gaps, areas of operations, opportunities and collaboration to strengthen their capacity to grow, scale and remain sustainably impactful in the entrepreneurship ecosystem.

3. SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

This is a 1-month consultancy with the deliverables to be achieved in that duration. The consultant will be expected to undertake expected to undertake the following activities:

- 1. Conduct a rapid assessment of the Entrepreneur Support Organizations in the entrepreneurship ecosystem to undertake:**
 - a. ESO Ecosystem Mapping that includes identifying and categorizing of ESO types (incubators, accelerators, co-working spaces, etc.), their service offering, geographical location, size, target demographics, and areas of focus. Some of the outputs include: an updated database of ESOs, capacity assessment report and potential areas for improvement in ESO services and capacity building.
 - b. Identify gaps in areas of operations by analyzing the current state of operations of ESOs in the following aspects: Program and project management, Resource management, Data management and analysis, Monitoring and evaluation and Risk management.
 - c. Identify opportunities by looking for areas where ESOs can increase their impact, expand their reach, continuously innovate and adapt to evolving demands of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and enhance their sustainable business models.
 - d. Develop an ESO Collaboration framework that will explore how ESOs can potentially share resources and expertise, to jointly advocate for policy change, peer to peer learning and reduce duplication of effort, programs and services in the overall entrepreneurship ecosystem.
 - e. Facilitation of a validation workshop with stakeholders to validate the findings of the research to gain further insights to enhance the report and findings.

Key Deliverables

- High level Inception report
- Comprehensive ESO Capacity assessment report including data analysis, insights and recommendations for potential areas for improvement in ESO services and capacity building.
- ESO Collaboration Framework document
- Updated database of Kenyan ESOs with detailed information on their services and target demographics.
- Hosting a virtual validation session/ workshop to present high level key findings and gather further recommendations from stakeholders to enhance the report.
- Final report

2. METHODOLOGY

The selected service provider must:

1. The process should be consultative and participatory with ASSEK.

2. Describe how it will address the demands of the TOR, including performance characteristics, reporting conditions, and quality assurance mechanisms.
3. Facilitate the active engagement of all members in the capacity assessment and development process. Include a review of secondary information available.
4. Adopt a combination of participatory tools and methodologies (e.g., desk research, self-assessment, SWOT analysis, stakeholder analysis, interviews with key stakeholders) and group facilitation techniques to promote participation and buy-in.
5. Coordinate and work closely with the ASSEK secretariat throughout the entire capacity assessment process.

3. OVERALL ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The assessment process will be organized as follows:

1. Advertisement for consultants and submission of applications.
2. Selection of the consultant.
3. Signing of the contract with the consultant.
4. Submission of a detailed inception report, work plan and assessment methodology by the consultant.
5. Agreement on the draft work plan and assignment methodology.
6. Execution of the assignment as per the agreed work plan, with revisions as necessary.
7. Submission of a final report for the consultancy for approval by ASSEK.

4. CONSULTANT REQUIREMENTS

The minimum qualifications of the consultant or organization is listed below:

1. Research organization or Consultant (s) with 7+ years of experience conducting research in the startup and SME ecosystem
2. Strong understanding of the Kenyan startup and SME landscape.
3. Expertise in qualitative and quantitative research methods.
4. Excellent communication and reporting skills.
5. Ability to work effectively with diverse stakeholders.
6. Good communication and report writing skills.
7. Experience in working with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds.

5. ASSESSMENT

a. Technical Assessment

The application will be assessed on the following criteria:

1. Quality and relevance of the proposed methodology
2. Adequacy of the proposed work plan and methodology in responding to the terms of reference
3. Expertise and experience of the consultant related to the assignment

4. Qualifications and competence of the key staff for the assignment

b. Financial Assessment

1. Realistic Financial Proposal

6. APPLICATION

The submitted proposals must include the following:

1. Technical Proposal:

- a. Clear and well demonstrated approach and methodology (Not more than 8 pages)
- b. The profile of the consultant(s) and executive brief of similar projects undertaken
- c. Detailed work plan with clear timelines and deliverables
- d. As Annexes, kindly include the Curriculum Vitae (CV) of the lead consultant and case studies of research and or/ rapid assessments conducted with organizations.
- e. At least two reference letters from past clients.

2. Financial Proposal:

- a. Submit the financial proposal as a separate document and ensure it is password encrypted. After the review of the Technical Proposals, only shortlisted bidders will be contacted to provide the password to the document for review.
- b. Ensure the financial proposal is in Kenya Shillings and is inclusive of all taxes, levies and reimbursable costs for the consultancy.

Submit your complete proposal to admin@assek.ke with the subject line: **ASSEK Rapid ESO Research Assessment**. Deadline for submission is **8th March 2024 at 5pm EAT**.

Any queries or clarifications can be directed to the same email address listed by 28th February 2024 after which no response will be given after the specified date.

Please note only successful candidates will be contacted.