

Terms of reference (ToRs) for the procurement of services below the EU threshold

	Project number/
Consultancy for the Design and Implementation of an AI for SMEs cost centre: Program	G-018082-001

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0. List of abbreviations

AG	Commissioning party
AN	Contractor
AVB	General Terms and Conditions of Contract for supplying services and work
FK	Expert
FKT	Expert days
KZFK	Short-term expert
ToRs	Terms of reference

1. Context

The Private Sector and Innovation Support (PSInno) programme is an innovation-driven project commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in cooperation with national partners in Ghana.

PSInno aims to strengthen Ghana's private sector competitiveness and innovation capacity by supporting the development and adoption of digital and technology-driven solutions across the digital and agri-business ecosystems. The programme contributes to inclusive economic transformation by enabling startups, SMEs, public institutions, and intermediary organisations to innovate, improve productivity, and create sustainable employment opportunities, with particular attention to young people, women, and actors in northern Ghana.

The project works across three interconnected areas: strengthening innovation ecosystems and institutional capacities; supporting agric SMEs and startups to develop and test technology-based products, services, and business models; and expanding digital competencies to improve employability and economic participation. Through targeted interventions, PSInno promotes science-to-business collaboration, technology transfer, and the introduction of innovation support mechanisms that connect research institutions, industry, and markets.

Small and Medium Enterprises account for about 70% of Ghana's GDP and employ 85% of the workforce. Despite their importance, most SMEs operate far below their potential productivity levels, which limits their ability to grow and create quality jobs.

Over the past several years, government agencies, development partners, and private sector organizations have invested significantly in SME support programmes. These efforts have strengthened foundational business capabilities across the country. However, important gaps remain in translating this foundation into sustained business improvements.

While many programmes teach business concepts and raise awareness about digital tools, few provide the hands-on support that SMEs need to actually implement new systems and technologies in their daily operations. Business owners often leave workshops with good ideas but no practical pathway to put them into practice. The gap between awareness and implementation remains wide.

Additionally, most SME support initiatives measure success by tracking participation and satisfaction rather than verified business results. This approach makes it difficult to determine which interventions genuinely improve business performance and which simply deliver well-received training sessions.

The advice provided also tends to be general rather than specific. SME owners hear about "digital transformation" and "efficiency improvements" but struggle to connect these concepts to their particular challenges, whether managing inventory, tracking customer orders, or handling invoicing.

These observations are not criticisms of existing efforts, which have done important foundational work. Rather, they represent the next stage of support that SMEs require to move from awareness to implementation, from concepts to concrete applications, from participation tracking to results measurement.

1.1 Objective of the Consultancy

This consultancy will design and implement a programme that helps Ghanaian SMEs adopt specific AI tools to improve their business operations. The focus is on practical implementation rather than training alone, with rigorous measurement of actual business improvements.

The programme will complement existing SME support initiatives by addressing the implementation gap. Where other programmes build general business capabilities, this intervention will provide hands-on coaching to help businesses adopt and use specific tools until they work properly and deliver measurable results.

The consultant will need to assess Ghana's current SME support landscape to understand what already exists and identify where this programme can add unique value without duplicating efforts. This assessment should inform the design of a programme that serves businesses at different stages of development, from micro-enterprises struggling with basic operational inefficiencies to medium-sized companies seeking competitive advantages.

Success will be measured by verifiable business improvements. These include revenue and profit increase or either one of the aforementioned parameters in addition to cost savings or productivity increase or additional products/services sold or newly developed markets (product or spatial markets) or increase in operational investments.

1.2 Program Components

The programme consists of five phases, delivered over approximately four months.

The consultant will begin by assessing both the SME support ecosystem and the operational challenges facing businesses. This assessment requires mapping existing support programmes, identifying what they don't provide, and understanding the specific problems that Ghanaian SMEs face in their day-to-day operations.

Based on this assessment, the consultant will design a three-month programme that provides differentiated support depending on where businesses are in their development. The programme must be heavily weighted toward implementation, including hands-on coaching and support and standard workshops or trainings.

The consultant will then recruit approximately 100 SMEs across different sectors and business sizes, ensuring representation of women-owned businesses, businesses from Northern Ghana, and young entrepreneurs.

Programme delivery will proceed in tracks, based on categorization of SME needs. Each cohort begins with a thorough diagnostic of participating businesses, followed by intensive initial workshops, then an extended implementation period where the consultant's team works directly with businesses to set up and optimize their use of new tools. This implementation phase includes weekly check-ins, troubleshooting support, peer learning among participating businesses and a documentation of participants' journeys for education and awareness creation purposes.

Throughout the programme and for at least six months afterward, the consultant will track business results, documenting improvements with evidence and producing case studies that demonstrate what worked and why.

1.3 Target Beneficiaries:

This programme will work with businesses across the full SME spectrum, recognizing that different types of businesses face different challenges and need different kinds of support.

Emerging businesses, typically micro-enterprises with 2 to 9 employees often struggle with basic operational systems. A market vendor may have no systematic way to track inventory. A home-based business may manage all customer information in their head or on scraps of paper. These businesses need foundational digitization alongside basic productivity tools.

Growing small businesses, with roughly 10 to 49 employees face different challenges. They've usually established some basic systems, but as they try to scale, they hit productivity bottlenecks. Manual processes that worked fine when the business was smaller now consume too much time and create errors. These businesses need operational optimization tools that help them do more with their current team.

Established medium-sized enterprises, with 49 to 249 compete not just locally but increasingly with regional and global players. They need tools that provide competitive differentiation, ie better customer service, faster delivery, superior quality, or more sophisticated capabilities than their competitors can offer.

The programme should also be open to high-potential businesses that may be smaller but show strong growth potential, whether through innovation, export orientation, or serving specialized markets.

To be eligible, businesses should have been operating for at least six months and demonstrate actual business activity through sales records, a client base, or operational premises. The owner or a senior manager must participate personally throughout the programme. Businesses must commit to implementing at least one or two specific improvements during the programme period.

Digital readiness requirements should be flexible, recognizing that businesses start from different places. An emerging business owner should at least be comfortable using a mobile phone and willing to learn computer basics. Growing businesses should have computers and internet access and use some basic digital tools. Established businesses should already be using business software and be ready for optimization and enhancement.

The programme should aim for at least 30% representation from women-owned or women-led businesses, Northern Ghana and people under 35 years old. Businesses should come from the agribusiness sector and 3 other sectors based on the initial assessment conducted by the consultant

2. Tasks to be performed by the contractor

The consultant is responsible for providing the following work packages:

Work Package 1: SME Needs Assessment and Opportunity Mapping

Before designing the programme, the consultant must understand both the ecosystem of existing support programmes and the specific operational challenges facing Ghanaian SMEs.

The ecosystem assessment should map what's already available to SMEs in Ghana. Which organizations provide business development services? What do they focus on? How do they

deliver support? What outcomes have they achieved? This isn't about criticizing existing efforts but about understanding where gaps exist and where this programme can add unique value.

Specifically, the consultant should identify which business functions or challenges are already well-served by existing programmes, what kinds of hands-on implementation support are missing, which business segments may be underserved, and what existing programmes don't provide in terms of practical technology adoption and results measurement.

The SME needs research should involve deep engagement with businesses across different segments. The consultant should conduct detailed interviews with selected SMEs, ensuring diversity in size, sector, ownership, and location. These interviews should explore not just what challenges businesses face, but how they currently handle these challenges, what they've tried before, what worked and what didn't, and what would actually be useful to them.

Focus group discussions with business owners can also reveal common patterns and enable business owners to learn from each other's experiences. These should be organized thoughtfully, perhaps grouping businesses by size or sector so participants can discuss challenges they all understand.

Consultations with business associations, chambers of commerce, technology vendors, financial institutions, and representatives from other SME support programmes will provide additional perspectives and may reveal partnership opportunities.

The research should produce several outputs. An ecosystem analysis report should document what already exists in SME support and recommends how this programme should position itself. An SME assessment report should thoroughly describe the operational challenges businesses face, organized by business segment and function.

A particularly important output is the use case catalogue: a detailed compilation of 30-50 specific applications, each one mapped to a particular business function and described in enough detail that business owners can understand whether it addresses their problem. Each use case should explain what problem it solves, how it works, what tools are available (with realistic cost estimates), how complex implementation would be, what impact businesses might expect, and what prerequisites are needed.

These use cases should be prioritized based on business impact, how accessible they are for businesses without extensive technical capabilities, affordability, how quickly results might appear, how broadly applicable they are across sectors, safety and privacy considerations for the use of selected AI tools and actual demand from the SMEs consulted.

The deliverables should be submitted to GIZ for review and approval before the consultant proceeds to programme design.

Deliverables:

- Inception Report detailing research methodology, stakeholder engagement plan, and work schedule
- Ecosystem Analysis Report documenting existing SME support programmes, identified gaps, and strategic positioning recommendations
- SME Assessment Report covering operational challenges by business segment and function, digital readiness analysis, and differentiated needs across business maturity levels
- AI Use Case Catalogue documenting 30-50 specific applications, each with problem description, solution approach, available tools, cost estimates, implementation complexity, expected impact, and prerequisites

- Sector Focus Recommendations identifying 3-4 priority sectors with strongest potential
- Presentation to GIZ summarizing findings and recommendations
- Revised assessment incorporating GIZ feedback

Approval from GIZ required before proceeding to Work Package 2.

Work Package 2: Programme Design

Based on the approved assessment, the consultant will design a practical, three-month programme. The design should reflect a clear understanding that business owners have limited time and need to see results, not just complete training modules.

The programme structure should recognize that different businesses need different support. A micro-enterprise trying to establish basic systems needs different guidance than an established company optimizing sophisticated operations. The design should explain how the programme will provide appropriate support to each segment.

The three months should be structured roughly as follows: Weeks 1 for business diagnostics and selecting which specific improvements each category of business will work on. Weeks 2-3 for intensive group workshops where businesses learn about relevant tools and best practices. Weeks 4-8 for implementation, during which the consultant's team provides ongoing hands-on support. Weeks 9-12 for optimization, measurement and peer sharing of results, and planning for sustainability.

During the implementation phase, participating businesses should receive weekly check-ins to review progress and solve problems, on-demand support through phone, email, or video calls when they encounter challenges, regular peer learning sessions where businesses share their experiences, and quality assurance to ensure that tools are being used correctly and delivering value.

The programme design should include detailed curriculum materials that business owners can actually use, ie clear, practical guides written in straightforward language. Video tutorials demonstrating how to use specific tools. Templates and checklists that businesses can adapt to their needs. A curated library of recommended tools with honest assessments of costs, capabilities, and limitations.

Perhaps most importantly, the design should explain exactly how business impact will be measured. What data will be collected before businesses start? How will progress be tracked during implementation? What evidence will be gathered to verify results? How will the consultant ensure the data is reliable?

Deliverables:

- Programme Design Document covering programme structure, support differentiation by business segment, week-by-week implementation plan, and support mechanisms
- SME Handbook with practical guides, tool tutorials, troubleshooting resources, templates, and checklists
- Video Tutorials demonstrating tool use and common procedures
- Curated Tool Library with honest assessments of capabilities, costs, and limitations for each recommended tool
- Impact Measurement Framework detailing baseline data requirements, progress tracking methods, evidence gathering protocols, and verification procedures

- Workshop Materials including presentation slides, exercises, and facilitator guides
- Implementation Support Plan outlining team structure, check-in schedules, and quality assurance mechanisms

Work Package 3: SME Recruitment and Selection

The consultant will recruit approximately 100 SMEs, in accordance with GIZ guidelines, likely organized into various tracks to make implementation manageable.

Recruitment should reach beyond the usual suspects. Business associations and chambers of commerce are obvious partners, but the consultant should also work with institutions that serve SMEs, government agencies like GEA, technology hubs, and use targeted digital advertising. The recruitment materials should be honest about what the programme offers and what it requires, emphasizing that this is about achieving real business results, not just attending workshops.

The selection process should identify businesses that are genuinely committed and ready to implement changes. The consultant should assess motivation and readiness, not just eligibility. Ideally incentives can be identified that ensure that SME's have their own "skin in the game". The selection should ensure the target demographic mix is achieved while prioritizing businesses most likely to succeed and benefit.

Deliverables:

- Recruitment Strategy Document outlining outreach channels, messaging approach, and timeline
- Recruitment Materials including programme brochure, application guide, promotional materials, and partner engagement presentations
- Application Portal and selection tools including assessment criteria and interview guides
- Marketing Materials: Programme brochure clearly articulating unique value proposition, application guide, social media graphics, promotional video (2-3 minutes), application platform
- Applicant Database documenting all applications with evaluation scores and selection rationale
- Final SME list with demographic breakdown showing women ownership, Northern Ghana representation, youth ownership, and sectoral diversity. Selection panel will constitute representation from GIZ and the consulting agency.
- Recruitment Report summarizing outreach process, challenges encountered, and demographics achieved

All communication materials must be developed in accordance with GIZ's guidelines and with approval from the communications department of GIZ

Work Package 4: Programme Implementation

Implementation means delivering the three-month programme under each track, maintaining quality throughout, and adapting when things do not go as planned.

Before the programme formally starts, the consultant's team will conduct a diagnosis of the businesses for a clear understanding of how they currently operate, what the main bottlenecks are, which specific improvements make sense for the businesses, what the current baseline metrics are (time spent on key tasks, current costs, current revenue), and what realistic targets might be.

The intensive workshops in weeks 2-3 should be interactive and practical, not lectures. Business owners should work on their actual businesses during workshop time, not just theoretical exercises.

The implementation phase is where the real value is created or lost. The consultant's team needs to stay engaged consistently, checking in with businesses weekly, responding quickly when problems arise, facilitating peer learning so businesses help each other, and ensuring that tools are actually being used correctly and delivering results.

Some businesses will progress smoothly. Others will struggle, and the consultant will need to figure out why and adjust the support accordingly.

Deliverables:

- Business Diagnostic report of selected businesses detailing current operations, bottlenecks, selected improvements, baseline metrics, and targets
- Workshop Reports documenting each training session with attendance, content covered, and participant feedback
- Bi-Weekly Summary Reports highlighting overall progress, common challenges, and support provided
- Mid-Programme Review Report assessing progress at cohort midpoint and eventual recommendations for adjustments/fine tuning
- Programme Completion Report for each track including retention data, implementation outcomes, and initial business improvements

Work Package 5: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Impact Measurement

- Develop an M&E strategy plan: GIZ will provide the contractor an M&E framework, which should be considered when developing the M&E strategy plan. The plan must be approved by GIZ at the start of the project.
- Provide continuous monitoring reports: Regular reports that provide an update on the progress of the contractor's activities and the status of the events preparation.
- Submit final reports for each work package when each work package is completed.
- Develop a final evaluation report: A comprehensive report providing an overall assessment of the implementation of this contract. This report should provide evidence of the achievement of the contract objectives and indicators. The report will also include recommendations, lessons learned and a Scaling Proposal, ie how to replicate this program for a larger target e.g 1000 SMEs.

Certain milestones, as laid out in the table below, are to be achieved during the contract term:

Milestones	Deadline
Technical Kick-off meeting	August 2026
SME market analysis	August 2026
Programme Design for all tracks	September 2026

Recruitment and Selection	September – October 2026
Implementation	October – December 2026
Finalization and Reporting	Jan – Feb 2027

Period of assignment: from 1st August 2026 to 28th February, 2027

3. Concept

In the tender, the tenderer is required to show *how* the objectives defined in Chapter 2 (Tasks to be performed) are to be achieved, if applicable under consideration of further method-related requirements (technical-methodological concept). In addition, the tenderer must describe the project management system for service provision.

Note: The numbers in parentheses correspond to the lines of the technical assessment grid.

Technical-methodological concept

Strategy (1.1): The tenderer is required to consider the tasks to be performed with reference to the objectives of the services put out to tender (see Chapter 1 Context) (1.1.1). Following this, the tenderer presents and justifies the explicit strategy with which it intends to provide the services for which it is responsible (see Chapter 2 Tasks to be performed) (1.1.2).

The tenderer is required to present the actors relevant for the services for which it is responsible and describe the **cooperation (1.2)** with them.

The tenderer is required to present and explain its approach to **steering** the measures with the project partners (1.3.1) and its contribution to the **results-based monitoring system** (1.3.2).

The tenderer is required to describe the key **processes** for the services for which it is responsible and create an **operational plan** or schedule (1.4.1) that describes how the services according to Chapter **Error! Reference source not found.** (Tasks to be performed by the contractor) are to be provided. In particular, the tenderer is required to describe the necessary work steps and, if applicable, take account of the milestones and **contributions** of other actors (partner contributions) in accordance with Chapter 2 (Tasks to be performed) (1.4.2).

The tenderer is required to describe its contribution to knowledge management for the partner (1.5.1) and GIZ and to promote scaling-up effects (1.5.2) under **learning and innovation**.

Project management of the contractor (1.6)

The tenderer is required to explain its approach for coordination with the GIZ project. In particular, the project management requirements specified in Chapter 2 (Tasks to be performed by the contractor) must be explained in detail.

The tenderer is required to draw up a **personnel assignment plan** with explanatory notes that lists all the experts proposed in the tender; the plan includes information on assignment dates (duration and expert days) and locations of the individual members of the team complete with the allocation of work steps as set out in the schedule.

4. Personnel concept

The tenderer is required to provide personnel who are suited to filling the positions described, on the basis of their CVs ([see Chapter 6](#)), the range of tasks involved and the required qualifications.

The below specified qualifications represent the requirements to reach the maximum number of points in the technical assessment.

Team leader

Tasks of the team leader

- Overall responsibility for the advisory packages of the contractor (quality and deadlines)
- Coordinating and ensuring communication with GIZ, partners and others involved in the project
- Personnel management, in particular identifying the need for short-term assignments within the available budget, as well as planning and steering assignments and supporting local and international short-term experts
- Regular reporting in accordance with deadlines

Qualifications of the team leader

- Education/training (2.1.1): Advanced University degree in Business Administration, Entrepreneurship, Management, or related field
- Language (2.1.2): C1-level language proficiency in English
- General professional experience (2.1.3): 7-10 years' experience in SME development, business consulting, or competitiveness programmes
- Specific professional experience (2.1.4): 5-7 years of professional experience in managing business support or productivity improvement programmes with documented business results
- Leadership/management experience (2.1.5): 5-7 years of management/leadership experience as project team leader or programme manager
- Regional experience (2.1.6): 5 years of experience in projects in Africa, of which 3 years in projects in Ghana
- Development cooperation (DC) experience (2.1.7): 3-5 years of experience in DC projects

Key expert 1: AI for Business Development Specialists (2 Experts)

Tasks of AI for Business Development Specialists

- Conduct operational diagnostics for assigned SMEs, identify business bottlenecks, and develop tailored AI use cases aligned with specific business needs and improvement opportunities
- Design programme curriculum, training materials, and implementation frameworks for assigned cohort
- Deliver workshops on AI tools and best practices, and provide ongoing hands-on technical support throughout implementation including troubleshooting and tool optimization
- Conduct weekly check-ins with assigned businesses, facilitate peer learning sessions, and coach business owners on change management and staff training
- Ensure quality of implementation, verify correct tool usage, and track business progress and results for assigned cohort

- Document implementation challenges, solutions, and lessons learned throughout the programme

Qualifications of AI for Business Development Specialists

- Education/training (2.2.1): Advanced degree in Business Administration, Management, Computer Science, Information Systems, or related field combining business and technology expertise
- Language (2.2.2): C1-level language proficiency in English
- General professional experience (2.2.3): 5-7 years combining business consulting and technology implementation experience
- Specific professional experience (2.2.4): 5-7 years conducting operational assessments and implementing AI or automation solutions in SME contexts, with documented business results
- Regional experience (2.2.5): 5 years of experience in projects in Africa, of which 3 years working with SMEs in Ghana
- Development cooperation (DC) experience (2.2.6): 2-3 years of experience in DC projects

Key expert 2: Research and M&E Specialist

Tasks of Research and M&E Specialist

- Design and conduct ecosystem assessment including mapping existing SME support programmes, identifying gaps, and conducting stakeholder consultations with business associations, chambers of commerce, financial institutions, and SME support organizations
- Facilitate focus group discussions with SME owners, analyze research findings, support use case prioritization, and produce ecosystem analysis and assessment reports
- Develop M&E framework, impact measurement methodology, and data collection tools with verification protocols
- Collect and verify baseline data for all participating SMEs, track business results throughout implementation, and conduct six-month follow-up assessments
- Produce impact case studies with verified evidence, prepare monthly progress reports and final evaluation report, and ensure data quality and credible results documentation

Qualifications of Research and M&E Specialist

- Education/training (2.3.1): Advanced degree in Monitoring and Evaluation, Statistics, Development Studies, Economics, Business Research, or related field
- Language (2.3.2): C1-level language proficiency in English
- General professional experience (2.3.3): 7-10 years in research, monitoring, evaluation, or impact assessment
- Specific professional experience (2.3.4): 5-7 years conducting business research and measuring business or livelihood outcomes (not just programme outputs), with experience in verification methods and data quality assurance
- Regional experience (2.3.5): 5 years of experience in projects in Africa, of which 3 years in projects in Ghana
- Development cooperation (DC) experience (2.3.6): 3-5 years of experience in DC projects

5. Costing requirements

Assignment of personnel and travel expenses

Per-diem and overnight accommodation allowances are reimbursed as a lump sum up to the maximum amounts permissible under tax law for each country as set out in the country table in the circular from the German Federal Ministry of Finance on travel expense remuneration (downloadable at <https://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de>).

Accommodation costs which exceed this up to a reasonable amount and the cost of flights and other main forms of transport can be reimbursed against evidence

All business travel must be agreed in advance by the officer responsible for the project.

Sustainability aspects for travel

GIZ would like to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂ emissions) caused by travel. When preparing your tender, please incorporate options for reducing emissions, such as selecting the lowest-emission booking class (economy) and using means of transport, airlines and flight routes with a higher CO₂ efficiency. For short distances, travel by train (second class) or e-mobility should be the preferred option.

If they cannot be avoided, CO₂ emissions caused by air travel should be offset. GIZ specifies a budget for this, through which the carbon offsets can be settled against evidence.

There are many different providers in the market for emissions certificates, and they have different climate impact ambitions. The [Development and Climate Alliance \(German only\)](#) has published a [list of standards \(German only\)](#). GIZ recommends using the standards specified there.

Specification of inputs

Fee days	Number of experts	Number of days per expert	Total	Comments
Designation of Team Lead	1	25	25	
Designation of Research and M&E Specialist	1	25	25	
Designation of AI for Business Development Specialists	2	50	100	
Transport	Quantity	Number per experts / Persons	Total	Comments
Travel expenses (project staff)	4	30	120	Travel within the country of assignment for project staff

Other costs	Quantity	Price	Total	Comments
Training related costs:	1	€10,000	€10,000	<p>Please calculate a budget for training related costs taking the following cost items into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Internet data • Online platform subscription • Training materials • Other related costs
Flexible remuneration	1	€8000	€8000	<p>A budget of EUR 8000 for foreseen flexible remuneration. Please incorporate this budget into the price schedule.</p> <p><i>Use of the flexible remuneration item requires prior written approval from GIZ.</i></p>

6. Requirements on the format of the tender

The structure of the tender must correspond to the structure of the ToRs. In particular, the detailed structure of the concept (Chapter 3) should be organised in accordance with the positively weighted criteria in the assessment grid (not with zero). The tender must be legible (font size 11 or larger) and clearly formulated. It must be drawn up in English (language).

The complete tender must not exceed 10 pages (excluding CVs). If one of the maximum page lengths is exceeded, the content appearing after the cut-off point will not be included in the assessment. External content (e.g. links to websites) will also not be considered.

The CVs of the personnel proposed in accordance with Chapter 4 of the ToRs must be submitted using the format specified in the terms and conditions for application. The CVs shall not exceed 4 pages each. They must clearly show the position and job the proposed person held in the reference project and for how long. The CVs can also be submitted in English (language).

Please calculate your financial tender based exactly on the parameters specified in Chapter 5 Quantitative requirements. The contractor is not contractually entitled to use up the days, trips, workshops or budgets in full. The number of days, trips and workshops and the budgets will be contractually agreed as maximum limits. The specifications for pricing are defined in the price schedule.