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GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE
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SIERRA LEONE ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION PROJECT
INDIVIDUAL CONSULTING SERVICES
EXPRESSION OF INTERESTS FOR CONSULTING SERVICES FOR UPDATING QUALITY
STANDARDS AND LICENSING PROCESSES FOR LODGING ESTABLISHMENTS IN
SIERRA LEONE AND PROVIDING COVID-19 HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Sierra Leone possesses pristine beaches and islands, mountains and rich biodiversity, interesting wildlife, friendliness and rich cultural capital among people and its special place in the world history of anti-slavery movement as ‘the land of the free.’ The Government of Sierra (GoSL) has officially prioritized tourism in the newly formulated National Development Plan 2019 - 2023. The new National Tourism Policy states the goal of tourism in Sierra Leone is to “generate foreign exchange, encourage even development, promote tourism-based rural enterprises, generate employment, accelerate rural-urban integration and foster socio-cultural unity among the various regions of the country through the promotion of domestic and international tourism.” (GoSL, 2017). Its National Ecotourism Policy states the goal of receiving 20,000 international and 30,000 domestic ecotourism visits to sites by 2025 (GoSL, 2017).

The World Bank is preparing an Economic Diversification Project, one of the components of which will take an integrated destination approach to improving the performance of Sierra Leone’s tourism sector. This will include facilitating the reduction of barriers to business success, assisting existing tourism providers with market access, and improving the quality of selected tourism products in order to place the country’s tourism sector on a sustainable and inclusive growth trajectory. This will be achieved through a mix of institutional and policy reforms, market development, national marketing enhancement, re-branding, building B2B linkages, and strategically developing tourism products in selected areas.

Accommodation quality is one of the most important factors in the visitor experience. Visitors typically spend more time and money in their accommodation than anywhere else during their trip. The lodging experience significantly affects tourists’ perception of the destination, as well as their likelihood of recommending the country and coming back for a return visit. Sierra Leone has a lodging licensing and standards system but it is outdated. There is a need to update the licensing standards and processes to better align them with regional and international best practices as well as the Sierra Leonian context.

In addition, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, additional health and safety protocol will be needed to keep staff and guests safe and protect against community transmission.

II. Objective of the assignment

The objective of this consultancy is to i) strengthen COVID_19 protocols for the hotel sector and prepare training for their roll out and ii) review and update the National Tourist Board’s (NTB) licensing standards and processes for lodging establishments, develop an implementation manual, and work with the NTB to ensure effective implementation of the updated standards.

III. Scope of Work and Approach

The consultant will review existing COVID-19 protocols from Sierra Leone and other leading markets. They will distil relevant information from recovery and reopening plans and prepare a draft set of guidelines for the hotel and accommodation sector. These will be in the form of a small booklet that will be shared with hoteliers and government for feedback before finalizing. The final version will also be presented in a short video in English and Krio demonstrating the protocols in action. Capacity building will be provided for trainers to help spread adherence to these standards across the sector.

Once the COVID assignment is complete the consultant will review existing quality and licensing processes and evaluate current implementation processes. The consultant will also identify and highlight three or four examples of international good practice from elsewhere in Africa as options for Sierra Leone. The consultant will hold a stakeholder meeting to discuss the aims of the new standards and seek stakeholder input on the updated criteria. Based on the information collected, the consultant will draft the new standards. Based on feedback received on the draft standards and recommended processes, the consultant will finalize the standards and draft two implementation handbooks (including all necessary forms and templates): one for the auditing institution and the other for lodging establishments.

This process should be highly participatory, with workshops and consultations to be undertaken with tourism enterprises, associations and the public sector—both to gather inputs and to validate suggested modifications. The handbooks should be simply written and attractively laid out. Evaluation and scoring processes should be objective. Evaluation forms should be mobile friendly so they can be completed and submitted via a tablet.

Finally, the consultant will hold a training for the accommodation standards evaluators to ensure the new standards are fully understood and MoTCA and NTB are capacitated to implement the standards.

A. Preparing COVID-19 accommodation health and Safety protocols

The consultant will improve existing or adapt new recommended COVID-19 health and safety protocols for the accommodation sector: hotels, guest houses, self-catering and ecolodges. These will cover the arrival, stay, restaurant services, excursions and all other aspects of the guests stay.

- The consultant will review the existing COVID-19 protocols for accommodation properties in Sierra Leone and hold a series of meetings to hear how these are being implemented
- The consultant will compare these standards with international best practice from the World Travel and Tourism Council and UNWTO.
- The consultant will draft a short brochure documenting suggested improved protocols for the transport, accommodation and provision of services to guests.
- These standards will also indicate the procedure for notifying authorities when a guest is unwell and suspects COVID-19.
- The improved protocols will consider environmental risks of single-use plastic and the risks of cleaning chemicals on hotel staff.
- The consultant will review the protocols with government (transport, health, tourism, environment) and hoteliers and other private sector stakeholders (associations) and make revisions as necessary
- The consultant will organize a virtual or socially distanced workshop to discuss the new standards and finalize the recommendations
- The consultant will finalize the protocol brochure and list of “do’s and don’ts” for tourists and prepare a series of short video (2-5 min) to raise awareness of the standards and new protocol processes for hoteliers and for arriving tourists

- The consultant will hold at least 4 socialization and train-the-champion virtual or in-person trainings including government trainers, hotel schools, tourist associations, private trainers and hoteliers to assist with the adoption of the protocols.

Outputs from A will include: final protocols, COVID-19 training brochure for accommodation providers, video for hoteliers and tourists. List of tourist do's and don'ts.

B. Modifying lodging establishment licensing standards and processes

The consultant will produce recommended licensing standards and processes for at least four categories of accommodations: hotels, guest houses, self-catering and ecolodges. The consultant may also identify and define new categorization of establishments.

- The consultant will review existing lodging standards, national construction guidelines, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines, the ECOWAS harmonized standards and international examples from elsewhere in Africa. The consultant will include case studies of at least three examples that were drawn upon in the report annex.
- The consultant will hold initial meetings with institutions involved in the current lodging establishment licensing system to better understand their roles, responsibilities, and perspectives.
- The consultant will conduct site visits / phone interviews with a full range of lodging establishments (including both those that are currently licensed and those that are not) and meet with owners/managers whenever possible. This will allow the consultant to better understand the local context, as well as the constraints in the current system that have led to relatively low uptake levels.
- Based on the document review, meetings, and site visits/ phone interviews, the consultant will draft a modified set of licensing standards for the agreed-on accommodations categories. The standards should cover the areas of health & sanitation, safety, security, environment, and comfort, among others. A normative approach will be taken to reduce subjectivity. There will be three possible answers to each criterium on the standard: “present” “not present” or “not applicable”.
- The consultant will also draft a series of recommendations for enhancing the licensing process. These should take into consideration international best practices (which should be described in the case studies in the annex).
- The consultant will prepare and hold training workshops for MoTCA and NTB staff in how to implement the new standards. These will include at least one mock assessment.
- The recommendations should include:
 - Suggested roles and responsibilities of each participating institution
 - A process flow mapping, including lengths of time allocated to each step in the process
 - Frequency in which licensing should take place
 - Costs/fees to be paid by lodging establishments (taking into consideration the cost of steps and procedures already required for a lodging establishment to operate in Sierra Leone so as ensure these standards do not impose an undue burden on them).
 - Who will perform the audit (considering the possibility of third-party auditors/monitors)
 - Training/capacity building needs for monitors and participating institutions
 - Staffing, equipment/software, and funding requirements to implement the new licensing system
 - Possibility of using innovative processes, including the use of mobile technology and digitization
 - Safeguards to put in place to reduce the potential for unlawful payments or charges in connection with the inspection of establishments.
 - Possible updated that would need to be made to relevant legal frameworks

- Outreach efforts to be made to ensure that all lodging establishments are familiar with modifications to the licensing process
 - Process for lodging establishments to submit appeals
 - Potential incentives for compliance
 - Potential penalties for non-compliance
 - Mechanisms for quality control within the licensing period if complaints are lodged
- Policy meetings will be held with EPA, fire, health, safety and NTB to consider, discuss and agree on the implications of the proposed changes. These will be facilitated by the MoTCA with the support of the consultant.
 - A full day workshop will be facilitated by the consultant to work with the private sector to review the recommended changes to the licensing standards and processes. Based on feedback, adjustments to the documents should be made.
 - A full day workshop will be facilitated by the consultant and public sector involves in lodging licensing to finalize the standard and process.

C. Drafting of Implementation Handbooks for the Monitoring Institution and Lodging Establishments

These will be two separate technical handbooks to guide both the auditing institution and lodging establishments through the licensing process. They will contain all relevant templates and forms to be filled out during the process.

- The Monitoring handbook will provide a road map for the implementing institution to apply the new standards. It will contain the full list of approved standards, with additional guidance on what the Monitoring Officer¹ should look for specifically and how information can be obtained/verified for each. Cases where exceptions may apply should be specified. Additionally, the handbook will provide detailed explanations of all structures, processes, and procedures involved in the process. It should cover at least all of the issues specified in section A.
- The lodging establishment handbook will help accommodation owners and operators understand how to implement the standards and prepare for audits/Monitoring activities. For each standard, there will be an explanation of the rationale and how to implement each. Rules regarding a ‘non applicable’ score will be noted. Resources and examples of how to comply will be cited along with the process and rules around inspection and grievance redress.
- Once the handbooks are drafted, at least six workshops will be held with lodging establishment owners expanded to tour operators, restaurants and taxi operators and operators to introduce the handbook and receive feedback to help finalize the document. The workshop will also serve to build awareness of the new licensing system.
- The agreed-to evaluation forms will be prepared in mobile-ready format so that Monitoring Officers can undertake audits (offline) using a tablet rather than paper survey forms. The consultant will recommend the necessary software for this process. Purchase of agreed-to software will be financed separately if required.
- Finally, a three-day training will be designed and run for monitoring officers to familiarize them with the new standards and processes and ensure consistent implementation. At least one test monitoring activity will be completed by each monitoring officer. Successful submission of a correct monitoring will result in the certification of the monitoring officers

¹ Auditors will be referred to in this work as “Monitoring Officers” in line with the mandate of the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs that monitors tourist establishments nationwide.

to use the new process. Purchase of needed tablets for the auditing will be financed separately.

Timeline and Deliverables

Deliverables	Delivery Dates
Inception report A including review of COVID-19 SL and International standards for accommodation	2 weeks after contract signing
Draft COVID-19 recommendations for Sierra Leone accommodation and stakeholder review	3 weeks after contract signing
Final standards booklet, videos and training for trainers	5 weeks after contract signing
Inception report B, including review of existing and international best practice	7 weeks after contract signing
Recommended licensing standards and processes document draft	11 weeks after contract signing
Validation workshop	13 weeks after contract signing
Licensing standards and processes document final	15 weeks after contract signing
Draft implementation handbooks for Monitoring Officers and lodging establishments	17 weeks after contract signing
Validation workshop	19 weeks after contract signing
Final implementation handbooks for Monitoring Officers and lodging establishments	20 weeks after contract signing
Training/capacity building for Monitoring Officers	22 weeks after contract signing
Total	14 weeks

Validation/comments on deliverables will be provided within 10 days from receipt of the report.

IV. Reporting

The consultants will be financed under the World Bank Economic Diversification Project and will report to Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs (MoTCA) and the National Tourist Board (NTB).

V. Consultant Qualifications

- A University qualification in tourism management or a related discipline
- At least 8 years' experience in tourism sector consulting, management and/or development of the tourism sector
- Previous experience in carrying out at least two assignments on the review and improvement of accommodation standards, classifications and licensing in the past 5 years
- Previous experience with the development of COVID-19 tourism protocols a plus
- Experience with accommodation standards in Africa is essential
- Knowledge of the Sierra Leone tourism sectors is a plus
- Strong analytical and report writing abilities
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills in English; Krio is a plus.
- Candidates should include in their proposal, references for the completion of similar assignments

Mode of Application

Note: The Consultant will be selected in accordance with Individual Consultant (IC) method set out in the World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers Procurement in Investment

Project Financing Goods, Works, Non-Consulting and Consulting Services Fourth Edition November 2020. The evaluation shall be based on the relevant qualifications and experience of the individual Consultant. All applications in writing should be accompanied by up-to-date Curriculum Vitae and supporting documents (Note: do not send originals) with the names and addresses of three referees, one of which should be the last or current employer and addressed to:

The Head of Procurement

Project Fiduciary Management Unit
Ministry of Finance
13a Howe Street Freetown
Tel: +23276672186

or

By E-mail application as attachment (including all supporting documents) to: **seconomicdiversification@gmail.com**

Please indicate clearly on the envelop (in the case of hard copy application) or in the email subject heading and attachment (in the case of electronic applications) the post for which application is made.

Closing Date:

The Closing Date and time for receipt of applications is 11th March, 2021 at 16:00pm.