

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR CONDUCTING RAPID RESEARCH ON THE ENTRPRENUERSHIP AND INNOVATION ECOSYESTEM

REF: ASSEK/CP/2024/03



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 growth and evolution of the Kenyan entrepreneurship ecosystem to identifying gaps, challenges hindering innovation growth, emerging opportunities for investment and collaboration to provide key insights and recommendations to support the growth of the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Kenya.

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 Rapid Assessment of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Ecosystem to identify emerging opportunities and gaps hindering innovation growth. This includes:**
 - a. Map and analyze barriers and key policy bottlenecks hindering the growth and effectiveness of the entrepreneurship ecosystem and develop strategies for lobbying and advocacy to create a more enabling environment for growth and development of ESOs and their beneficiaries i.e. startups and SMEs.
 - b. Research on the innovation ecosystem to identify and map out key constraints to clearly identify challenges faced by ESOs and their beneficiaries hindering their growth, the needs and gaps faced by entrepreneurs using ESO services and analyze existing collaboration activities and assess their effectiveness.
 - c. Identify and analyze emerging trends in the Kenyan and global innovation landscape, the current state of research on these trends in Kenya highlighting their alignment with the needs and priorities of the Kenyan innovation ecosystem.
 - d. Review of existing innovation/ entrepreneurship masterplans, policy documents, acts and other instruments to attain the effectiveness to support the growth of the Startup and SME Ecosystem.
 - e. Evaluate and identify potential vulnerabilities in the Kenyan entrepreneurial ecosystem and the preparedness of ESOs to navigate them considering factors such as funding diversification, adaptability to changing needs, and crisis response capabilities.
 - f. Assess the ability of ESOs to adapt their services and programs through innovation, adoption new technologies and service delivery models to meet the evolving needs of entrepreneurs and the broader ecosystem and propose strategies to enhance the effectiveness of those services.
 - g. Develop practical and actionable recommendations to address identified gaps and challenges.

Key Deliverables

- High level Inception report
- A comprehensive report summarizing the findings of the research assessment report including data analysis, insights and recommendations.
- Ecosystem strengthening report outlining steps to be taken to improve the resilience of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Ecosystem
- Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis to provide key insights on how ASSEK can leverage its stakeholders to support its existing network of ESOs.
- Hosting a virtual validation session/ workshop to present the 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 Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Research. Extended Deadline** for submission is **11th 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.