



WARCIP LIBERIA PROJECT

WEST AFRICA REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM



Request for Expressions of Interest

Consultant Services for Conduct of a Feasibility Study for the Deployment of a National ICT Backbone Network

1) This Request for Expressions of Interest is being published on DGmarket, UNDB, national newspapers in Liberia, and on LTA website to attract suitable candidates.

2) **Background**

The Government of Liberia (GoL) has received a loan from the International Development Association of the World Bank (the “Bank”) towards the cost of implementing the first phase of the West Africa Regional Communications Infrastructure Program (WARCIP) Liberia Project (the “Project”) and intends to apply a portion of the proceeds of this loan towards the cost of conducting a feasibility study for the deployment of a national ICT Backbone network.

The National Telecommunications and ICT Policy of Liberia support the deployment of a national telecommunications backbone, which would require a supportive environment facilitated by the Government with participation from the private sector. The Government of Liberia is committed to utilizing Public Private Partnerships (PPP) in the deployment of a national backbone to be managed under Open Access principles.

The National ICT Policy also envisages the establishment of broadband connectivity between major urban centers within the country and last mile penetration to un-served and underserved areas in line with the Government’s Universal Access Policy.

At present a competitive environment is made up of five GSM companies, the national operator, which operates a CDMA network, and a number of ISPs. These operators provide fairly extensive coverage of the capital, Monrovia, and other major urban centers. However, like other countries at Liberia’s level of development, a large imbalance exists between urban and rural areas, particularly in terms of Internet access.

The Cable Consortium of Liberia (CCL), a Public Private Partnership (PPP), has been established among the two largest private operators, the state-owned operator, and the Government of Liberia to construct, own and manage the ACE fiber optic cable landing station in Liberia.

The ACE fiber optic cable landing in Monrovia should facilitate better and cheaper access to communications services, but to be truly effective, a terrestrial broad backbone infrastructure needs to be put into place to drive demand for the capacity of the ACE cable, and enable last mile connectivity nationally and regionally.

In support of this objective, the Government of Liberia with financing from the International Development Association seeks the services of a consultant to undertake a feasibility study on the construction, maintenance and management of a national terrestrial broadband communications backbone.

3) **Objective**

The overall objective of this study is to provide advice to the Government of Liberia in its drive to increase the country’s accessibility to the regional and global communications network by providing last mile, high speed broadband connectivity throughout the country.

4) **Scope of Work**

4.1 Background Research and Review of Best Practices

The Consultant is expected to conduct research and present findings on previous work/studies done on developing a National Backbone in Liberia, and advise the Government on international best practices and lessons learned in deploying national backbones, especially with regards to the experience of countries in a similar development situation as Liberia.

4.2 Telecommunications Sector Overview & Market Analysis

The Consultant shall provide a broad overview of the telecommunications sector of Liberia in the context of the reach and range of existing communications infrastructure; the terrain of the country; and location of major population centers and development corridors. The market analysis shall consider the marketing and investment strategies of communications operators and other potential investors in the backbone. The Consultant's analysis of development corridors, geographical terrain and population centers will be supported by appropriate maps and diagrams.

4.3 Legal, Regulatory & Policy Framework

The Consultant shall review the existing commercial, legal, regulatory and policy frameworks of Liberia as they relate to rights of way, interconnectivity among networks, an Open Access environment, and safeguards to achieve the full development impact of the deployment of a National Backbone.

The Consultant will also identify any legal or regulatory constraints to private participation in the roll-out of the Backbone. Where appropriate, the Consultant will recommend and draft amendments to licenses, regulations, policy and legislation, or propose new licenses, legislation, policy and regulations to remove obstacles to the public private development of the National Backbone.

4.4 Technical Design & Implementation Strategy

Based on background research, sector overview, market analysis and relevant international experience, the Consultant will propose viable options for the technical design of the National Backbone and recommend strategies for implementing the options. In designing the National Backbone, the Consultant shall take into consideration existing and planned communications infrastructure as well as highways, railways, and electricity grids which could potentially form part of the backbone.

4.5 Business, Management and Financing Model

The Consultant shall develop and recommend options for sustainable management and operation of the National Backbone under a Public Private Partnership and in keeping with Open Access principles.

The Consultant shall develop a business model for the national backbone, including expected cost structure, for both capital expenditure (CAPEX) and operating expenditure (OPEX); revenue structure; and financing options. The Consultant shall provide options for the appropriate institutional mechanisms for management and operation of the Backbone with consideration for the structuring of the Backbone's administration to ensure transparency and accountability.

4.6 Development Impact Assessment

The Consultant shall conduct an economic assessment and provide a report on the developmental impact of a national backbone. The report shall consider impact on the ICT sector in particular and impact on the socio-economic development of the country as a whole.

4.7 Environmental Impact Assessment

The Consultant shall conduct a preliminary assessment of the environmental impact of the proposed National Backbone, and prepare an environmental and social management framework that could be used for a more detailed environmental impact assessment. Such a study shall include impacts on the natural environment and on human settlements and livelihoods. The study shall propose measures to mitigate possible environmental impacts and advise on a resettlement policy framework.

5) Duration, Deliverables and Administrative Arrangements

The Consultant will undertake missions to Liberia as required to complete this work. The Consultant will work under the general direction of, and in close collaboration with, the Liberia Telecommunications Authority (LTA), and in consultation with telecom sector stakeholders in Liberia. The LTA will provide the consultant with access to all relevant reports, legislation, statistics, policy documents and information, as well as arrange consultations with other government agencies, private operators, and relevant parties.

The work involved in this consultancy is estimated to be completed in not more than eight months from the date of contract signature. The work is expected to involve field trips to Liberia, and consultations with government and operators in Liberia. The consultant is expected to mobilize within three weeks of contract signature.

6) **Consultant Qualifications**

This consultancy is expected to be carried out by a consulting firm or a group of firms that will undertake missions to Liberia as required to complete this work. The Consultant will work under the general direction of, and in close collaboration with, the Liberia Telecommunications Authority (LTA), and in consultation with telecom sector stakeholders in Liberia. The LTA will provide the consultant with access to all relevant reports, legislation, statistics, policy documents and information, as well as arrange consultations with other government agencies, private operators, and relevant parties.

The work involved in this consultancy is estimated to be completed in not more than eight months from the date of contract signature. The work is expected to involve field trips to Liberia, and consultations with government and operators in Liberia. The consultant is expected to mobilize within three weeks of contract signature.

7) **Deadline for Submission**

Expressions of Interest with detailed information of Past Performance must be delivered to the address below (by hand or e-mail) **on or before 16 September 2013 at 1700hrs GMT**. Only short listed candidates will be contacted.

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