

**STANDARD REQUEST
FOR EXPRESSION OF
INTEREST**
Consulting Services (Firms
Selection)



Royal Government of Bhutan
Ministry of Finance

2019

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FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST



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PREFACE

This Standard Request for Expression of Interest (SREoi) is based on the Procurement Rules and Regulations of the Royal Government of Bhutan. The SREoi must be used for the Procurement of Consulting Services (Firm). This document will come into effect from 1st July, 2019.

To obtain further information on procurement you may contact:

Government Procurement and Property Management Division Department of National Properties
Ministry of Finance Royal Government of Bhutan

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REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Implementation of FTTx/FWA in the country

GovTech Agency

Hiring of Consultanting firm to develop the Fiber to the x (FTTx) and

Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) implementation plan for Bhutan

INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

[GovTech/DoTS/40(5)/2022-23/817 dated 16th February 2023]



འབྲུག་གཞུང་འཕུལ་རྒྱུ་ལྷན་ཁག་གི།
Government Technology (GovTech) Agency
Royal Government of Bhutan

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GovTech
Bhutan

A technologically advanced nation, with empowered citizens, and a thriving digital economy

GovTech/DoTS/40(5)/2022-23/ 879

16th February 2023

Re- Letter of Invitation(extension of deadline for the submission of EoI)

This has reference to the invitation letter GovTech/DoTS/40(5)/2022-23/814 dated 31st January 2023. The GovTech Agency (GovTech) invites expression of interest to provide the following consulting services: **Hiring of Consultant firms to develop the Fiber to the x(FTTx) and Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) implementation plan for Bhutan.** More details on the services are provided in the Terms of Reference.

A Consultant firm will be selected as per the procedures described in this REoI, in accordance with Procurement Rules and Regulations of the Royal Government of Bhutan

The EoIs are to be submitted at the latest by 3rd March, 2023 12:00 Noon (Bhutan Standard Time) to the address mentioned below.

The procedural requirements for responding to this invitation are provided in the complete REoI document, which includes the following:

Section I - Instructions to Consultants

Section II - Standard Forms

Section III- Terms of Reference

Address for response/ Address of Procuring Agency: **The Acting Secretary,**

GovTech Agency, Post Box no 482

Thimphu, Bhutan

Address for the submission of EoI via email: tchoephel@tech.gov.bt

Yours sincerely,

(Sonam Penjor)

Officiating Acting Secretary, GovTech

SECTION I: INSTRUCTIONS TO CONSULTANT

1. Scope of Assignment: The Employer has received a budget from _____ *[Insert Source of Fund]* and intends to select a Consultant for the specific assignment as specified in the Terms of Reference in Section III.
2. Qualifications of the Consultant: Prospective Consultants shall demonstrate in their EoI that they meet the required qualifications and experiences and are fully capable of carrying out the assignment.
3. Conflict of Interest: The Consultant shall hold the Procuring Agency's interests paramount, without any consideration for future work, and strictly avoid conflict with other assignments or its own corporate interests. For this purpose, the provisions of the Procurement Rules and Regulations on Conflict of Interest shall apply.
4. Unfair Advantage: If a Consultant could derive a unfair competitive advantage from having provided Consulting Services related to the assignment in question, the Procuring Agency shall make available to all Consultants together with this REoI all information that would in that respect give such Consultant any unfair competitive advantage over competing Consultants.
5. Preparation of EoI: EoI shall be typed or written in indelible ink in English language and shall be signed by the Consultant. Consultants are required to complete the following Forms including supporting documents to substantiate the qualification and experience of the firm:
Section I - Instructions to Consultants Section II - Standard Forms
Section III- Terms of Reference
6. Submission of EoI : The prospective Consultant may deliver their EoI by hand, mail, courier service to the address mentioned in the REoI.
7. The EoI shall be properly sealed in envelopes addressed to the Procuring Agency as mentioned in the REoI advertisement and bear the name & address of the Consultant as well as the name of the assignment.
8. The closing date for submission of EoI is *[insert date]* up to *[insert time]*. Any EoI received after the deadline for submission of EoI shall be declared late, and returned unopened to the Consultant.
9. The EoI may be modified or substituted before the deadline for submission. The Procuring Agency may at its sole discretion, extend the deadline for submission of EoI.
10. At any time prior to the deadline for submission of EoI the Procuring Agency for any reason or on its own initiative may revise the REoI Document by issuing an addendum, which shall form an integral part of the Document.
11. Evaluation: The Consultants shall be evaluated on the following criteria:
[The Procuring Agency may modify and allocate the following indicative points based on their requirements and further breakdown each criteria into sub- criteria and allocate points accordingly].

Sl. No	Criteria	Points
1	General experience of the firm	[5-10]
2	Relevant experience of the firm that best fit with proposed assignment	[10-30]
3	Relevant experience of Firm's professional staff (including external professionals to be hired for the proposed assignment) in reference to the proposed assignment	[10-50]
4	Any others	[0-10]
	Total	100

[When the total points allocated is less than 100 the final points awarded should be scaled up/ converted out of 100 points]

12. Immediately after the closing date and time for submission, the Procuring Agency shall open all EoI documents, including any substitutions accompanied by a properly authorized substitution notice.
13. Following the opening of the EoI, and until the RFP is issued; no Consultant shall make any unsolicited communication to the Procuring Agency. Such an attempt to influence the Procuring Agency in its decisions on the examination, evaluation, and comparison of the EoI may result in the rejection of the EoI.
14. **EoIs shall be evaluated based on the criteria outlined under clause 11. Request for Proposal (RFP) documents shall be issued to the shortlisted consultants only (top three shortlisted consultant firms)**

SECTION II: STANDARD FORMS

Form 1: Sample letter of Expression of Interest Form 2: Firm Information Sheet

Form 3: General Experience of the Firm during the Last 5 (five) calendar Years Form 4: Relevant Experience of the Firm during the Last 5 (five) calendar Years Form 5: Relevant Experience of the Firm's Professional Staff

Form 6: Relevant Experience of the External Professional Staff available to the Firm

Form 1: Sample Expression of Interest (EOI) for Consultancy services

Date:

To
[Insert address of Procuring Agency]

Sub: **Expression of Interest (EOI) for the Consultancy Service**[Insert title of Consulting Services]

Dear Sir/Madam,

This is in response to your public notice published in [.....insert name of paper/ website.....] on [.....insert date.....], inviting expression of interest for [insert description of Consulting services]. We hereby submit our expression of interest and have attached necessary information according to the standard forms.

The information furnished by us in this expression of interest is correct to the best of our knowledge. Based on this information, we understand you would be able to evaluate our proposals in order to shortlist for the above-mentioned assignment. We, however, understand that the Procuring Agency reserves the right to decide whether or not to shortlist our firm without disclosing the reason whatsoever.

Sincerely yours,

On behalf of the firm: Signature: Name of signatory:
Designation:
Company Seal

Form 2: Firm Information Sheet

2.1. Consulting Services Data

Name of the consulting services	
Brief Description of the Assignment	

2.2. (a) Consulting Firm Information

Name of the consulting firm:	Country of Registration:
Name of the owner:	Day, month & Year of Establishment:
Name of Authorized Representative (<i>if applicable</i>):	Position/Designation:
Contact Person details: Name, Designation, email and phone number	

[Attach valid Trade License /Registration certificate]

2.2. (b) Associations (Joint Venture or Sub-consultancy)

Name of the consulting firm	Country of Registration	Joint Venture (JV) or Sub-consultant	Name of Owner/ Authorized representative	Position/Designation

[Attach Certificate of Registration of the lead member, Certificate of Registration of the JV member (for each member) Certificate of Registration of the Sub-Consultant (for each sub-consultant), Letter of Association/letter of Intent to form JV/Association]

2.3. Core Area of expertise of the firm [Provide a brief Description]

2.4. Company Profile *[Provide a brief Description]*

2.5. Available Equipment *[where applicable]*

Provide list of equipment owned by the firm and relevant for the assignment

SECTION III: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Tender Reference: Hiring of Consultanting firm to develop the Fiber to the x (FTTx) and Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) implementation plan for Bhutan

1. Background

The Internet has become an indispensable tool for socio-economic development in every country. Although the Internet is growing rapidly in the country, high speed Internet is not accessible from every household. The majority of the Internet users rely heavily on the mobile broadband network to access the Internet. The Mobile broadband services have reached 90% of the total population¹.

During the nationwide lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic where schools, institutes and offices were closed, telecom operators experienced congestion in their mobile network, largely in the urban areas of thromdes. As a result, users experienced poor mobile broadband Internet service, affecting the key public service delivery. Expansion in the Mobile Broadband Networks may not be adequate to address the congestion. In order to resolve the congestion in mobile broadband networks, and also to avoid such user experiences in the future, fixed broadband networks should be established to connect urban households.

It has, therefore, become of utmost importance to make fixed broadband Internet service accessible and reliable so that the general people could adopt high speed Internet services at their respective homes. The increased coverage of the fixed broadband network would also contribute in bringing the cost of Internet leased-line services down.

In Bhutan, Fixed broadband services such as Internet leased-line services are being provided by the Internet Service Providers (ISPs). As per the National ICT Household Survey, 2021 it was found that 0.8% households of the total households have access to Internet leased-line connection. One of the major barriers being faced by the ISPs in expanding their Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) services is the lack of common utility ducts to install their fiber cables and RoW (Right of Way) clearances from the relevant agencies and house owners. The relevant agencies will have to ensure that these requirements are mandatorily met to connect 90% of Dzongkhag Thromde homes with high speed Internet access.

Several Transformation Initiatives were identified as the foundation to achieve national objectives in pursuit of social and economic development of the country. One of the transformation initiatives - Technology - is designed to help achieve the national goal of “Developed Bhutan” by establishing critical ICT infrastructure to pursue digital government, digital economy and digital society by the end of 2031. The need for accessible, reliable, affordable and high speed Internet broadband services were highlighted as one of the deliverables under the Technology Transformation Initiative. Thus, the consultant firm will be hired who shall develop Fiber to the x (FTTx) and Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) implementation plan for Bhutan and other related assignment.

2. Objective of the Assignment

The objective of this assignment is to complete a study and accordingly develop a plan for the Government Technology Agency (GovTech) to connect 90% of Dzongkhag/Thromde households across the country with accessible, reliable and affordable fixed broadband service.

3. Scope of the study/Task:

Propose the best suited solutions with details to implement the FTTx and FWA technology in the country considering all the aspects under the project scope to meet the objective

4. Specific task and proposed methodology

- 4.1. Take stock of the existing fixed broadband Internet infrastructure in the country including but not limited to:
 - 4.1.1. study the existing Internet leased-line rates, fiber leasing rates/tariffs and come up with the affordable rate considering the disposable income that citizens may be able to pay for usable bandwidth in the country. The consultant must also submit realistic strategies on reducing the rates.
 - 4.1.2. study the current town plan infrastructure of all thromdes and Dzongkhags and come up with recommendations on how to resolve the issues faced by the operators such as unavailability of common ducts, RoW clearance and approval from building owners.
 - 4.1.3. study the possibilities of unbundling Internet Service Provider’s/Telecom Service Providers’ (ISP/TSP) FTTx infrastructure and make it affordable for lease among all other operators (ISPs/TV cable operators) to provide affordable fixed broadband Internet services.
 - 4.1.4. Study the possibilities of using existing government fiber infrastructure by ISPs/TSPs in Dzongkhags to provide Internet services to households
- 4.2. Identify suitable fixed broadband technologies such as FTTx/FWA to connect all the households located in urban areas of the twenty Dzongkhags to the Internet. Proposed technologies should be suitable to our country and in line with international best practices.
- 4.3. To develop the detailed design of the fixed broadband network (FTTx) in Thimphu and Paro Dzongkhags. Consultant may recommend other technologies such as Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) to complement FTTx technologies
- 4.4. Identify policy and regulation reforms along with identification of appropriate measures to implement FTTx and FWA infrastructure in the country

¹ Source: Annual Report, 2021-2022, BICMA

https://www.bicma.gov.bt/bicmanew/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/BICMA-Annual-Report_2022.pdf

- 4.5. Identify suitable business model(s) to help establish FTTx and FWA infrastructure across the country. Business model should clearly highlight the capital cost along with other recurrent costs associated with the operation and management of FTTx and FWA infrastructure. The consultant should also clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of all the stakeholders involved.

5. Deliverables and timeline:

The project deliverable is as follows:

Sl no	Deliverable	Duration (days)	Payment models for deliverables	Remarks
1	Contract signing	B		B = Base day
2	Stakeholder meetings/workshop	B+10		By consultants
3	Report: Assessment of current infrastructure	B+45		
4	Draft Technical Proposal and business model	B+80		
5	Stakeholder meetings/workshop: Presentation by individual consultant on the draft technical and financial proposal to stakeholders and DITT	B+90		DITT/relevant agencies
6	Submission of final report/plan	B+100		

Note:

- All the draft reports/proposals shall be reviewed by GovTech Agency before finalization
- The Stakeholders lists includes Royal Commission for Urban Development(RCUD), Bhutan Power Corporation, Telcos and ISPs, BICMA and other relevant stakeholders.

6. Reporting Requirement

	Required Proposal Section
a.	Title Page
b.	Cover Letter
c.	Table of Contents
d.	Executive Summary
e.	Technical Proposal Experience on Similar Projects Key Personnel Qualifications and Relevant Experience required during implementation phase Technical Approach Proposed Management Plan Cost Proposal

7. Qualification and Evaluation Criteria

7.1. Qualification: The qualification criteria is as follows:

Sl no	Qualification requirement	Roles and Responsibilities
1	Project Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - possess 10 years of experience in the regional broadband connectivity or any other telecommunication related field - perform superior managing skills, with a high sense of responsibility; and possess excellent interpersonal skills with proven team - Identify clear description of roles of ISPs and other relevant agencies - Detailed timeline for smooth implementation of fixed broadband network (FTTx and FWA) over the years - Achievable action plan that will deliver the project on time - Effective risk identification and mitigation strategies through the use of project management tools
2	Telecom/network specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - possess 10 years of experience in the network engineering, especially for backbone/backhaul telecommunications infrastructure; - possess knowledge and mapping exercise of existing infrastructure; - possess experience in international gateways, IP transit, IXPs; and - possess experience in a variety of related engineering issues, such as installation, daily operation and management, and future network

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> planning. - Proposal plan and adopt smart implementation, network topologies, best international practices/case studies for fixed broadband network (FTTx) and FWA - Propose recommendation and findings on the current town plan infrastructure, - Provided solutions on the issues faced by the operators such as unavailability of common ducts, RoW clearance and approval from building owners, etc
3	Telecom Policy/Regulation Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - possess 10 years of experience in the telecommunication sector, especially in policies, regulations, strategy formulation, institutional arrangement, cross-sector infrastructure sharing, demand-side promotion in other sectors possess experience in international gateways and IP transit; - demonstrate a proven record of publishing policy and regulatory analysis, either directly or for clients. - Propose Policies and regulation gap analysis to identify appropriate measures for fixed broadband network (FTTx/FWA) implementation - Propose monitoring plans of fixed broadband network (FTTx/FWA) by regulators (BICMA) or relevant agencies - Propose realistic strategies to reduce the leased line rates and make it affordable after studying the existing leased line rates
4	Business Analyst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - possess 10 years of experience in business development and related strategy formulation for the cross-border telecommunications; - possess experience in engaging with various type of stakeholders such as the public sector organizations, technical partners (e.g. operators), financial partners (e.g. investors); - Possess business judgment, analytical, and problem-solving skills to identify issues and present creative and practical solutions; and possess experience in financing of large-scale telecommunications infrastructure deployment projects. - Propose stragePossibilities of unbundling ISP's/TSP/ FTTH/FTTx infrastructure - Provide solution on how to support operators via Government's interventions in accessing low-interest loans and come up with loans and general terms and conditions that should be levied to the operators while availing such loans
5	Economist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - possess 10 years of experience in economy analysis in the telecommunications sector; - Cost of fixed broadband network (FTTx)/FWA implementation with detailed timeline and investment - possess experience in how the telecommunications services are used for other sectors, such as health and education; and - possess experience in cost estimate in the telecommunications sector.
6	Bhutanese Liaison Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct and coordinate stakeholder consultation with all relevant stakeholders that will be involved for the project on behalf of the consultant or with the consultant - Collect data from fields and stakeholders and share with consultant

Note: The persons that are nominated as Project Manager and Technical Specialist (Network Engineer) may not be nominated with other positions within the team of the Consultant, given the intensity of their roles. Other positions may be double-dutied, if those nominated possess relevant skillsets adequately.

7.2. Evaluation criteria: The evaluation criteria shall be as follows:

Sl No.	Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Score	Percentage	Mandatory
1	Subject Matter Expertise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proposal plan and adopt smart implementation, network topologies, best international practices/case studies for fixed broadband network (FTTx) and FWA ● Propose Policies and regulation gap analysis to identify appropriate measures for fixed broadband network (FTTx)/FWA implementation 		70%	Yes

Sl No.	Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Score	Percentage	Mandatory
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Possibilities of unbundling ISP's/TSP/ FTTH/FTTx infrastructure ● Monitoring plans of fixed broadband network (FTTx/FWA) network by regulators (BICMA) or relevant agencies ● Provide solution on how to support operators via Government's interventions in accessing low-interest loans and come up with loans and general terms and conditions that should be levied to the operators while availing such loans ● Study the current town plan infrastructure and come up with recommendations on how to resolve the issues faced by the operators such as unavailability of common ducts, RoW clearance and approval from building owners ● Study the existing leased line rates and come up with the affordable leased line, accordingly submit realistic strategies on reducing the rates 			
2	<p>Project Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clear description of roles of ISPs and other relevant agencies ● Cost of fixed broadband network (FTTx/FWA) implementation with detailed timeline and investment ● Detailed Timeline for smooth execution of fixed broadband network (FTTx/FWA) over the years ● Achievable action plan that will deliver the project on time and on budget ● Effective risk identification and mitigation strategies through the use of project management tools 		30%	Yes

8. Length and Time Frame of the assignment;

The duration of the overall project is specified in sl.no 5, under deliverables section.

9. Other Resources/ counter Facilities;

10. Any other Information(s)

10.1. Modification or Withdrawal of Proposal

- 10.1.1. A potential bidder may modify a proposal after its submission by withdrawing its original proposal and resubmitting a new complete proposal, prior to the final date for proposal submission,
- 10.1.2. Modifications offered in any other manner, oral or written, will not be considered.
- 10.1.3. A potential bidder may withdraw its proposal by submitting a written withdrawal request to the Department of IT & Telecom or to an authorized person.

10.2. Roles and Responsibilities of the

10.2.1. Procuring firm/GovTech Agency

The GovTech Agency will undertake the following responsibilities for the smooth execution of the consultant service:

- Provide documents and data related to the project that are readily available;
- Ensure active participation of relevant stakeholders at all levels during the whole time of the assignment;
- Facilitate consultations with other key stakeholders;
- Facilitate prompt feedback on reports and approvals of documentation submitted by the Consultants;

10.2.2. The Consultants' responsibilities includes, but not limited to:

- Ensure active participation and engagement of GovTech Agency and relevant stakeholders at all levels during the whole time of the assignment;
- Submission of periodic reports, consisting of progress vis-a-vis agreed work plan and including workshops related reports, focus group discussion reports, minutes, record of discussions, and other documentations that form part of the assignment.
- All deliverables, reports and artifacts produced by the Consultant(s) in this assignment shall be made available to GovTech Agency in English in hard/ printed copy and in all suitable digital forms (such as pdf, doc).
- The consultants will be responsible to make necessary arrangements for travel and transportation for activities requiring off-site consultations.
- Consultant(s) must adhere to the official code of conduct of survey and non-disclosure agreement as deemed appropriate and necessary for assignment of this magnitude and relevance.
- the consultant shall bear the SDF fund during their visit to Bhutan for carrying out studies on the existing infrastructure and during proposal of their solutions as per the recent Government SDF tariffs.

10.2.3. Others

- All the EoI documents must be completed, signed and submitted in compliance with the requirements. Failure to meet any of the requirements will result in disqualifying the bid.
- Any clarification of the EoI document shall be sought through written communication at least five days before the submission of EoI and no inquiry via phone call or walk-in shall be entertained.
- The employer reserves the right to validate the references and documentary evidence submitted as a part of the bid.
- Any changes/exemption of the SDF tariffs shall be notified to the consultant by the procuring agency.

ANNEXURE:

[Attach any other documents from the Procuring Agency and the Consultants, if applicable]