

Log-in Georgia Project (P169698)

Terms of Reference for the design of a Digital Inclusion Program

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

The Government of Georgia has received financing from the World Bank for the implementation of Log-in Georgia Project. The proposed Project development objective is to increase access to affordable broadband internet and to promote its use by individuals and enterprises, in targeted rural settlements.

The Project consists of the following key components:

Component 1: Increasing access to broadband – this Component will help expand access to broadband internet in rural settlements across Georgia and improve the enabling environment for digital development.

Component 2: Promoting the use of broadband-enabled digital services – this Component will support the development of Georgia’s digital economy through a strengthened enabling environment, promoting digital use-cases of broadband, and addressing barriers to the participation of individuals in the digital economy. In addition, it will promote digital inclusion amongst minority groups and support the use of the internet and digital services by women, social minorities, and persons with disabilities in selected settlements.

Component 3: Project implementation support – this component will support the management and implementation of the Project and associated activities.

Detailed information on the Log-in Georgia Project is available in the Project Appraisal Document (PAD) at the following link: <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/996651598925686197/georgia-log-in-georgia-project>

The Project will be implemented over five years by the Open Net NNLE as the Project Implementing Entity (PIE), with the oversight and implementation of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia (MOESD) and the Communications Commission (ComCom). Activities under Component 2 will be implemented in coordination with the Media Literacy Development Department (MLDD) of ComCom, with the support of the PIE.

BACKGROUND OF THIS ASSIGNMENT

Through the Log-in Georgia project, the World Bank will support Georgia's National Broadband Development Strategy for 2020-2025, which was approved by the Government of Georgia in January 2020. The project will help connect up to 1,000 villages, including highland settlements, with high quality and affordable high-speed internet service. The project will benefit approximately 500,000 people who currently live in areas without high-quality, high-speed Internet access.

In addition to increasing rural high-speed internet coverage, the Project will provide nationwide awareness building, training, and capacity building programs, to facilitate the use of digital services and to promote digital inclusion. The project will promote use-cases of improved connectivity such as digital financial services and e-commerce as well as e-government services. In addition, the project will support the

increased use of distance learning and telemedicine. These efforts will support the Government to develop an enabling environment for the digital economy. Promoting use-cases and increasing digital inclusion will help increase the use of broadband connectivity by rural users, helping to achieve the Project's development objective.

These activities will need to be delivered at the settlement level and will rely on extensive citizen engagement in their design and implementation. Activities' design will rely on surveys, focus groups, and beneficiary engagement to collect detailed information about the status quo of Internet use and to identify relevant needs and use-cases for each of the settlements to be covered by the Project.

For this, the Project intends to undertake: (1) intensive and regular stakeholder and citizen engagement to match use-cases to settlements through participatory needs assessment and prioritization exercises, (2) coordination with public and private organizations to extend the use of their existing digital platforms or services to selected settlements, raise awareness of capabilities, and increase the adoption of broadband, (3) delivery of training and capacity- or awareness-building programs in selected settlements on identified use-cases, and (4) providing input to public agencies on the needs of the selected settlements and user-groups, to inform their design or rollout of platforms or services based on citizen and stakeholder feedback, including beneficiary dialogues.

The initiatives will be supported by a team of 'digital ambassadors.' The digital ambassadors will embed themselves in the settlements and for six months will undertake the citizen and stakeholder engagement activities and deliver training and awareness-building programs. Feedback from citizens will be conveyed to the ComCom team, which will then inform relevant agencies on those ideas or opportunities to improve their digital platforms and services, helping to close the feedback loop.

Support to Digital Inclusion

The Project will include special measures undertaken in the selected rural settlements to facilitate the use of the Internet and digital services amongst vulnerable groups such as women and women-headed households, ethnic and social minorities, the elderly (over age 65), and persons with disabilities.

In this, the Project intends to support the engagement of the vulnerable groups at the local level, ensure the mobilization of communities to increase support in using technology and digital services, to maximize participation and inclusion. Special efforts will be made to ensure the participation of women entrepreneurs in these activities, including facilitating their connection with public and private platforms to access resources and markets. Specific groups will be identified during the stakeholder and citizen engagement activities.

Programs such as training (in-person and online) and community mobilization will be provided by the digital ambassadors as noted above. Beneficiary dialogues will also inform the scope of legal or policy reforms that can serve to address the drivers of digital exclusion. Furthermore, the Project will also address the need for assistive and accessible digital technologies to overcome barriers faced by persons with disabilities to access and use the internet.

As the implementing agency for the Digital Adoption Program (under Component 2 of the Project), ComCom now seeks to define an overall Digital Inclusion Strategy that will bring together different activities towards common objectives to promote citizens' participation in the digital economy. This also aligns with the

development of a new universal service program in Georgia, which will aim to close the supply-side gaps facing households that are socially vulnerable and persons with disabilities.

OBJECTIVE OF THIS ASSIGNMENT

The main objective of the assignment is to: (1) conduct a digital inclusion gap assessment analyzing economic, social and demographic reasons for exclusion, and as a result of the assessment, come up with a Digital Inclusion Strategy, including actions and recommendations for its implementation; and (2) design a Pilot Program to increase the economic and social inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWDs) and minorities through improved skills and access to digital technologies, to showcase the benefits of investing in digital inclusion for target groups.

To achieve the objective, the Consulting Firm shall analyze and elaborate on the following key questions:

- What is a digital exclusion in a Georgian context?
- Who in Georgia is digitally excluded?
- Why are they excluded / What are the barriers to inclusion?
- What is needed to be digitally included and what are the actions that can enable inclusion?

SCOPE OF WORK

The Contractor shall conduct an in-depth study of the following topics:

- Key barriers persons with disabilities and minorities in Georgia face to access digital technologies (Analyze challenges specific to different sub-groups of persons with disabilities);
- The potential costs (lost opportunity) from the digital exclusion for PWDs and minorities and the potential benefits of investing in digital inclusion for this group, from the point of view of the potential use-cases mentioned in the background section;
- Types of actions (legal, policy, service, etc.), as well as investments (e.g., in procuring specific technology) and capacity building activities necessary to reduce the digital divide / promote digital inclusion for the target groups;
- Key stakeholders within the government and outside (including specific organizations and institutions) to be potentially involved in the development and implementation of the digital inclusion program;
- Core programs and initiatives that digital inclusion actions could be linked to accelerate the take-up of use-cases (see background section). This may be programs related to a social safety net, financial inclusion, remote learning, jobs opportunities for youth, entrepreneurship, etc.

APPROACH

To achieve the objective of the assignment, the Consulting firm shall:

- Conduct assessment of the state of digital inclusion initiatives and programs in Georgia, including digital adoption and technology training programs, by mapping the local actors (NGOs working on disability and minority issues, associations, and international organizations) focusing on specific areas of inclusion;

- Organize and facilitate at least 3 technical consultations/interviews in focus groups with stakeholders (individuals, communities, development partners, public agencies including state procurement agency) to understand the reasons for digital exclusion, identify existing gaps, analyze lessons learned from earlier initiatives, and validate ideas to identify feasible options for strategy and pilot program design;
- Compare and analyze inputs from various stakeholders (public agencies, telecoms operators, service providers, associations, NGOs, etc.), and highlight any discrepancies and gaps;
- Propose an approach to fill-in gaps in the available data;
- Organize at least 2 site visits (if COVID-19 pandemic situation allows) to selected settlements covered under the Log-in Georgia project to engage with local communities and stakeholders;
- Apply international best practices (including at least 3-5 detailed case studies from Europe, Latin America and/or Asia) and experiences to the assignment and undertake this work with a high level of innovation and creativity to identify and address the barriers to digital inclusion in Georgia. The countries of interest for the case studies will be proposed by the Consulting firm, based on the specific issues identified in Georgia, and agreed with the Client in the early stage of the study. The Consulting firm shall also provide a summary of any applicable literature on the subject (e.g. EC, ITU, GSMA, Internet Society, etc.);
- Define the link between the Digital Inclusion Strategy objective and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- Elaborate a set of recommendations and appropriate measures for various stakeholders (Client, government, civil society, private sector) to enable more inclusive digital services;
- Provide one-day off-line training for the client (Project Team) on the Digital Inclusion, as well as on the implementation of the Digital Inclusion strategy and action plan, both native and English languages are acceptable;
- Develop a robust monitoring and evaluation guide of the Digital Inclusion Program to help understand how well the initiatives are working and how they could be improved for coverage, efficiency, and impact.

DELIVERABLES

The assignment includes two main deliverables: a) Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan; and b) Pilot Program.

a) Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan Document

The Digital Inclusion Strategy document shall include a diagnostic on the state of digital inclusion in Georgia based on the data collected and reflect on socio-economic, cultural factors, dominant stereotypes, and technological and financial barriers, which affect women and women-headed households, ethnic and social minorities, and persons with disabilities. The document shall define the barriers to digital access and use experienced by persons with disabilities (physical, sensory, cognitive, psychosocial). The document shall identify approaches to overcome potential obstacles, such as affordability, awareness, interest, skills, data privacy concerns and/or other. It shall also include set of recommendations and appropriate measures to be undertaken to enable more inclusive digital services.

In addition, the strategy shall provide respective social and economic considerations, with details on the expected benefits to justify the budget associated with the initiative, build traction and commitment for the Action Plan.

The Action Plan document for the first two years shall encompass possible activities to support enhanced digital inclusion in Georgia for each of the target groups: women and women-headed households, ethnic and social minorities, the elderly (over age 65), and persons with disabilities.

The Action Plan shall include:

- Precise objectives, activities and indicators;
- A clear allocation of roles across institutional stakeholders for partnership;
- Timeline for each activity;
- Potential risks;
- An estimated budget.

B) Pilot Program

Based on the Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan Document, the consultant shall propose a Pilot Program to initiate the implementation of the Strategy. The Consulting firm will first validate the overall concept with the Comcom before designing the specificities of the program.

The Pilot Program shall target persons with disabilities (and their households/caregivers/service providers) and minorities. The Consulting firm shall elaborate at least one well-defined program per group with the priorities validated in consultation with stakeholders. The Program is expected to draw upon the global experience with disability accommodations funds, assistive technology provision programs, and universal service programs in telecommunications. The approach should also leverage partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities and other community organizations supporting people with disabilities.

The Pilot Program is expected to provide small-value hardware and software, together with related training and support services to targeted groups to improve their digital participation. The Client will run the pilot program to serve targeted groups in selected rural settlements.

The Pilot Program should have a built-in stakeholder engagement and active outreach mechanism, implementable through the processes of the Log-in Georgia project. It should incorporate measurable outcome indicators and an evaluation mechanism to produce lessons learned for the roll-out of future activities aimed at digital inclusion of persons with disabilities.

For the design of the Pilot Program, the Client will facilitate the coordination with the Social Service Agency of the GoG, which is responsible for social assistance and welfare programs, as well as with the Ministry of Education and Science and its agencies, given the online learning challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Clear synergies with existing and/or planned inclusion programs should be looked for, in view to foster the development of use-cases.

The Program should be implementable and cost-efficient, with low overheads to the extent possible. It should include mechanisms ensuring long-term sustainability and allow for future scaling up to cover more people and wider geographic areas.

To support the Consulting firm in the implementation of the given scope of work, the Client will facilitate the collection of relevant studies and data from Georgian government agencies and organizations by the consulting firm. This will also include information from the Ministry of IDPs from Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia and the Social Service Agency, as well as information on legal framework addressing the subject matter.

During the course of this study, the Client will participate in interviews and technical consultations with key stakeholders (individuals, communities, development partners, public agencies), but the overall organization of these meetings will be the responsibility of the Consulting company, and the associated costs (e.g. travel costs, accommodation, costs for site visits, meeting rooms, etc.) shall be fully covered by the Consulting company.

REPORTING OBLIGATION

The anticipated timeline for the given assignment is as follows:

Action/Deliverable	Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick-off meeting with the Client • Short initiation report with the proposed approach, timeline, etc. 	Contract signature + 2 weeks
Interim report including: 1) diagnostic on the state of digital inclusion: 2) international best practices	Contract signature + 8 weeks, including 1 week for the Client's review and feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Digital Inclusion Strategy, including 1) diagnostic on the state of digital inclusion: 2) international best practices; 3) detailed recommendations and action plan. • Presentation of the Draft Strategy and Action Plan to the Client 	Contract signature + 13 weeks, including 1 week for the Client's review and feedback
Presentation of the final Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan to the Client	Contract signature + 16 weeks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission of a draft Pilot Program • Presentation of the draft Pilot Program to the Client 	Contract signature + 16 weeks, including 1 week for the Client's review and feedback
Presentation of the final version of the Pilot Program to the Client	Contract signature + 20 weeks

The Client will provide feedback on reports submitted within a week of submission.

The contractor is expected to produce all the written materials/reports both hard-copy and electronic versions in English and Georgian languages.

QUALIFICATIONS

The assignment will be conducted by a firm with solid professional experience in digital development, digital inclusion, research, planning and policy development, legal and regulatory frameworks, as well as expertise in social data science and economics. Previous international experience in conducting similar assignments is a must. In addition, the firm should have:

- Minimum five years of working experience on the digital development and digital inclusion policy;
- Solid experience of conducting research;
- Experience in addressing needs and challenges of vulnerable groups;
- At least one local expert (as the relevant working documents will be provided in Georgian);
- Knowledge of the local context and issues is preferable.

The firm is responsible to identify a team leader and two technical experts to carry out the given assignment. The CVs of the candidates as well as the description of their individual scope of work are to be attached to the proposal.