

25.11.2016, Bucharest

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

ROMANIA

Romania Secondary Education Project

Loan Agreement No 8481-RO

Assignment Title: Design of the Impact Evaluation, as well as the Design and Implementation of Pilot Socio-Emotional Skills Interventions

Reference No.: C 3/11.2

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 *Design of the Impact Evaluation, as well as the Design and Implementation of Pilot Socio-Emotional Skills Interventions* within a period of 60 days. The Terms of Reference for *Design of the Impact Evaluation, as well as the Design and Implementation of Pilot Socio-Emotional Skills Interventions* are annexed to this Request for Expressions of Interest.

The *Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research / 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.

One Consultant 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. Each consultant must indicate the targeted position, taking into account the following minimum qualification requirements:

Qualification

The minimum competencies required are the following:

- i. Graduate degree and professional background in Economics, Public Policy, Statistics or a related field, with internationally recognized expertise in quantitative methods for microdata analysis;
- ii. Significant experience with the design and implementation of rigorous impact evaluation of social programs, through experimental and non-experimental methods;

- iii. Experience in the design and evaluation of similar socio-emotional skills interventions, preferred;
- iv. Proficiency in English;
- v. Ability to deliver under tight deadlines;
- vi. Good interpersonal skills
- vii. Good oral and written communication skills;

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).

One Consultant 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 **16 December 2016, 2:00 PM** 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 and Scientific Research – Unit for the Management of Externally Financed Projects

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Romania
Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research
Romania Secondary Education Project (ROSE Project)
Loan Agreement N° 8481-RO

Terms of Reference for the Design of the Impact Evaluation, as well as the Design and Implementation of Pilot Socio-Emotional Skills Interventions

I. 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 and Scientific Research of Romania (MNESR) until November 2022, through the Unit for the Management of Externally Financed Projects (UMAFP). 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 (1,160) 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 MNESR'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 grant schemes – one non-competitive and two competitive – for public faculties/universities that serve these at-risk students. Approximately 85 percent of Romanian public faculties would benefit from this component.

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 MNESR'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.

This component will also finance the **development and implementation of the impact evaluation of interventions aimed at improving socio-emotional skills** of high school girls and boys in high schools supported by the ROSE Project in order to increase retention and promotion to post-secondary education. The objective is to improve their academic performance and schooling decisions through developing skills related to goal-setting and persistence (grit/growth mindset) and self-confidence/self-efficacy. These skills have been shown to increase students' motivation, self-discipline, and autonomy in their own learning process.

The World Bank is supporting the MNESR to identify and develop options for developing potential targeted skills appropriate to the Romanian context. This involves: (i) targeting the specific skills that are most relevant for the country context and policy/program objectives, while paying due attention to issues of stereotype threat for girls and Roma students (e.g. goal-setting, future orientation, seeking/acting on feedback, identity); (ii) developing guidelines and delivering a hands-on, practical training for teachers and school principals on how to teach these socioemotional skills; (iv) developing the necessary materials for the students, to be delivered as part of the intervention(s), (iv) provision of technical assistance and support to schools for the implementation phase; and (v) carrying out a rigorous impact evaluation of pilot interventions to assess the impact on key outcomes, adjust the design or delivery as needed before any scaling up, and promote sustainability of the initiatives.

A specific focus would be assessing the relative cost-effectiveness of: (i) an intervention design focused on developing a selected set of skills to be taught by teachers as a stand-alone curriculum, potentially through the existing high school class on Counseling and Guidance; (ii) an intervention to teach socio-emotional skills embedded into the teaching of selected subject classes, based on the development of materials, guidelines for teachers, and a set of sample lessons applying those principles in core subjects (e.g. Math, sciences); and (iii) an intervention providing students with information on returns to secondary and higher education.

In order to draw lessons on which interventions can have greater impact in the Romanian context, the MNESR will pilot and rigorously evaluate variations of different approaches to develop specific socio-emotional skills. The MNESR will evaluate these pilot interventions through a randomized control trial. The evaluation will seek to answer whether and how the targeted socio-emotional skills can be changed and the causal impacts on a broad set of educational outcomes and attitudes toward effort and persistence, including variations by gender and ethnicity. The pilot intervention could include a combination of the following modalities:

Modality	Description
Stand-alone (delivered during a general class hour)	Stand-alone socio emotional skills training to be delivered during a selected regular class hour (e.g. Counseling and Guidance). This component would require developing a training plan and training modules for teachers and principals/teacher training, as well as relevant materials for students. This intervention would be designed and implemented through the project's systemic interventions.
Embedded (mainstreamed in a core subject)	Socio-emotional skills training embedded in the curricula and teaching of selected core subjects (e.g. language, math, science). This intervention would require developing a training plan and training modules for teachers and teacher training for the teachers of the relevant core subjects as well as relevant materials for students. This intervention would be designed and implemented through the project's systemic interventions.
Information (returns to education)	Provision of information to students on returns to secondary and higher education. Designed materials would be provided by the World Bank. This intervention would be implemented through the project's systemic interventions.

II. Objective

The objectives of this assignment are to design and implement the impact evaluation of pilot socio-emotional skills interventions, and to support the design and implementation of these interventions under the ROSE Project.

III. Scope of Services

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

- a. **Learning Tasks.** The Consultant shall meet the core members of the ROSE Project Management Unit, especially the Project Director, the Technical Coordinator, and the Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist, and also become familiar with all relevant ROSE Project documentation. This includes the Project Appraisal Document, Project Operations Manual, Project Implementation Plan, and other documents as indicated by the Project Director.

- b. **Support the design and implementation of both a “stand-alone” and “embedded” socio-emotional skills pilot interventions.** The objective of this task is to provide active and continuous support to the design and implementation of the socio-emotional intervention modules, which would be done by another consultant (a separate appointment). The consultant to be selected based on this Terms of Reference should provide substantial comments to design documents for students and principal/teacher training, pre-test results and proposals, and participate in team meetings in collaboration with the ROSE team and World Bank team.
- c. **Design the impact evaluation of socio-emotional skills interventions supported by the ROSE Project (considering all three modalities previously described: stand-alone, “embedded” and information) and lead the field implementation of the evaluation tools and data collection process.** The Consultant will be responsible for the design, implementation and analysis of the impact evaluation, particularly: (i) carrying out power calculations to determine adequate sample size; (ii) designing and implementing the randomization strategy; (iii) supporting the design of the data collection strategy at baseline and follow-up(s), which will be carried out by a separate consultant/firm hired under a separate assignment; (iv) advising in the development of a baseline and follow-up data collection instruments; (v) leading the implementation of the evaluation tools and data collection process, although the field work for data collection and tabulation will be performed by a consultant/firm hired under a separate assignment; (vi) leading the analysis and write-up of intermediate and final reports on results of the impact evaluation, likely based on a combination of administrative and primary data.

In completing these tasks, the Consultant shall pay special attention to a design that is gender - and ethnic-informed so as to ameliorate stereotype threats among girls and ethnic minorities.

IV. Deliverables

As a result of the services described above and beyond active support in the design and testing of the interventions, the Consultant shall deliver the following products:

- **Deliverable 1:** Design for impact evaluation of the socio-emotional skills interventions (stand-alone, “embedded” and information), including sampling, randomization, and evaluation design and strategy.
- **Deliverable 2:** Intermediate analytical report with baseline data analysis (administrative and primary) and write-up.
- **Deliverable 3:** Analytical report with baseline and follow up(s) data analysis (administrative and primary) and write-up of impact evaluation results.
- **Deliverable 4:** Inputs to the design and implementation of both a “stand-alone” and “embedded” socio-emotional skills pilot interventions.

The proposed assignment must be completed by September 2017. The Consultant is expected to produce a detailed action plan to carry out the proposed tasks within 2 weeks after the contract starting date.

The deliverables should be prepared and submitted in English.

V. Qualifications

The following qualifications are required for the proposed appointment:

- Graduate degree and professional background in Economics, Public Policy, Statistics or a related field, with internationally recognized expertise in quantitative methods for microdata analysis.
- Significant experience with the design and implementation of rigorous impact evaluation of social programs, through experimental and non-experimental methods.
- Experience in the design and evaluation of similar socio-emotional skills interventions, preferred.
- Proficiency in English.
- Ability to deliver under tight deadlines.
- Good interpersonal skills.
- Good oral and written communication skills.

VI. Other Relevant Terms

Period of the Assignment. The proposed assignment is planned for up to 60 days between December 2016 and November 2017.

Reporting Obligations. The Consultant shall report to the ROSE Project Director. All deliverables shall be submitted to the ROSE Project Director.

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 MNESR and World Bank in the course of the proposed assignment shall be confidential. The MNESR shall, solely and exclusively, own all rights to any work created in connection with this agreement, including all data, documents, information, copyrights, patents, trademarks, trade secrets or other proprietary rights. The Consultant is not allowed to post or publish (electronically or in print) any project-related information without the explicit permission of the MNESR.