



REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

CONSULTING SERVICES - “INBOUND EXPORT MISSIONS TO STRATEGIC SECTORS OF MOLDOVA (FRUITS AND HONEY SECTORS)” (MSME COMPETITIVENESS PROJECT)

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES COMPETITIVENESS PROJECT

Sector: General industry and trade sector

IDA Credit No. 71740

IBRD Loan No. 94230

Project ID No. P177895

Reference No. MD-CEP-474933-CS-CQS

The Republic of Moldova has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Competitiveness Project (MSME) and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services.

The consulting services (“the Services”) include providing targeted buyer identification along with comprehensive logistics and support services for organizing 2 (two) inbound mission focused on promoting Moldova’s strategic sectors and boosting export opportunities in the Fresh Fruits and Honey Sectors. The EFTA-Moldova Free Trade Agreement, entered into force on April 1, 2025 and aims to facilitate trade between the two parties. For fresh fruits, the target buyer markets are EFTA countries like Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein, with a goal of 10 qualified buyers and 10 Moldovan companies participating in at least 5 tailored B2B meetings each. Similarly, for honey, the target markets are Italy and/or Germany, with the same objective of 10 buyers and 10 local companies participating in at least 5 tailored B2B meetings/local company. The main objective of the assignment is to organize and conduct by the end of 2025 two inbound business missions for international trade delegations to connect them with Moldovan producers from (i) Fresh Fruits sector and (ii) Honey sector, including the identification and recruiting high-potential international buyers, coordination of B2B matchmaking, and arranging complete travel logistics for international participants.

The assignment is expected to be implemented during the period September 2025 through December 2026. Both inbound missions are expected to take place during the period September through December 2025 for core activities and January – December 2026 for the activities related to the results monitoring assessment. Each mission is expected to last for a period of 4 to 5 days.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the primary procurement stage for the assignment are attached to this request for expressions of interest.

The Project Implementation Unit of the MSME Competitiveness Project now invites local eligible and experienced specialized firm, or consortium of such firms with demonstrated experience in identifying and recruiting relevant foreign buyers, as well as in managing all logistical components of inbound business delegations. The Consultant should have strong capabilities in customer care and stakeholder

communication, providing clear, timely, and responsive support to both foreign buyers and Moldovan participants throughout all phases of the mission - pre-arrival, during the visit, and post-mission follow-up. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services (required qualifications and experience of the firm, but not individual experts' bio data).

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:

- ✓ Consultant' proven experience in carrying out similar assignments related to inbound business missions of international trade delegations, including the coordination of B2B matchmaking and buyer engagement. Supporting references should be provided by having at least 7 (seven) years of experience in the field of the assignment.
- ✓ Consultant' demonstrated experience and competence in designing and applying modern export promotion instruments and tools with established relations and access to international network of potential buyers (e.g. wholesalers, supermarkets chains, etc).
- ✓ Consultant' demonstrated experience and proven capability of arranging complete travel logistics for international delegations, including booking airplane tickets for inbound travel and coordinating local transportation options to support all mission-related activities within the country.
- ✓ Consultant' portfolio that would prove professional excellence and professional capacity and previous successful experience of the company and staff with at least 3 (three) similar or alike successfully implemented assignments.
- ✓ Consultant has thorough knowledge of the economic sectors of Moldova, their needs, reflected by having practical experience in working on SME, export and trade facilitation issues.
- ✓ Consultant' successful prior experience in implementation of donors' and/or IFIs' sponsored projects.

The selection criteria are:

#	Criteria	Points
1	Competence and experience and competence in designing and applying modern export promotion instruments and tools with established relations and access to international network of potential buyers.	35
2	Track record of similar assignments by having at least 7 (seven) years of experience in carrying out similar assignments related to inbound business missions of international trade delegations, including the coordination of B2B matchmaking and buyer engagement, as well as practical experience in working on SME, export and trade facilitation topics.	35
3	Demonstrated ability and experienced staff with at least three similar successfully implemented similar assignments as well as experience and proven capability of arranging complete travel logistics for international delegations, including booking airplane tickets for inbound travel and coordinating local transportation options to support all mission-related activities within the country.	25
4	Has successful prior experience in implementation of donors' and/or IFIs' sponsored projects	5

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. A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the „Consultant's Qualification-based Selection" method set out in the Procurement Regulations.

Consultants may associate with other firms to enhance their qualifications; but they 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.

The Expression of Interest shall clearly state the name of the Consultant (individual Firm, Joint Venture or sub-consultancy). The Consultant shall provide relevant references (assignment name, Client, time frame, the role of the firm (main Consultant/Partner in JV/sub-consultant, contract amount, tasks performed etc.) to confirm its experience and qualifications.

Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours.

Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by mail, or by e-mail) by **September 17, 2025**, COB.

Project Implementation Unit of the MSME Competitiveness Project

Attn. Aureliu Casian, Executive Director

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Tel: + 373 22 296-723; + 373 22 296-724;

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TERMS OF REFERENCE
MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES COMPETITIVENESS PROJECT
(Project ID No. P177895)

Inbound export missions to strategic sectors of Moldova
(Fruits and Honey Sectors) Ref. No. MD-CEP-474933-CS-CQS

A. Introduction

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.

The World Bank has been supporting the Government in its competitiveness and reform efforts through two Competitiveness Enhancement Projects (CEP), which closed successfully and focused on: (i) regulatory reform; (ii) small and medium enterprises' access to business development services and quality certifications, through a matching grant facility (MGF); (iii) access to finance, through a line of credit (LoC) for exporters; and (iv) quality infrastructure, including equipment and institutional reform in the area of metrology, standards, testing, and quality.

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 Development 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.

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 the Government. 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 Invest Moldova Agency as key Beneficiary of the assignment.

C. Context of export-led growth for Moldova

A key challenge facing the Government of Moldova is the need to promote economic growth and job creation based on robust private sector activity, exports and enhanced investment. One of the elements which could ensure sustainable economic growth of the country is the implementation of coordinated and proactive incentive policies in the field of export development and investment activity.

Over decades, export-led growth has delivered high growth rates, created new jobs, led to higher labor productivity, ensured relevant inflows of capital and technology, introduced new organizational and managerial methods of production, substantially increased export revenues and, in several cases, turned traditional trade deficits into surplus. It has improved the current account balance and, as a result, contributed to higher financial stability.

In accordance with its development agenda, the Government wants to steer the economy towards export-oriented production activities and better exploit the country’s potential as a natural transit point between the East and West.

Therefore, under the current support of the MSME project, the Government through its Invest Moldova Agency (MIA) is seeking the services of a qualified company (Consultant) to provide targeted buyer identification along with comprehensive logistics and support services for organizing 2 (two) inbound mission focused on promoting Moldova’s strategic sectors and boosting export opportunities in the Fresh Fruits and Honey Sectors. The EFTA-Moldova Free Trade Agreement, entered into force on April 1, 2025 and aims to facilitate trade between the two parties. For fresh fruits, the target buyer markets are EFTA countries like Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein, with a goal of 10 qualified buyers and 10 Moldovan companies participating in at least 5 tailored B2B meetings each. Similarly, for honey, the target markets are Italy and/or Germany, with the same objective of 10 buyers and 10 local companies participating in at least 5 tailored B2B meetings/local company.

By selecting a qualified company, Invest Moldova Agency aims to deliver well-organized, results-oriented missions that strengthens trade relations, supports Moldova’s export promotion strategy, and builds lasting commercial ties between Moldovan businesses and international partners.

D. Objectives of the Assignment

The **main objective** of the assignment is to organize and conduct by the end of 2025 **two inbound business missions for international trade delegations to connect them with Moldovan producers from (i) Fresh Fruits sector and (ii) Honey sector**, including the identification and recruiting high-potential international buyers, coordination of B2B matchmaking, and arranging complete travel logistics for international participants.

E. Tasks to be performed (Scope of the Work)

During the implementation of the assignment the Consultant will be responsible for the implementation of the following tasks:

1. Targeted identification and selection of relevant, high-potential international buyers aligned with the mission’s target sectors from the following countries:
 - a. Fresh Fruits sector - 10 qualified buyers from EFTA countries (Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein).
 - b. Honey sector - 10 qualified buyers from Italy or Germany
2. Identification and selection of high-potential international buyers for collaboration with 20 local Moldovan SMEs (10 per each sector) ensuring their business profiles and interests align with Moldova’s key export sectors and strategic objectives. The table below presents the assignment matrix in terms of markets, sectors, and expected participants.

Sector	Target Buyer Markets	Number of International Buyers	Number of local companies	Matchmaking Objective
Fruits	EFTA countries (Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein)	10 buyers	10 SMEs	Minimum 5 tailored B2B meetings per Moldovan company
Honey	Italy or Germany	10 buyers	10 SMEs	Minimum 5 tailored B2B meetings per Moldovan company

3. Conducting thorough assessment of each selected buyer's needs, interests, and business objectives to ensure alignment with Moldova's export sectors and mission goals.
4. Initiation and maintaining communication with selected buyers prior to the mission, identifying their specific partnership expectations and tailoring matchmaking opportunities accordingly.
5. Assessing buyers' business profiles to confirm their compatibility with Moldovan companies, ensuring a high potential for successful collaboration and commercial partnerships.
6. Developing personalized matchmaking agendas and analyze each buyer's product focus and market strategy to ensure compatibility with local Moldovan producers. For each Moldovan company, the Consultant must secure a minimum of 5 tailored B2B meetings with selected foreign buyers whose interests and requirements match the company's export offerings.
7. Arranging round-trip international flights for all selected foreign buyers according to the mission timeline and provide for visa assistance if needed to ensure all participants obtain the required travel documents for entry into Moldova.
8. Arranging complete travel logistics for international participants, including booking round-trip international flights for traveling to Moldova and coordinating reliable local transportation options (e.g., buses, shuttles) to support all mission-related activities throughout the mission (e.g., from hotels to meeting venues, site visits, events, etc.).
9. Organizing site visits and business meetings with Moldovan companies, ensuring that these activities align with the mission's strategic objectives of showcasing Moldova's competitive sectors.
10. Ensuring the availability of professional interpreters or facilitators as needed to support effective communication between international buyers and Moldovan companies, particularly during business meetings, site visits, and networking events, to facilitate smooth interactions and ensure that language barriers do not impede the mission's objectives.
11. Designing cultural/touristic agenda for the visiting delegation, including the organization of visits to at least two locations of cultural or touristic interest in Moldova (e.g., wineries, historical landmarks, or other relevant attractions), in consultation with Invest Moldova Agency.

The Consultant will work in close collaboration with Invest Moldova Agency and relevant stakeholders and oversee the end-to-end planning and execution of the mission, ensuring all activities are managed professionally. The Consultant's services will conclude after the final business representatives have returned home, following the completion of the post-mission reporting and any additional support required by Invest Moldova Agency.

F. Reports / Deliverables

During the implementation of the assignment, the Consultant will be expected to provide the following reports / deliverables:

1. A documented strategy / roadmap outlining the approach for identification and engaging selected buyers, including tailored matchmaking objectives, pre-engagement steps, and expectations from both Moldovan companies and international buyers.
2. A comprehensive report detailing the selected international buyers, their company profiles, product focus, market potential, and alignment with Moldovan export sectors (fruits, honey), as well as the rationale for their selection.

3. A confirmed list of scheduled matchmaking meetings between selected buyers and pre-screened Moldovan companies, including meeting's agenda, goals, and specific matchmaking outcomes.
4. Briefing materials for both buyers and Moldovan companies, including company profiles, product specifications, and expectations for the meetings to ensure preparation and alignment of interests.
5. A detailed report summarizing the results of the matchmaking meetings, including key outcomes, leads generated, business interests, follow-up actions, challenges encountered, and overall mission success.
6. A final list of confirmed travel bookings and detailed mission itinerary, including flight confirmations, accommodation details, local transportation arrangements for all international buyers, shared with Invest Moldova Agency and Moldovan participants at least 10 days prior to the mission.
7. Documentation outlining the local support arrangements, including the local point of contact in Moldova, the role of interpreters or multilingual staff, and how these resources will be made available to participants during the mission.
8. Reports describing performed activities should be submitted by the Consultant within 14 days after the conclusion of each mission, including an assessment of the mission's overall success and any feedback gathered from participants.
9. A follow-up report at 3, 6 and 12 months after the mission, documenting the progress of partnerships, contracts, sales, challenges faced, and recommendations for future engagement, will be submitted to Invest Moldova Agency and stakeholders to ensure continuous monitoring of the mission's success and long-term impact.

G. Timeline

Both inbound missions are expected to take place during the period September through December 2025 for core activities and January – December 2026 for the activities related to the results monitoring assessment. Each mission is expected to last for a period of 4 to 5 days. All travel and logistical arrangements, including transportation, accommodation, and event coordination, should be planned to accommodate this timeframe.

H. Reporting Arrangements

The Consultant will report to the Invest Moldova Agency, coordinating with the Project Implementation Unit (PIU). All deliverables will be reviewed and approved by the Invest Moldova Agency Director or other appointed person.

I. Qualification Requirements

This assignment will require a Consultant, which shall be an experienced specialized firm, or a consortium of such firms with demonstrated experience in identifying and recruiting relevant foreign buyers, as well as in managing all logistical components of inbound business delegations. This includes international travel arrangements, local transportation within Moldova, hotel accommodations, coordination of the mission agenda, and on-the-ground operational support to ensure a smooth and impactful experience for all participants. The Consultant should have strong capabilities in customer care and stakeholder communication, providing clear, timely, and responsive support to both foreign buyers and Moldovan

participants throughout all phases of the mission - pre-arrival, during the visit, and post-mission follow-up.

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 qualification requirements:

- Consultant' proven experience in carrying out similar assignments related to inbound business missions of international trade delegations, including the coordination of B2B matchmaking and buyer engagement. Supporting references should be provided by having at least 7 (seven) years of experience in the field of the assignment.
- Consultant' demonstrated experience and competence in designing and applying modern export promotion instruments and tools with established relations and access to international network of potential buyers (e.g. wholesalers, supermarkets chains, etc).
- Consultant' demonstrated experience and proven capability of arranging complete travel logistics for international delegations, including booking airplane tickets for inbound travel and coordinating local transportation options to support all mission-related activities within the country.
- Consultant' portfolio that would prove professional excellence and professional capacity and previous successful experience of the company and staff with at least 3 (three) similar or alike successfully implemented assignments.
- Consultant has thorough knowledge of the economic sectors of Moldova, their needs, reflected by having practical experience in working on SME, export and trade facilitation issues.
- Consultant' successful prior experience in implementation of donors' and/or IFIs' sponsored projects.

J. Terms of Payment¹

The Contract will be a lump-sum contract for small assignments in accordance with the World Bank standards. The tentative payment schedule is as follows:

- ✓ **10% of the contract amount** upon acceptance of the Inception Report, which shall be based on the original technical proposal to confirm or propose changes to the methodology of the contract; if necessary, propose changes to the proposed work plan for the delivery of each activity, the area of expertise and the list of deliverables, etc. The inception report shall present all activities in terms of deliverables highlighting the milestones. The report shall list and comment on any developments that have occurred since the TOR agreed upon by the parties that could have an impact on the project design and relevance of the activities to be developed under the project. This report shall be submitted within 1 week after the contract' effectiveness.
- ✓ **20% of the contract amount** upon acceptance of the 1st report, which shall include a comprehensive report detailing, *inter alia*, (i) the roadmap outlining the approach for identification and engaging selected buyers, (ii) information detailing the selected international buyers and their company profiles, and information detailing domestic firms, etc. in accordance with the requirements described under Clause F. Reports/Deliverables, points 1-4. This report shall be submitted within 6 weeks after the contract' effectiveness.

¹ Payment schedule and sequences of deliverables are tentative and will be defined during the negotiation of the technical and financial proposals (work plan, timelines, etc.)

- ✓ **20% of the contract amount** upon acceptance of the 2nd report, which shall include, *inter alia*, (i) the results of the matchmaking meetings; (ii) list of confirmed travel bookings and detailed mission itinerary, etc. in accordance with the requirements described under Clause F. Reports/Deliverables, points 5-7. This report shall be submitted within 8 weeks after the contract's effectiveness.
- ✓ **20% of the contract amount** upon acceptance of the report, describing activities and results of the 1st inbound mission to Moldova. This report shall be submitted within 11 weeks after the contract's effectiveness.
- ✓ **20% of the contract amount** upon acceptance of the report, describing activities and results of the 2nd inbound mission to Moldova. This report shall be submitted within 14 weeks after the contract's effectiveness.
- ✓ **10% of the contract amount** distributed evenly, upon submission of the after missions' reports.