



REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (Consulting Services - Selection of a Consulting Firm)

Selection of a consultant (firm) to conduct a feasibility study for the establishment of a regional Internet exchange point for the West Africa region.

Reference Number: ECW/PPDU/2023/QCBS/01

1. Introduction

Articles 32 and 33 of the revised ECOWAS Treaty form the basis for the region's engagement in the field of information and communication technologies to achieve its ideals of regional integration. Article 33 calls on Member States to "develop, modernize, coordinate and standardize their national telecommunications networks in order to ensure reliable interconnection between Member States, and to coordinate their efforts to mobilize national and international financial resources through the participation of the private sector in the provision of telecommunications/ICT services". Guided by this vision, we have made substantial investments in the telecommunications sector, particularly in the provision of broadband Internet services. Currently, ten (10) submarine cable systems with thirty-three (33) landing points connect ECOWAS to the rest of the world. The average internet penetration rate in the region is 41%.¹

Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) are a key infrastructure within the Internet service delivery ecosystem. IXPs allow local networks to efficiently exchange information/data within a country, avoiding routing local Internet traffic through foreign/overseas territories. Therefore, an IXP is a key component of Internet infrastructure that can make the Internet more affordable and of better quality for local communities. Except for Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone, all ECOWAS member States have successfully established their own IXPs.²

Beyond national territories, regional Internet exchange points are important, especially for the ECOWAS region. With the aim of supporting the strengthening of existing IXPs and the emergence of new IXPs in Africa, the African Union (AU) has implemented the African Internet Exchange System (AXIS) project. In addition to supporting the establishment of a national IXP in countries that do not have one, the project also aims to support the establishment of at least one RIXP in each of Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

In addition, given its regional integration objectives, ECOWAS has launched several digital economy initiatives whose success depends on the efficient exchange and transfer of data among member States.

These projects include the implementation of affordable regional mobile roaming, the operationalization of the Regional Customs Network for Transit Trade (ALISA) and the operationalization of the ECOWAS e-commerce strategy. The establishment of a RIXP infrastructure or national IXP interconnection throughout the region is therefore important for the successful implementation of these initiatives and ensures efficient routing of intra-regional Internet traffic.

¹ Source: World Bank: World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS>

² Source : <https://sigtel.ecowas.int/ict-statistics/core-household-indicators/>



This strategic initiative reflects ECOWAS' commitment to optimize digital connectivity, encourage collaboration and promote our vision of a technologically dynamic and interconnected West Africa.

2. Objective

Considering the above, the ECOWAS Commission, through its Project Preparation and Development Unit (PPDU), is seeking to engage the services of a consulting firm to undertake a feasibility study for the establishment of a Regional Internet Exchange Point for the West African region.

3. Scope of services

Consulting services ("the Services") include, but are not necessarily limited to, the tasks and responsibilities described below:

- Review the implementation of the AU-AXIS project to determine the current state of the ecosystem/IXP landscape in the region and comment on the project's contribution to the establishment of a functional RIXP in the region.
- Determine the technical requirements and specifications of the Internet exchange, including the necessary equipment, bandwidth capacity, and physical infrastructure.
- Conduct an analysis of existing IXPs/RIXPs/Data Centres in the region to identify a candidate who could expand to fulfill the functions of a RIXP or justify a new project.
- Identify any legal, regulatory or policy considerations to be taken into account when setting up and operating the Internet clearing-house mechanism.
- Propose an institutional model for the implementation and operationalization of a regional internet infrastructure.
- Review the investment and operating costs for implementing a RIXP, as well as the sources of investment and sustainability of the RIXP.

4. Eligibility, Qualification and Experience of the Consultant

The ECOWAS Commission is now inviting eligible firms to express their interest in providing the services. Interested consultants must provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the services.

The similarity of the references will be analyzed and evaluated based on the following perspectives:

- The value and scope of the contract performed.
- Nature of Service: Technical studies in the field of telecommunications and information technology, development or evaluation of information technology policy at the national level, etc.
- Field and technical expertise: IXP Ecosystem, IXP, RIXPS, Data Centers, Broadband Industry/ISP
- Geographical context: ECOWAS region or similar environment.

Interested consulting firms may take the form of a consortium or partnership in order to guarantee and/or strengthen their consolidated capacity to carry out the mission.

The attention of interested individual consultants is particularly drawn to Article 118 of the revised ECOWAS Public Procurement Code ("Offences by Candidates, Bidders and Contractors"), which provides information on corrupt or fraudulent practices in the context of competition or contract performance. In addition, please refer to the following specific information on conflicts of interest related to this mission, in accordance with Article 119 of the revised ECOWAS Public Procurement Code.



The consulting firm must meet the following minimum qualifications:

Expérience :

- The firm must have general experience in conducting studies in the broadband/ISP sector within the last 10 years (2013 - 2023).
- The company must also demonstrate that it has performed at least two (2) similar assignments related to the establishment of a national or regional broadband/internet infrastructure in the last ten (10) years (2013 - 2023).
- The experience of a similar mission in the ECOWAS region is an advantage.
- The consulting firm must have an experienced multidisciplinary team comprising at least the following:
 - o Team Leader/Project Management Expert - oversees the entire feasibility study.
 - o One (1) expert in telecommunications/ICT/digital development.
 - o One (1) legal/regulatory expert.
- The team leader must hold a master's degree in management/MBA, engineering, telecommunications/computer science or mission-related disciplines and have at least 10 years of professional experience, other team members must have at least 8 years of professional experience in their respective disciplines.

Langage

- The consultant must demonstrate the ability to work in one of the three official languages of ECOWAS (English, French and Portuguese).

5. Duration of the mission

The duration of the contract is 4.5 calendar months.

6-Selection method

Consultants will be selected in accordance with the Quality and Cost Based Selection Method (QCBS) defined in the ECOWAS Public Procurement Code and a shortlist of six to eight (6-8) best qualified firms, will be established and invited to submit a technical and financial proposal.

7- Request for additional information

Interested consultants may obtain additional information at the email addresses below during business hours, no later than one (1) week prior to the submission deadline: Monday to Friday from 9:00 GMT+1 to 17:00 GMT+1, with the subject line "EOI - RIXP Clarification".

Email : ikkamara@ecowas.int; procurement@ecowas.int; with a copy to: mamoa@ecowas.int, oshokunbi@ecowas.int , kfy@ecowas.int , gdikko@ecowas.int , ctienon@araa.org

8-Submission of applications

Expressions of interest will be submitted by email. Bidders must submit password-protected expressions of interest clearly titled in the following format: "Expression of Interest - RIXP - (company name)". Submissions should be sent to the addresses below no later than **October 13, 2023 at 16:00 Nigeria Time (GMT + 1)**.

Email : ikkamara@ecowas.int; procurement@ecowas.int ; with a copy to: mamoa@ecowas.int , oshokunbi@ecowas.int , kfy@ecowas.int , gdikko@ecowas.int , ctienon@araa.org



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The password will be sent to the same addresses (above) 15 minutes prior to the date and time of opening and evaluation of the expressions of interest received.

Expressions of interest must include:

- A Letter of Expression of Interest.
- If the Candidate is formed as a consortium: a copy of the grouping agreement or a letter of intention to form a consortium.
- A brochure presenting the firm or consortium.
- the firm's references: each reference provided must be summarized on a reference sheet (Designation and description of the mission, place of completion (country, city), duration of the mission, name and point of contact of the client, start date, end date, description of the services rendered by the consultant, list of key personnel of the firm who participated in the mission).

9 -Publication website

This Notice of Interest is also published on the ECOWAS <http://www.ecowas.int/doing-business-inecowas/ecowas-procurement> website and the ECOWAS www.p pdu.org PPDU website.

Commissioner, Internal Services

Prof. Nazifi Abdullahi Darma