REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANT

Consulting services for the position of Matching Grants Facility Officer (part-time position)

World Bank Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Competitiveness Project

**REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

Sector: General industry and trade sector

IDA Credit No. 71740

IBRD Loan No. 94230

Project ID No. P177895

Reference No. MD-CEP- 342045 -CS-INDV

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 consulting services in all aspects related to MGF in order to ensure timely implementation of the MGF subcomponent in compliance with the Financing Agreement, Project Appraisal Document (PAD), Project Operation Manual (PoM), MGF Operation Manual and the Moldovan legislation.

The assignment will be implemented in the period November 2025 – June 30, 2026.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the assignment is attached to this request for expressions of interest.

The Project Implementation Unit of the MSME Competitiveness Project now invites **eligible individual local consultants** (“Consultants”) to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services.

The evaluation criteria are:

* Master degree in economics, business management or finance.
* Good knowledge of the economic sectors of Moldova and their needs, reflected by having a minimum of seven years of practical experience in working in or with, the private sector in Moldova.
* First-hand experience of at least five years in developing and/or implementing tools and/or programs to support enterprise development in Moldova.
* Strong communication and teamwork skills.
* Ability to communicate, negotiate, analyze and develop reports.
* Fluency in Romanian and English.
* Computer proficiency (Windows, MS Office, Internet Explorer)

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 „Open Competitive Selection of Individual Consultants” method set out in the Procurement Regulations and to be specifically set out in the Request for submission of the technical and financial proposal.

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

The applications should include a letter of Expression of Interest, CV, and related recommendation letters, if any, together with a **copy of CV in MS WORD format**.

Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by mail, or by e-mail) by **October 17**, **2025**, COBD**, indicating the assignment title in subject line.**

Project Implementation Unit of the MSME Competitiveness Project

Attn. Mr. Aureliu Casian, Executive Director

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**Terms of Reference**

**Consulting services for the position of Matching Grants Facility Officer (part-time position),**

under the World Bank’ Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Competitiveness Project (MSME)

**A. Background**

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 for stimulating sustained private sector growth. Significant regulatory and institutional weaknesses in the business environment have been identified by the recently conducted Investment Climate Assessment as the major obstacles for the private sector ability to perform efficiently and grow, and they also negatively affected investor confidence. The existence of cumbersome regulations undermines competitiveness of private Moldovan enterprises and prevents increased investment by increasing costs of doing business, and ultimately providing a fertile ground for corruption, favoritism, and the informal economy.

The World Bank has been supporting the government in its competitiveness and reform efforts through the Competitiveness Enhancement Projects, 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, the supported activities generated approximately US$215 million in new exports, more than 1000 jobs, an estimated US$15 million in savings for the private sector linked to the implementation of the electronic one stop shop for permits, as well as other reforms. Two hundred and seventy companies benefited from MGF, with more than 55 percent of them exporting for the first time. A total of US$41 million in new export sales have been realized by program recipients and creating more than 800 new jobs. Impact evaluation of the MGF revealed that for US$1 invested through the program, US$12,4 in new export sales have been achieved. Under the new operation it is also envisaged support for firms through matching grants and export readiness programs. Support under CEP II to new program initiated by ODA on internationalization and export readiness aims at helping aspiring local enterprises become export ready.

MoE has expressed its strong desire for a project that builds on the successes of the previous one, addresses institutional capacity challenges, and takes a more comprehensive approach to enterprise competitiveness.

**B*.* Project’ Description**

The Project's Development Objective (PDO) is (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 Credit Guarantee Facility (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 will support the Government in reducing regulatory burden for business through further digitization both at the national and local levels, enhancing and digitizing inspection services, improving interoperability and integrated service delivery for enterprises, simplifying the regulatory environment, as well as improving the national quality infrastructure system (hereinafter NQI).

***Component 2 –******Access to Finance***.This component aims to support CGF within Organization for Entrepreneurial Development (ODA) for the provision of financial guarantees to MSMEs, to provide more effective programs and assistance that have positive spillovers for growth of SMEs and export-oriented sectors to expand the business and realize economies of scale, start operations in new markets, engage in new export activities, and adopt new technologies required for productivity gains.

Breaking it down by key activities:

1. Financial support to CGF within ODA for the provision of financial guarantees to MSMEs through a new portfolio guarantee product.
2. Technical assistance and support for institutional strengthening of ODA with regards to CGF in order to address key areas identified by the assessment as they relate to the ability of CGF to achieve its mandate and the objectives of the access to finance component.
3. Technical assistance and capacity building workshops to the NBM and PFIs on managing and controlling climate-related and environmental risks, climate change adaptation and mitigation topics relevant for financial institutions in the country and in the context of international regulations (e.g. European Green Deal, EU Taxonomy, etc.), as well as on climate change vulnerability assessments.

***Component 3 – MSME Development and Export Competitiveness***, focusing on support firms through matching grants, export readiness, supplier linkages, and export promotion programs. The objectives of this component are linked with the Government’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. Through this Component, the Project will provide funds to MGF to support MSMEs in improving their products and services, as well as technology adoption. The Project will also fund an export readiness program, buyer-supplier linkages as well as export missions, all geared towards helping MSMEs export and link with international buyers. As a result, MSMEs will increase their competitiveness and exports.

***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.

**C. Background of the assignment**

MGF under CEP II has proven very effective and impactful, thus, scaling up and continuing support to firms to obtain business development services is one of the critical tools to enable exports. The new MGF it is administrated by ODA and is following all relevant World Bank rules and procedures. The subcomponent has a budget of EUR 4,75 million and it is expected that approximately 320 MSMEs will benefit from the proposed facility during the Project implementation. Energy efficiency and environmental and climate performance criteria will be applied for purchases of small equipment as a climate change mitigation measure. In this way, MGF will be integrated in ODA’s export readiness, internationalization, European Green Deal, and linkages programs for maximum efficiency. The Project will provide matching grants to Moldovan MSMEs to help them export to the international market and/or to be integrated into export-oriented value chains. Through the provision of matching grants, the project will help eligible MSMEs to finance a set of activities, including business development services and fixed assets, to achieve a business improvement objective, inter alia, to: (a) improve existing products and services; (b) create new products and services; (c) improve production processes; (d) improve business management; and/or (e) purchase small equipment. The Project will help increase the number of MSMEs reaching a new export-oriented goal such as: (a) exporting to new markets or new customers, (b) exporting for the first time, (c) exporting new products; and/or, (b) selling new products into export-oriented value chains.

The MGF covers on a grant basis up to 80 percent of the cost of the business improvement project (BIP), the maximum ceiling of the grant per beneficiary MSME is MDL 600,000 (without VAT).

ODA is responsible for managing the MGF subcomponent in accordance with the provisions of the MGF Operations manual and is responsible for entering into a Matching Grants Agreement with eligible MSMEs.

The PIU is supporting ODA in the technical implementation in terms of financial management, disbursement of MGFs, monitoring and evaluation, procurement, and environmental & social measures.

Based on PAD and results framework, at the end of the project, the following results are expected from the MGF subcomponent:

* 320 micro, small and medium enterprises receiving matching grants.
* 55 percent of the matching grants beneficiaries engaged in a new export-oriented activity (defined as exporting to new markets or new customers, exporting for the first time, exporting new products, or selling new products into export-oriented value chains).
* 35 percent of MGF beneficiaries are female-owned/female-managed firms.
* 70 percent of MGF beneficiaries are satisfied with engagement.
* USD 52 million - cumulative value of exports generated by MSMEs supported under MGF subcomponent.

In order to achieve these results and to facilitate the MGF implementation, ODA is collaborating with a MGF team (MGFT) throughout Project implementation. The MGFT is responsible for coordinating the implementation, supervision, completion, and documentation of all the activities related to the MGF.

Within this framework, the Government of Moldova is seeking the services of a local individual Consultant with relevant knowledge, abilities and work experience to assist the MGF Coordinator and ODA in implementing the activities needed to achieve MGF subcomponent’s objectives.

**D.Objectives of the Assignment**

The objective of this Consultant is to provide consulting services in all aspects related to MGF in order to ensure timely implementation of the MGF subcomponent in compliance with the Financing Agreement, Project Appraisal Document (PAD), Project Operation Manual (PoM), MGF Operation Manual and the Moldovan legislation.

**E. Tasks to be performed by the Consultant under the Project (Scope of the Work)**

The MGF Officer will work under the supervision of the MGF Coordinator and will provide support to MGF coordinator and ODA team in implementing the MGF procedures and all activities needed to achieve MGF objectives in accordance with the eligibility criteria, selection procedures and implementation conditions set forth in the MGF Operation Manual and ODA internal procedures. The MGF officer will provide support in the application and implementation procedures; communication with key stakeholders, applicants and beneficiaries; project documents reporting; etc.

In particular, the Consultant will be expected to perform the following tasks:

Under the Implementation Phase

* Support the implementation of the MGF following the MGF Operations manual.
* Support the implementation of the MGF Annual Work Plan.
* On the pre-application phase ensure assistance for potential beneficiaries in order to facilitate their application process.
* Ensure that rapid and complete records are maintained of all Applications, approvals, claims and payments, as well as all relevant documentation is properly stocked in the beneficiary files.
* Ensure that all procedures and internal controls for each stage are adequately documented.
* Participate and help the MGF team with the implementation of the outreach activities by ODA/PIU.
* Review and check the payment request, with all supporting proofing documents, and deliverables presented by the MGF Beneficiary.
* Prepare in collaboration with MGF Coordinator the Payment request under the grant approved by ODA to be executed by PIU in favor of MGF Beneficiary
* Support to MGF monitoring & evaluation specialist and MGF coordinator in the implementation of the MGF Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy, including the Impact Assessment.
* Participate in field visits to supervise the progress of the BIPs progress implementation as required by the MGF Coordinator.
* Evaluate the operation and performance of the MGF and propose any changes or additions required to ensure that the objectives will be achieved.
* Support provided to MGF coordinator in preparing progress reports, as well as reports for WB periodic missions related to the MGF and other activities described in the MGF operations manual.
* Ensure completion of contractual formalities in respect of approved projects.
* Participate in technical meetings with PIU and with WB representatives during supervision missions, as required by the MGF Coordinator.

Under the Closing Phase

* Ensure that all information collected during the Project life cycle is organized and archived according to the Project operation manual and the MGF operations manual.
* Ensure that all consultancy services and equipment contracted under the MGF are delivered before the closing date of the Project.
* Ensure that all the MGF indicators are met.

**F. Timing for the Assignment**

This is a part-time assignment to be performed in the period ***November 2025 – June 30, 2026*** with a probation period of three months, during which the contract can be terminated. The contract can be extended beyond this term, subject to the Consultant’s satisfactory performance, *inter alia* achievement of the intermediary MGF’ performance indicators.

**G. Reporting Arrangements**

The MGF officer will work under the supervision of the MGF Coordinator and in collaboration with ODA head of growth and business internationalization department. The MGF Officer will provide monthly reportsin the form of a time-sheet, which will include performed activities and the number of working days.

**H. Client’s inputs**

PIU will provide working space, including office equipment and furniture, consumables and access to Internet.

**I. Terms of payments**

The MGF Officer will receive monthly remuneration for services rendered. The Contract will be the time-based contract for small assignments according to World Bank standards.

**J. Requirements for the assignment**

This assignment will require an individual local Consultant, who has:

* Master degree in economics, business management or finance.
* Good knowledge of the economic sectors of Moldova and their needs, reflected by having a minimum of seven years of practical experience in working in or with, the private sector in Moldova.
* First-hand experience of at least five years in developing and/or implementing tools and/or programs to support enterprise development in Moldova.
* Strong communication and teamwork skills.
* Ability to communicate, negotiate, analyze and develop reports.
* Fluency in Romanian and English.
* Computer proficiency (Windows, MS Office, Internet Explorer)