

30<sup>th</sup> of March 2017, Bucharest

## **REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (CONSULTING SERVICES – INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANTS)**

### **ROMANIA**

*Romania Secondary Education Project*  
Loan Agreement No 8481-RO

**Assignment Title: Technical Assistance for Evaluation of Universities Grants Proposals**

**Reference No.:** C 2/2

The *Government of Romania (GoR)* has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the *Romania Secondary Education Project*, and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services.

The consulting services (“the Services”) include Technical Assistance for Evaluation of Universities Grants Proposals planned for an average of 25 days within a maximum of 50 days. The Terms of Reference for Technical Assistance for Evaluation of Universities Grants Proposals are annexed to this Request for Expressions of Interest.

The *Ministry of National Education / Unit for the Management of Externally Financed Projects* now invites eligible 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.

Twenty Consultants will be selected in accordance with the selection of individual consultants method set out in the Consultant Guidelines. Firms are not allowed to propose individual consultants.

### **Qualification**

The minimum competencies required from the Consultant are the following:

- i. Master degree or other postgraduate studies in any field;
- ii. At least 5 years of experience in education or education management at university level, proving a good understanding of Romanian education system;
- iii. At least 5 years of experience and knowledge related to project design, evaluation and implementation;
- iv. Proven experience in projects or grants evaluation, in the frame of different national or international competitions;
- v. Previous experience with grants under World Bank-financed projects will be an advantage;

The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to paragraph 1.9 of the World Bank's "Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits and Grants by World Bank Borrowers" dated January 2011 (revised July 2014). ("Consultant Guidelines"), setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest. In addition, please refer to the following specific information on conflict of interest related to this assignment:

Bank policy requires that consultants provide professional, objective, and impartial advice and at all times hold the client's interests paramount, without any consideration for future work, and that in providing advice they avoid conflicts with other assignments and their own corporate interests. Consultants shall not be hired for any assignment that would be in conflict with their prior or current obligations to other clients, or that may place them in a position of being unable to carry out the assignment in the best interest of the Borrower. Without limitation on the generality of the foregoing, consultants shall not be hired under the circumstances set forth below:

(a) Conflict between consulting activities and procurement of goods, works, or non-consulting services (i.e., services other than consulting services covered by these Guidelines): A firm that has been engaged by the Borrower to provide goods, works, or non-consulting services for a project, or any affiliate that directly or indirectly controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with that firm, shall be disqualified from providing consulting services resulting from or directly related to those goods, works, or non-consulting services. Conversely, a firm hired to provide consulting services for the preparation (before Loan effectiveness) or implementation of a project, or any affiliate that directly or indirectly controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with that firm, shall be disqualified from subsequently providing goods, works, or services (other than consulting services covered by these Guidelines) resulting from or directly related to the consulting services for such preparation or implementation. This provision does not apply to the various firms (consultants, contractors, or suppliers) which together are performing the Contractor's obligations under a turnkey or design and build contract.

(b) Conflict among consulting assignments: Neither consultants (including their personnel and sub-consultants), nor any affiliate that directly or indirectly controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with that firm, shall be hired for any assignment that, by its nature, may be in conflict with another assignment of the consultants. As an example, consultants assisting a client in the privatization of public assets shall neither purchase, nor advise purchasers of, such assets. Similarly, consultants hired to prepare Terms of Reference (TOR) for an assignment shall not be hired for the assignment in question.

(c) Relationship with Borrower's staff: Consultants (including their experts and other personnel, and sub-consultants) that have a close business or family relationship with a professional staff of the Borrower (or of the project implementing agency, or of a recipient of a part of the loan) who are directly or indirectly involved in any part of: (i) the preparation of the TOR for the assignment, (ii) the selection process for the contract, or (iii) the supervision of such contract may not be awarded a contract, unless the conflict stemming from this relationship has been resolved in a manner acceptable to the Bank throughout the selection process and the execution of the contract.

(d) A consultant shall submit only one proposal, either individually or as a joint venture partner in another proposal. If a consultant, including a joint venture partner, submits or participates in more than one proposal, all such proposals shall be disqualified. This does

not, however, preclude a consulting firm to participate as a sub-consultant, or an individual to participate as a team member, in more than one proposal when circumstances justify and if permitted by the RFP (Request for Proposal).

Twenty Consultants will be selected in accordance with the selection of individual consultants method set out in the Consultant Guidelines.

Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours 8:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.

Expressions of interest and CVs must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by mail, or by fax, or by e-mail) by 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2017, 14:00 hours local time. To validate the information presented in the CV, the candidate will attach all supporting documents, necessary to prove at least the minimum qualifications that are mandatory (study diplomas, proofs for the professional experience, list of papers and/or copies after the cover and the content of relevant scientific works, recommendations, training diplomas etc.).

Ministry of National Education – Unit for the Management of Externally Financed Projects  
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**Romania**  
**Ministry of National Education**  
**Romania Secondary Education Project**  
**Loan Agreement N° 8481-RO**

**Terms of Reference for Technical Assistance for  
Evaluation of Universities Grants Proposals**

## **1. Background**

On April 17, 2015, the Government of Romania (GoR) and the World Bank (WB) signed the Loan Agreement N° 8481-RO on the implementation of the **Romania Secondary Education Project** (hereinafter referred to as **the ROSE Project**). The ROSE Project was declared effective on October 14, 2015, and will be implemented by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) until November 2022, through the Unit for the Management of Externally Financed Projects (UMEFP). The ROSE Project Development Objectives (PDO) are to improve the transition from upper secondary into tertiary education and increase the retention in the first year of tertiary education in project-supported education institutions. It is structured in three components, as described below.

**Component 1 – School-based and Systemic Interventions.** This component finances supply-side interventions at the school and system levels to address the academic and personal factors hindering Romanian students from transitioning from upper secondary to tertiary education, including dropping out, declining to take the Baccalaureate, or scoring a low mark on the Baccalaureate.

**Sub-component 1.1 – School-based Interventions.** This sub-component supports the transition of students from upper secondary into tertiary education using a decentralized approach based on non-competitive grants to low-performing public high schools. The criteria for selection of eligible high schools combine the following rates: Baccalaureate passing rate and upper secondary graduation rate. Grants will be awarded to public high schools for a 4-year period to allow sufficient time for implementing activities aimed at supporting students from Grade 9 through Grade 12. At the end of the Project, it is estimated that approximately 80 percent of Romanian public high schools would benefit from this sub-component.

**Sub-component 1.2 – Systemic Interventions.** This sub-component finances: (i) revision of the upper secondary education curriculum, with specific consideration for the needs of disadvantaged students including Roma; (ii) training of teachers and public school directors on implementing the revised curriculum, on adapting the curriculum to the needs and abilities of different students (inclusive education), student-centered teaching approaches, intercultural competence and on formative assessment; (iii) improving teaching conditions within Teachers Houses; (iv) revising and updating Grade 8 and Baccalaureate exam banks of items, and providing training and improvement of existing information and technologies platform; (v) development and implementation of a Grade 10 learning assessment, to be administered at the end of the compulsory education cycle; (vi) development of digital teaching and learning

materials; (vii) development and implementation of campaigns to raise student and teacher awareness, which could be tailored for Roma students; and (viii) strengthening of MoNE's capacity to use educational information to monitor upper secondary education and the transition of students into tertiary education.

**Component 2 – University-Level Interventions and Bridge Programs.** This component supports activities designed to address the needs of students who are at risk of dropping out of faculties in the first year of study in tertiary education. It finances **three types of grants schemes: one non-competitive and two competitive – learning centers and summer bridge programs.** These three grants schemes are targeted to public universities that serve at risk students, with the aim of increasing retention and efficiency. Approximately 85 percent of Romanian public faculties would benefit from this component.

This Component will also finance all the technical assistance required for establishing a quality assurance mechanism for the Universities Grants Scheme along all the steps in the cycle, including: (i) evaluation of grant proposals; and (ii) monitoring of fiduciary and other pedagogical aspects during the implementation of the approved grants.

*Non-competitive grants* aim at encouraging eligible public faculties to implement remedial programs, tutoring, counseling, guidance and support services, coaching services, workshops in specific areas, and awareness raising campaigns targeted to at-risk student to achieve the specific Project Development Objectives. The implementation period of these grants would be for 2 or 3 years.

*Summer bridge programs competitive grants* aim at supporting tertiary-level summer activities, such as, but not limited to campus-based courses, for public high school students, with a special focus on students at-risk/coming from disadvantaged groups. The summer bridge courses and activities would be implemented during summer breaks and last between two to three weeks. These grants would be offered for 25 high school students per year, per delivery, and will fund students' subsistence costs, in academic campus or similar, and related activities-delivery expenses. These courses would provide students an early and low-consequence university experience ("university knowledge"), developing familiarity of the context and initiating early skills development relevant to success in tertiary education. The students may also participate in workshops, study visits, sport competitions, visits to museums, art displays etc., activities specifically related to the university life and faculties' fields of study. The universities can develop and implement dissemination activities, in order to attract and select the students for the summer bridge courses.

*Learning centers*, also funded under the competitive grant scheme, aim at increasing the academic and social support mechanisms available to at-risk students. Each learning center would be designed based on the main factors contributing to student under-achievement and dropout from the earliest years of university, including under-preparation in upper secondary education, underdeveloped study skills, limited exposure to new academic subjects, and lack of familiarity with pedagogical norms (class size, duration, homework levels, and the like) at the university level. These centers would be fully-realized learning spaces, for directed support and self-learning, with furniture (including desks, tables for collaborative work, chairs and

bookshelves) and technical equipment, such as computers, interactive white boards, and teaching/learning software (e.g. for language instruction, mathematics, writing, and other core skills, as well as for remedial support and assessment). The learning centers would require full-time administrative staff, paid or volunteer tutors and support staff, and would benefit from the contributions of professors or experts who would be compensated for supplementary work through the Project.

Eligible categories of expenditures, for all grants schemes, could include: training, consulting services, non-consulting services, works, goods and incremental operating costs (including the management of the grant, not to exceed 10 percent of the amount of the grant). The specific eligible categories of expenditures for each grant scheme, as well as eligible activities are defined in the Universities Grants Manual, which will also inform the participating tertiary education institutions about the steps to prepare and present proposal for all grants schemes, as well as the evaluation criteria and processes envisioned to approve or reject proposals. Furthermore, it will describe the implementation process for approved proposals, procurement procedures and disbursement of funds and collection of supporting physical and financial implementation progress information.

**Component 3 – Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation.** This component finances day-to-day project management activities, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) activities, project audits, as well as incremental operational and staffing costs of the MoNE's UMEFP. This component also finances the carrying out of: (i) surveys concerning high school students attending bridge programs; (ii) an impact evaluation of the high school grants program to assess improvements in student outcomes and school management processes; (iii) a revision of the existing student loan scheme developed for tertiary education students; (iv) an analysis of existing demand-side programs addressing the needs of disadvantaged upper secondary students that are currently under implementation; and (v) other M&E studies, as needed.

## **2. Objective**

The objective of this assignment is the *evaluation of the Universities Grants Proposals*, according to the criteria and methodology described in the Universities Grants Manual.

## **3. Scope of Services**

To achieve the objective of this assignment, the Consultant is expected to undertake the following activities:

- *Learning tasks:*
  - Review the ROSE Project documents including the Project Appraisal Document, Loan Agreement No 8481-RO, Project Operations Manual and the Subsidiary Agreement signed between MoNE and the Ministry of Public Finance (MoPF).
  - Review the Universities Grants Manual.

- *Meet the core ROSE Project Management Unit*, especially the Project Director, the Technical Coordinator, the Higher Education Specialist, the Grant Officers, and the Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist.
- *Participate in a training session organized by the MoNE – UMEFP*, that will include modules focused on the following:
  - General background on ROSE project;
  - The main features of the universities grants schemes and implementation background;
  - Evaluation of grant proposals.
- *Evaluate grant proposals prepared by the universities.*
  - The Consultant will evaluate assigned proposals according to specific criteria as designated in the Universities Grants Manual and the POM. Analysis and scoring for each criterion should be detailed in evaluation reports with respective recommendations for approval or further improvements.
  - The sub-project proposals shall be randomly distributed to evaluators. In view of avoiding conflicts of interest, an evaluator will not receive projects submitted by a university/faculty with which he/she collaborated in the last five years, that could affect her / his ability to perform the task with the required objectivity and impartiality, or if she / he has an interest, financial or patrimonial, in connection to the project proposals to be evaluated.
  - The number of projects to be evaluated will be agreed with the UMEFP staff based on the evaluator's availability and number of projects submitted during each evaluation period.
- *Communicate proactively and regularly with UMEFP staff.*

#### **4. Deliverables**

As a result of the services described above, the Consultant shall deliver the following products:

Evaluation Reports for each grant proposal evaluated: due within 5 business days of receipt of a proposal. The template of the evaluation report will be established in the Universities Grants Manual. The evaluation report for each grant should be a standalone document that provides complete and convincing evidence to support its findings. More specifically, the report should be: analytical in nature (both quantitative and qualitative), structured around issues and related findings learnt using scoring criteria, include conclusions and recommendations.

All deliverables will be elaborated in Romanian.

#### **5. Qualification**

The minimum competencies required from the Consultant are the following:

- Master degree or other postgraduate studies in any field;
- At least 5 years of experience in education or education management at university level, proving a good understanding of Romanian education system;
- At least 5 years of experience and knowledge related to project design, evaluation and implementation;
- Proven experience in projects or grants evaluation, in the frame of different national or international competitions;
- Previous experience with grants under World Bank-financed projects will be an advantage.

## **6. Other Relevant Terms**

**Period of the Assignment.** The assignment is planned for an average of 25 days within a maximum of 50 days between April 2017 and July 2018, with the possibility to be extended based on a positive assessment of the performance of the Consultant, if needed. The periods for evaluation will be established through the Universities Grants Manual, and are estimated between April – July 2017, and February – May 2018, respectively.

It is expected that up to 20 individual consultants will be selected based on this Terms of Reference, the expected duration of evaluation per grant application being of 4 hours.

**Location of Assignment.** The Consultant will be located in his/her office. He/ She will also participate in regular meetings with the UMEFP staff, at the UMEFP office, or at trainings, in a location established by UMEFP.

**Reporting.** The Consultant should report to the Project Director / Technical coordinator. The Consultant should work closely with the Technical coordinator, Higher education specialist and Grants Coordinator and Officer.

**Confidentiality.** The Consultant shall not at any time communicate to any person or entity any confidential information acquired in the course of the proposed assignment.

**Proprietary Rights.** All documentation compiled or prepared by the Consultant for the MoNE in the course of the proposed assignment shall be confidential and become and remain the absolute property of the MoNE. The Consultant shall, not later than upon termination or expiration of the Contract to be prepared for the proposed assignment, deliver all such documentation to the MoNE.