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Resilient nations.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Job Title:	International consultant to provide mentorship and consultative support to the selected collaborative projects in fresh fruits promotion in public schools under the UNDP Moldova Business Innovation Lab
Type of Contract:	Individual Contract (IC)
Duty Station:	remote and from Chisinau, Moldova (at least 3 business trips to Moldova for mentorship purposes)
Expected workload:	up to 20 w/d
Expected duration of assignment:	May – 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 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 financial expert, and one communication specialist. Each members 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. Such members of the Board will be monthly or quarterly reporting on the progress and achieved results, against their specific Terms of references.

Under the current Call, BIL is searching an **experienced technological consultant** to provide mentorship and consultative support to the collaborative projects of SMEs in fresh fruits sector. Such collaborative projects will be selected based on MICS in fresh fruits (<http://inobiz.md/financial-support/collaborative-projects-in-the-fresh-fruits-sector/>). The consultant shall support the selected collaborative SME(s) to develop the prototype of the future collaborative solution that will permit regular provision of fresh snacks to selected and closed list of public schools and kindergartens in the pilot phase of the intervention.

In particular, the consultant, with support of the existing cross-sector mentors of the BIL, would deliver the following:

Key deliverables:

Deliverables	Deadlines
1. Map the existing technological solutions for producing fresh snacks of apples and other fresh commodity, ready to be delivered to public schools, kindergartens and retail chains - up to 1 w/d	May – June 2016

2. Support the collaborative project(s) of Moldovan SMEs in choosing the most appropriate technological solution - up to 7 w/d	By end-June 2016
3. Provide mentorship for the prototyping and testing the technological solution - up to 7 w/d	July – September 2016
4. Provide specific inputs to the BIL collection of success stories and blog posts in fresh fruits – up to 2 w/d	continuous
5. Develop narrative report on conducted mentorship and consultancy – up to 3 w/d	By 10 December 2016

ORGANIZATION CONTEXT

Under the guidance of the Project Manager, the consultant will be responsible to provide the above enlisted deliverables. The consultant will sign a declaration by which he/she agrees to be neutral in relation to the various technological solutions available and will disclose any potential conflict of interest with potential vendors and suppliers of ready-to-use solutions on the market. The Project will provide needed logistical support. Reporting on days worked will be performed based on the UNDP timesheet.

SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

Academic Qualification

- University degree in Economics, Engineering , Food Science or other relevant fields;

Experience

- At least 3 years of relevant technological experience in the fresh fruit sector and proven knowledge and experience of the fresh snacks technologies
- At least 2 years of experience in technological mentorship similar projects by SMEs

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.