

DIGIT Program – AID 12525

Content of this document has been presented during the first Info Session on the DIGIT Program, held online on 17th of January 2024.

It introduces the main information about the Call for Proposals launched by AICS on 2nd of January 2024. At the end of this documents, questions asked by participants to the online session, with answers given by the presenter, are listed.

Introduction

The **global objective** of this call for proposals is to “Contribute to the sustainable development of Mozambique through the support to the digital transition of the country”.

The **specific objective** of the action financed through the grant of this call for proposals consists in supporting the Strategic Plan for the Information Society (2019-2028) of the Government of Mozambique through an action aimed at the creation of innovative tools of digital excellence for the improvement of public utility services, the promotion of entrepreneurship and the increase in digital skills.

The priorities (Expected Results) and related Outputs, which this call for proposal will contribute to, are the following:

Expected Result - ER1: Increased offer and access to digital services and technologies for productive and social use.

Output: Established a Tech Hub of Digital Excellency, using an already existing public facility in the area of Maputo city, managed by a public-private partnership.

Expected Result – ER2: Increased digital competencies of young Mozambicans to stimulate innovation, productivity and growth.

Expected Result – ER3: Reinforced incubation and acceleration of sustainable and inclusive Digital Start-ups.

Expected Result – ER4: Improved public and private digital services with special attention to people with disabilities.

Of course, you find these definitions, with more details, in the guidelines for applicants.

Now, going back to the specific notes that I want to present here, let’s start with Consortia and Consortia members.

The applicants must create a consortium and produce a signed agreement among members that states their roles and responsibilities in the action (lead applicant, co-applicants and affiliates) (in paragraph 2.2.1 of the guidelines).

Each consortium must include one or more Mozambican Public institutions, as co-applicants, that will make available an existing physical infrastructure where the Tech hub will be created, being, at the end of the project, the final destination of all other infrastructures created by the project.

To facilitate the creation of consortia, a mapping of local digital ecosystem has been produced by a local consultant. This document is available, in English and Portuguese, on AICS’ web site.

Eligibility criteria

The actors: Lead applicant, co-applicants and their affiliates

The lead applicant must be non-profitmaking, be established in the EU and be authorized or provide evidence to effectively operate in Mozambique (for example through an MoU with the public member of the consortium that allows it to fund activities and contract people that will manage the tech hub and carry out activities). Can be NGO's, public entities, technology research centres of public interest, educational technology entities of public interest, etc...

The **lead applicant** shall demonstrate adequate capacity for planning, monitoring, expertise in similar projects worldwide. This set of experience and competencies may be complemented by co-applicants.

At the time of signing a contract with the contracting authority the lead applicant must provide a financial guarantee for the first payment of the grant. The lead applicant is responsible to present an annual financial report to the contracting authority in order to claim the other payments of the grant (final report must be produced by an auditor. See annex VII)

Co-applicants are other members of the consortium that participate in designing and implementing the action. Can be private organization, NGO's, public organizations, etc..

Affiliates are entities having a legal structural link with the lead applicant or co-applicants.

Associates and contractors

Associates are organizations or individuals that may be involved in the action. They cannot receive funds from the grant, except for per-diem and travel costs.

The lead applicant, co-applicants, affiliates and associates must be mentioned in part B of the Grant application form. There is a form to be filled for each of them.

Contractors are awarded contracts by the lead applicant, co-applicants and affiliates. Contractors are subject to the procurement rules.

Third parties

Third parties may receive sub grants, to develop activities that could help achieving the objectives of the project.

Examples of **third parties** are startups selected through hackathons and incubated in the tech hub to create a digital service for social use (for example) or a local association of people with disabilities that helps involving its members to participate in training courses or other activities in the tech hub.

PPP: Private public partnerships – the project would like to promote PPP among public institutions, the Mozambican private sector and civil society organization (CSO) or international organizations with specific expertise in ICT, startup creation and networking.

In 2019, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) launched the Kampala Principles.

These five Kampala Principles were designed by and for the business community, governments in developing countries and their development partners, civil society, and other stakeholders. The principles are meant to enhance the effectiveness of development partnerships with the private sector at the country level.

What benefits the private sector should expect to get being involved in the DIGIT Project?

The private sector can be involved being either a member of a consortium or to develop specific activities during the project's life.

In the first case, it will be part of a steering committee that strategically steers the tech hub policy regarding skill transfer and startup incubation, meaning that they can address skill transfer activities on a specific area of their interest, as for example, fintech development to create digital financial services for their customers, or as another example, mobile development for telecommunication providers, use of cybersecurity tools to monitor and protect data and digital critical infrastructures, among other examples.

In this case the private sector companies, members of consortia, are indicated as "**Co-applicants**" in the Guidelines for Applicants.

For the second case, the local private sector can be involved to run skill transfer activities and startup incubation on specific topics because of their expertise in any field as, for instance, app development to remotely control solar power installations, use of digital apps and digital equipment in a car workshop, IOT development for sensors to be applied in agriculture, health systems and so on.

In this case, the private sector companies involved are indicated as "**Contractors**" in the Guidelines for Applicants and are subject to the procurement rules set out in Annex IV.

The benefit for the private sector is twofold because they will be paid by the project to run these skill transfer activities and because they create local competencies that could be used for their own business activities, either recruiting trainees or using services from startup incubated in the tech hub.

The direct project's beneficiaries are, of course, the young people that acquire these specific competencies that give them job opportunities, either being absorbed by the private sector or creating their own startup.

Applicants has not to present a detailed training offering and incubation program on any specific topic at the time of submission of their proposals, they have only to specify the number of courses and the amount of fund allocated specifically for these budget lines.

A more detailed digital ecosystem and market assessment may be conducted by the winning applicant in order to address specific job opportunities that the digital economy is providing.

Tech hub

The guidelines for applicants give examples of a set of activities to be proposed.

First thing first is the creation of a physical tech hub using an already existing infrastructure owned by one of the public members of a consortium.

The physical infrastructure can be rehabilitated, expanded, and adapted to host all the activities that a typical digital tech hub develops for the local digital ecosystem, like skill transfer, startup incubation, creation of a community of technologists and innovators and networking.

The tech hub will be equipped with all digital infrastructures needed to run the activities mentioned above (i.e. computers, LAN cabling, internet connection, office furniture, communication equipment, etc..).

An example of tech hub model has been described in an annexed document for the applicants to use it as a reference. Applicants can propose a different model based on the experience of the consortium's members, although there are minimum infrastructures requisites that such a tech hub should have in order to achieve the project's expected results.

The expected results and types of activities that are supposed to be implemented in the tech hub are described in the guidelines in par. 1.2.

Proposals should balance the distribution of funds among these activities considering the expected results and the number of beneficiaries (direct and indirect) that the project aims to achieve.

Anyway, these figures can be slightly adjusted as effect of a more realistic assessment of activities' costs and according to the proposed distribution of funds among the budget lines.

Language

Proposals can be written in English or Portuguese.

Other information given in the tender's documentation seem to me to be sufficiently self-explanatory.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is the minimum composition of the consortia to participate in the Call for Proposals?

Consortia must have, at minimum, an EU based not-profitmaking lead applicant and a Mozambican public institution, not from the Central Government (like Ministers). Institutions under supervision of Ministers can be public members of consortia. Municipalities, Public universities can also be public members of consortia.

What are other institutions that can be members of consortia?

Consortia can include other co-applicants like NGO's, Associations and the private sector (see guidelines for applicants).

Participating in more than one consortium

Lead applicants, Mozambican public institutions and other co-applicants are not allowed to be part of more than one consortium to participate in the Call for Proposals for the DIGIT Program.

Applicants can apply, at the same time, with the same or with a different consortium, to another Call for Proposals for the "VaMoz Digital! Program" that AICS launched to develop a similar initiative for the Centre and North of Mozambique (see guidelines for applicants of the VaMoz Digital! Program).

Allocation of fund to the area of "Greater Maputo"

The initiative must be developed only in the area of Greater Maputo, meaning within a geographical area that includes Marracuene city, Maputo city and Matola district.

Associates

Associates are other organizations or individuals that are useful for the implementation of the project but are not members of the consortia. They can carry out activities for which the project can pay only travel costs and per-diem. Associates must be listed in the Grant Application form.

Agreement among members of consortia

To apply to the call, consortia must produce an agreement among all members, stating each role and commitment, that must be signed and presented at proposals submitting. There is no need to produce separate agreements between two members. The agreement must be produced relative to the proposal to be submitted and signed by all members.

Budget

Funds must be distributed among budget lines proposed in the guidelines to applicants. Applicants can introduce other budget lines, if appropriate. There is not a suggested percentage distribution of funds among the budget lines. Applicants will decide the distribution according to the local conditions of the existing infrastructure to be used as the premises for the Digital Tech Hub to be created and to the priorities that they want to give to the main components of the project (skill transfer, startup incubation, networking, etc..).

During the second info session, held on the 20th of February 2024, the following were the main notes given to participants.

Talking about PPP

I would like to inform you that including a local private sector's member in the consortia is strongly recommended as it could increase sustainability of the action at the end of the project and because AICS is promoting Public Private Partnerships in the implementation of its cooperation initiatives.

Another clarification note is about the area in which the project must be implemented.

We received few emails from consultants, members of associations, community activists, and other people from different areas of Mozambique.

I remind those people that the project must be implemented in the area of Grande Maputo, meaning the area that comprises Marracuene, Maputo and Matola.

So, the physical infrastructure that will host the digital tech hub must reside in this area and must be owned by the public member of the consortia.

This is clearly explained in the guideline for applicants at section 1.2 Expected Result n.1.

The digital tech hub facilities should be, preferably, within the same premises, although they could be split among different spaces, but within a reasonable walking distance as, for instance, different spaces within the same university campus.

About Proposals' evaluation.

I remind you that applicants must submit a concept note and a full proposal at the same time.

An evaluation commission will be created to assess the proposals.

The steps and criteria for the evaluation process are described in section 2.3 of the guideline for applicants.

The director of AICS Maputo will formally appoint the evaluation commission's members only few days before the proposals' presentation deadline.

Q&A

Will a “digital monitoring information system” for the whole project, be provided or expected for measuring generated changes, impact, and performance?

The winning Consortium will decide which information system to use for the project. AICS doesn't provide any information system to implementing entities selected to execute its development cooperation projects.

Can a UN Agency, with its headquarters in an EU country, be eligible as an applicant?

A UN Agency is eligible both as a lead applicant and as co-applicant.

Can the Ministério da Ciência, Tecnologia e Ensino Superior or other Ministers be part of a proposal as associates?

Ministers cannot be members of consortia.

At slide 15 of the ppt presentation of the Digital Tech Hub Model, there is a list of the minimal physical infrastructures needed, namely:

*2 salas de aulas com computadores para, pelo menos, 15 participantes (~30x2 m²);
Espaço para incubação para, pelo menos 6 startups, por um total de 18 membros ~60 m²);
Sala de reuniões para, pelo menos, 12 participantes (~30 m²);
Sala de conferências para, pelo menos, 40 participantes (~50 m²);
Escritório para os gestores (6-8 pessoas) (~50 m²);*

Regarding the the rooms cited above, with particular reference to the two conference rooms (*Sala de reuniões e Sala de conferências*), can they be dislocated in another building, different from the one of the Hub?

Yes, provided that they are in close proximity of the main Tech Hub premises, especially for the meeting room (for instance different buildings in the same university campus).

Pg. 9 of the Guidelines for Applicants cites: "*Application to the programme's Call for Proposals may be submitted by consortia, set up by one or more Mozambican public institutions, one or more public or private international institutions with experience in cooperation development's projects, in ICT education/training and digital start-up creation or tech hub managing, and one or more private sector representative organizations or businesses in the local digital ecosystem*".

Can a private university be considered a *private sector representative organizations*, as it is intended in this call? Can it be considered as the "private" entity of the Private-Public Partnership ?

Yes.

Regarding budget structuring, should the equipment of the tech-hub (*computadores, equipamento para conferencias, impressoras laser, fotocopiadora etc...*) be budgeted

under the chapter "3. Tech Hub setup" or under the chapter "5. Equipment and supplies"?

Tech Hub setup refers to the physical preparation of the site (Construction/Renovation/Expansion) with fixed infrastructures like LAN and telephone cabling, air conditioning, etc...

Equipment and supplies refer to all other technological means used to support activities in the Tech Hub.

May I participate being an affiliate of a French university

At page 11 of the Guidelines for applicants, section 2.1.2, there is a comprehensive description of what "affiliates" means in the context of this program.

As a general indication, a single person is not considered an affiliate.

Have I to necessarily include affiliate partners of Italian entities?

Nowhere in the Guidelines for applicants is referred that lead applicants and/or co-applicants must be Italian organizations.

Are there templates for the annexes to be sent (The call refers to many of them, from A to M)?

They are in the call for proposals' page, under the links "Files to be submitted by deadline (A, B, C)", "Files to be submitted if selected (D, E, H, L)" and "Digit Tech Hub Model".

Regarding the training courses (both for basic or professional digital users, programmers and ICT technicians, as mentioned at pg. 5 of the Guidelines) to be carried out through the Hub, how are they expected to be funded? In practice, during the implementation period, should they be paid by the project, or should they be paid by the beneficiaries (the people attending the courses)?

There are different types of beneficiaries: public servants, students, university professors, private companies' employees, civil society representatives, etc. Most of them, during the project's implementation period, are expected to benefit from the courses without paying any fee, in order to fulfil an inclusive objective of the initiative. The Tech Hub should pay teachers and logistics for these courses. However, the consortium's members and associates may organize advanced courses for companies' professionals at a subsidized cost, in view of a future (at least partial) sustainability of the tech hub. The consortium can even give the opportunity to specialists to organize their own courses and bring their own participants to the tech hub, where the courses can be run with the tech hub's facilities (computer rooms, Internet service, other facilities). In these cases, the specialists or their employers could pay a fee for using the tech hub facilities or, if we consider the participants as project's beneficiaries, the tech hub could subsidize the cost of the courses to pay the specialist teachers. Consortia shall elaborate a business plan that can change along the project's life, thus trying to take the Tech Hub from a completely donor-financed stage to a mostly auto-sustainable status.

Can the conference room of the Hub be located in the office/building owned by the private partner member of the consortium?

Conferences contributing to the results and interests of the project may be realized anywhere, including outside the Tech Hub premises, e.g. for special reasons such as high number of participants, demonstration of innovative ideas that use special equipment not available at the Tech

Hub, or conferences held on a laboratory or factory (e.g. solar panel factory or laboratory) for their special testing conditions, etc..). However, the Tech Hub should have at least a conference room where the ICT community (as well as the private sector and civil society representatives) can have meetings on a regular basis on themes of their interest.

Given my university has a bilateral agreement with UEM (Eduardo Mondlane University) in Maputo and is already carrying out different projects in Mozambique, is it eligible as lead applicant? The call says that the lead applicant must be authorised, and we are not, or provide evidence of capacity to effectively operate in Mozambique and be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with the co-applications and affiliated entities, not acting as an intermediary. We are working on a proposal directly, we don't want to be intermediary, but are we eligible? If yes, which kind of evidence are we supposed to provide?

It will be acceptable to demonstrate that the lead applicant can hire local or international staff for the project and jointly manage the project's bank account through and with its public partner in Mozambique.

These operational capabilities could be stated in an agreement between the lead applicant and the Mozambican public partner of the consortia or in the project agreement signed by all members of the consortia.

If an entity satisfies all the conditions to be an AFFILIATED entity, is it obliged to be an AFFILIATED entity or can it prefer to appear as CO-APPLICANT? What are the constraints here and what are the pros and cons of the two options?

There is no constraint on entities to participate in the action as an affiliate of the lead applicant or of co-applicants, even if, de facto, they are affiliates to one of them.

The agreement among all consortium's members must be signed by the lead applicant, the Mozambican Public Entity and by co-applicants.

Affiliates can participate either as co-applicants or as affiliates.

Co-applicants are considered beneficiaries of the grant and as such are entitled to receive part of the of the grant from the lead applicant to run activities, affiliates receive fund from the parent entity for costs incurred developing activities.

Affiliates do not sign the mandate in part B section 4 of the grant application form, but they do sign the affiliate entity statement in part B, section 5 of the grant application form.

The difference here is subtle, meaning only that affiliates do what their parent entities demand them to do, while co-applicants have a more decisional authority on the implementation of the project, although even affiliates participate initially in the design of the action.

If a lead applicant has got an affiliate already established in Mozambique, that could be stronger evidence for the lead applicant to demonstrate its capacity to effectively operate in Mozambique.

On page 5 of Annex A, in the first part (bullet list) it says the description of the action must not go beyond 2 pages, but the title of section 1.2 says 4 pages. Who is right?

The correct option is the one described in bold in title 1.2, to be able to use up to 4 pages. The value of 2 pages is a typo.

We would like to know what it means to be authorized or provide evidence of the ability to actually operate in Mozambique.

The Guidelines for Applicants precisely require that the Lead Applicant is actually operational in the country - which should be demonstrated with the classic government registration or authorization, but also (with reservations) with the functioning of an office, the direct recruitment of personnel (or

indirect but dedicated to specific projects) and/or with transfers and use of funds through the local public entity, any affiliates or partners. We have not restricted the evidence to government authorization alone, but there must be some evidence to comfort the Evaluation Commission.

According to the guidelines, section 2.2.1, it is stated that "the consortium must produce a signed agreement among all members, specifying each member's role and commitment to the implementation of the programme".

Is there any standard format/template we could use to prepare the agreement?

Do we have to send that agreement together with the application documents (namely Annex A: Grant application form, Annex B: Budget and Annex C: Logical framework) by the deadline of the 30 April 2024 or it has just to be prepared and it will be required in case of award?

Further, is it supposed to be a single agreement among all partners, or do we have to prepare bilateral agreements between the lead applicant and each one of the co-applicants?

There is no standard form to produce the agreement.

It must be a single agreement among all the members of the consortium, in order that they understand "who is doing what" in the action.

The agreement must be sent with the initial concept note and full proposal so that AICS is sure that all the consortium's member are committed to their roles in the action.

Application process – I wanted to confirm that the 30 April deadline is the deadline for the Concept Note (not a full proposal) and, if successful I am not clear on the deadline for the full applications – is it 31 May 2024? I am reading the indicative timetable 2.5.2 and there is mixture of application vs concept note.

as explained in the guidelines to applicants, 30th of April is the deadline to present both the concept note and the full proposal.

University vs. Technical Education – you state in the target beneficiaries that university students and secondary school students must be targeted. We would like to understand if there is flexibility here, specifically with university student targets. We see opportunities to make the target group more inclusive if other groups are considered for example Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) students as well as youth that have not been able to access TVET or University courses due to their socioeconomic constraints (e.g. [Bytes4Future](#)).

We confirm that a certain margin of flexibility is allowed in terms of beneficiaries. This means that the action can take into account skill transfer activities for young people not being university students or pre-university students, provided that the skill transfer is about using digital tools to improve TVET training, like, for instance, AutoCAD for designing electrical or piping schemes, or how to install solar panels and control them with digital apps, use of digital tools in a car workshop, and so on. For these kinds of training, external companies or trainers can be contracted to do the training in the Tech Hub.

We are a consortium led by Sapienza University of Rome and would like to have further explanations about the requirements expressed in the Guidelines for Grant Applicants, section 2.1.1. Eligibility of applicants, that the applicant should "be authorized or provide evidence of capacity to effectively operate in Mozambique". In particular, we would like to know if there are indicators to demonstrate that such requirements are fulfilled.

The lead applicant could declare that it can manage the project in Mozambique being able to operate through the local partner, to open a bank account for the project, contract local and international staff, etc...
