



Empowered lives. Resilient nations.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Job Title:	Financial expert to provide mentorship and consultative support to the selected collaborative projects under the UNDP Moldova Business Innovation Lab
Type of Contract:	Individual Contract (IC)
Duty Station:	Chisinau, Moldova
Expected workload:	up to 55 w/d per year
Expected duration of assignment:	March – December 2016, with possibility of extension

BACKGROUND

The Business Innovations Lab (BIL) is a knowledge and collaborative facility managed by a multidisciplinary team of business experts, mentors and practitioners/businessmen from Moldova and abroad capable to provide consultative support and guide SMEs on their path to innovate and improve competitiveness. BIL will be coordinating and hosting exclusively collaborative projects initiated and run by Moldovan SMEs with at least 2 years of experience on the market and start-ups.

In essence, BIL is a business innovation accelerator with an open application process, nurturing groups of SMEs with new business ideas and supporting them in order to get ready for further investments or market. BIL is also a facility which implements the monitoring of the Innovation Grant Scheme.

BIL represents an environment where selected SME's will have the possibility to obtain trainings and knowledge, to experiment and test their innovative solutions, up until the innovation is ready to be implemented in real businesses cases. BIL therefore creates a community where the diverse skills and backgrounds of the entrepreneurs, mentors, and the management staff are leveraged. It is supposed to encourage collaboration and establish community, and the sharing of experiences amongst stakeholder's teams.

BIL is built on three premises: transparency, inclusiveness and innovation.

These premises highlight the fundamental idea behind the BIL: improvements in competitiveness do not necessary come from new research and technological breakthroughs, but also through incremental improvement and absorption of new ideas and approaches used in other contexts and sectors. As such the

BIL adheres to innovations as defined by the OECD: substantial improvements towards products, processes and business conduct, i.e. something much broader than just technological improvements.

Considering the finding from the Baseline Study of the UNDP's LED Project and the lack of instruments and infrastructure directed at supporting innovation in SME's in Moldova, innovative SME's have crosscutting constraints: **poor access to finance, lack of entrepreneurial skills by management and employees, and insufficient experience in business skills.**

Therefore, the BIL is going to:

- i. Support to strengthening innovation ecosystem in Moldova;*
- ii. Providing direct financial matching and conditional support to the collaborative innovative projects initiated by groups of SMEs;*
- iii. Enable higher visibility of Moldovan innovative and startup community in the international arena;*
- iv. Secure area-specific knowledge via domestic and foreign experienced mentors for the co-development and support in the implementation of innovative projects/solutions by collaborative groups of companies;*
- v. Further introduce Moldova to foreign investors and attracting further financing, including by using new to market instruments, including crowdfunding and similar;*
- vi. Speed up technology transfer from research to industry through support to spinoffs;*
- vii. Prepare of innovative companies for additional stages of financing.*

Considering current state of the innovation ecosystem in Moldova and intention of UNDP to set up a framework for sustainable future streamlining of innovative SME's, this intervention financed within this Project will not be required to focus on particular technology field or industry. It is more urgent to focus on speed of bringing established companies and start-ups with global potential closer to potential investment. In this sense BIL is required to have investor and mentor base that is at their disposal to cover different fields appropriately. To that end, BIL will be managing a Board of Mentors, a community of competitively selected international and national consultants that would provide timely and highly qualitative support towards the implementation of all stages of the Acceleration Cycle.

METHODOLOGY

Business Innovation Lab (BIL) is a pre-seed SME accelerator: a modern type of business innovation incubator, with an open application process, accepting groups of SME's with innovative business ideas coming from various sectors and supporting them with mentoring, training and preparing for investments for a short definite period.

In it's piloting phase, BIL is complementary intervention from the UNDP's LED Project to Innovation Challenge Scheme ([MICS](#)) and it provides additional support and trainings to the Beneficiaries of the Grant Scheme.

BIL will connect to similar entities in the region, so that to ensure exchange of knowledge and technologies and promotion of various innovations. The future sustainability of BIL is based on generating venture-style returns, and not rent, or fees for services. BIL will provide its services free of charge to the SME's in the program. Some specific BIL services may be charged in the form of a direct contribution of the participant SMEs in covering part of project related costs, e.g. transportation for a study visit, etc.

The process that innovative companies go through in the accelerator (called Accelerator Cycle) can be separated into five distinct phases: awareness, application, program, demo day, post demo day.

1. **Awareness phase:** Social media, communities, universities.
2. **Application phase:** Web-based, quality of innovation and teams is main criteria.
3. **Program phase:** Mentoring, support, education and networking.
4. **Demo day phase:** Presentation (pitching) of the product/service/innovative solution.
5. **Post demo day phase:** Developing the innovation independently, collaborate in alumni network.

After the closure of the cycle, the groups of SMEs would end-up with pilots or prototypes. If successful, such projects will be further up-scaled either by companies themselves and/or by the BIL. The BIL will have the right to bring/share the innovative solution to other potential beneficiaries selected by BIL. Lessons learned in each of the AC (Accelerator Cycle) will stay within the BIL and will be further replicated.

Innovative SME's will benefit from the BIL program in that they gain training, access to future investors and business networks, since long-term funding is important to development of any innovative product. BIL will be ready to provide some matching financial and conditional support on a competitive basis, based on MICS practices.

As in all successful accelerators, because of the interest of innovative SME's in future capital, the potential investors should play a fundamental role in attracting companies to the BIL. Conversely, the role of the BIL is to present the investors with qualified investment suggestions.

Through the accelerator working program, the selected and qualified mentors provide the entrepreneurial expertise needed to make the innovative companies attractive to future capital. BIL is expected to fulfill certain goals in respect to investments attracted to startups one year after end of the working program.

The BIL will have, apart from providing physical space, to provide key services to innovative companies in the form of:

- Predefined working program for the innovative companies and startups;
- Access to investors and financing opportunities;
- Mentorship by experts in different fields relevant to specific sectors.

The BIL is expected to build reputation and provide sufficient level of quality to achieve:

- BIL will support startups and innovative SMEs to solve most pressing technological and non-technological challenges and problems by better understanding them, spotting, testing and scaling-up innovations and, if needed, connecting them to hands-on and international expertise.
- BIL brings new approaches to the ways the innovative entrepreneurs plan, manage their resources, and organize their activity - all to help them to overcome persisting business challenges and to increase their competitive edge.
- BIL is a highly competitive space with clear selection methodology based on the commitment to deliver results. It means that potential beneficiaries will be rigorously selected against motivation, capability to innovate and test innovative approaches, openness to share knowledge and disseminate results. This will permit to select the best innovative approaches and ultimately higher added-value for new participants.

- The primary value to the entrepreneur is access to top-level mentoring, connections, and the recognition of being chosen to be a part of the BIL.
- BIL is a platform where participants will have a chance to discuss innovations, share their experience and pilot their innovative ideas/visions.

The BIL team works with SME's to provide assistance in many ways:

- Provide permanent mentoring and consultation by its core team, taking the role of an engaged partner;
- Participate as advisors to companies to elaborate together business and product development strategies;
- Provide mentoring and consultation from a diverse pool of international business leaders and entrepreneurs of all levels;
- Provide tailored and regular trainings, based on an approved Training Programme;
- Offering access to a network, consisting of experts, tech vendors, successful entrepreneurs and investors; provide support in the organization of well-structured and result-oriented study visits in the region;
- Provide collaborative office space for some companies and events and gathering venue.

The specific tasks of the BIL concerning the synergy with the MICS component would be:

- Cooperating throughout whole evaluation and monitoring procedure of the MICS
- Provide tailored trainings to the MICS beneficiaries.

OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED DELIVERABLES OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The main objective of the assignment is to provide support to the Project and the BIL in the establishment of the BIL Board of Mentors. The Board will, on a collaborate basis, provide mentorship services to the winning collaborative projects run by SMEs and supported by BIL. Mentors will be providing highly competitive and qualitative consultancy services to the projects depending on the specific needs.

The Board of Mentors would consist of international and national experts to include at least: one innovation general expert, one innovation marketing specialist, one innovation funding/financing expert, one M&E expert, one national financial expert, and one communication specialist. Each member of the Board will be guided by the working plan of the BIL and might be 'activated' depending on the specific needs of the specific collaborative project or general BIL needs.

The general tasks of the board mentors are the following:

- Consult the SME's participating in each stage of the BIL Accelerator Program, mainly on-distance coaching and mentoring.
- Contribute to the development of Moldovan innovation ecosystems via trainings, seminars and participating and appearing in other events pursuant to the plan, elaborated by the BIL/Project Team in respect to sharing the mentors with ecosystem.
- Assist the innovative SME's in accessing BIL funding and finding the necessary client and investor contacts in their target markets.

The mentoring process can be pursued in a variety of forms, from introductions to thematic sessions where mentors present their ideas and experience and then spend time with teams on a one-to-one basis. The aim of this kind of mentoring is to challenge the SME and give them honest feedback on where they're going right or wrong and to give them a chance to create longer-term relationships with mentors who could take on the role as advisors later on.

The financial expert's specific deliverables are: Support the Project/BIL in the selection of the collaborative projects, particularly through the financial analysis of the proposed projects; support participating SMEs with financial planning; connect and coordinate consultative support with all other members of the Board.

Key deliverables:

Deliverables	Deadlines
1. Provide support to the Project/BIL in the selection of at least 3 collaborative innovative projects by Moldovan SMEs (based on MICS provisions)	March 2016
2. Provide at least 3 incipient tailored trainings for each participating collaborative project on the specific topic/area of consultancy (as per the LOTs) and based on the request of Project/BIL	April – May 2016
3. Develop 1 specific mentorship program , depending on the area of consultancy and submit to the Project/BIL; the program shall consist of selective reading materials, case studies, compilation of best practices and lessons learned	March 2016
4. Provide at least 10 w/d (40 hours) of tailored mentorship for each collaborative project during the Acceleration Cycle based on the specific mentorship program and report to the Project/BIL; collaborate with members of the Board to tailor support, depending on the progress in the implementation of the projects and specific needs of the Project/BIL	During March – November 2016
5. Adjust the mentorship program and submit to the project, together with the lessons learned per each collaborative project	November – December 2016
6. Provide specific inputs to the BIL collection of up to 3 success stories and up to 3 blog posts	continuous
7. Develop narrative report on conducted mentorship and consultancy	By 12 December 2016

ORGANIZATION CONTEXT

Under the guidance of the Project Manager and BIL Coordinator, the consultant will be responsible to provide the above enlisted deliverables. The Project will provide needed logistical support. All payments shall be made following certification by UNDP that the services related to each Deliverable, have been satisfactorily performed / achieved by or before the due dates specified above.

SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

Academic Qualification

- Advanced university degree in Economics, Social Science or other relevant fields;

Experience

- At least 5 years of proven experience in delivering trainings, coaching and mentorship for innovative projects led by SMEs or groups of SMEs;
- At least 3 years of proven experience in training and consulting SMEs in finance area;
- At least 3 years of proven experience in selection and monitoring/evaluation of innovative projects run by private sector is a strong advantage;
- Familiarity with the situation in the national innovations systems in the CEE region and Moldova is a strong asset (proved by the articles, analytical reports, publications, etc in the area);
- Familiarity with major European funding programmes and projects is a strong asset;
- Knowledge of the EU regulations, including institutional, legal and policy frameworks, in the area of innovation and technological transfer is a strong advantage;
- Knowledge of impact evaluation for innovative projects;

Competencies

- Strong analytical, drafting and training skills.
- Ability to analyse, plan, communicate effectively with stakeholders and present ideas clearly and effectively.
- Excellent communication and teamwork skills.
- Demonstrated interpersonal and diplomatic skills.
- Ability to enter new environments, adapt quickly and produce immediate results.
- Computer literacy - competent user of the main Microsoft Office programs.
- Proven commitment to the core values of the United Nations, in particular, respecting differences of culture, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, language, age, HIV status, disability, and sexual orientation, or other status

Language requirements

- Fluency in written and spoken English. Knowledge of Romanian or Russian would be an asset.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Contractor's performance will be evaluated against timeliness, responsibility, initiative, communication, accuracy, and overall quality of the delivered products.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Payments will be disbursed in installments, upon submission and approval of deliverables, and certification by UNDP Moldova Project Manager that the services have been satisfactorily performed.