

Terms of Reference

Project: Support for the Reform Office

Objective: Consultancy services for development and delivery the Digital Society Development Program in the framework of the implementation of the Digital Transformation Strategy of the Republic of Moldova 2023 - 2030

Period: June - September 2024

A. Background – Moldova’s ambition around the digital transformation

The Government of Moldova has an ambition to become a digital-first government and a government that supports its country in being, “the most competitive place to do business in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.” On 6 September 2023, the Government of Moldova adopted the [National Digital Transformation Strategy \(NDTS\)](#) to support this ambition by outlining a comprehensive strategy to increase the effectiveness of public governance, to enhance the welfare of citizens, and to increase the competitiveness of the country. All of these efforts also support Moldova’s broader ambitions of becoming an EU Member State by 2030.

The NDTS envisions a Moldova that has, “become an innovative and inclusive digital society with digital skills, an advanced digital infrastructure, a pro-digital governance and a business community that fully exploits digital opportunities.” It aims to achieve this vision by focusing on three (3) guiding principles:

1. Human development above technology.
2. Shared responsibility within the implementation of the strategy.
3. Compliance with European Union standards and regulations; implementation of international best practice.

The NDTS also lays out six (6) strategic objectives, each with outcome-oriented KPIs and high-level “sub-objectives” (sometimes called priority directions):

1. Developing a digital society
2. Developing a robust and competitive ICT sector
3. Building an innovative and resilient digital economy
4. Establishing an efficient, smart, and transparent digital state
5. Creating an accessible, secure, and inclusive digital environment
6. Strengthening Moldova's image as a digital nation

To achieve these objectives, three (3) programs have been identified to support further detailing the implementation activities to support the delivery of the NDTS:

- 1) **Digital Society Development Program**
- 2) ICT Sector and Digital Economy Development Program
- 3) Public Sector e-Transformation Program

During strategy implementation, developing and approving implementation plans will help translate strategic directions into specific activities and projects, while allowing the government to introduce necessary correctives and leverage various funding streams as they become available.

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At the same time, the implementation of the Strategy outlines various requirements that must be activated around governance and institutional arrangements to support delivery of the Strategy:

- 1) Balancing quick wins and strategic activities during strategy implementation.
- 2) Establishment of the National Digital Transformation Council (NDTC) that approves the implementation plans and main activities.
- 3) Creation of the Strategic Delivery Unit under MDED for implementation of key activities.
- 4) Reliance on agile delivery models.
- 5) Involving private sector companies as key implementation partners of the strategy.

B. Purpose of this Terms of Reference

The purpose of this Terms of Reference document is to solicit experts to support the development of the Digital Society Development Program – one of the three programs intended to support the detailing of the NDTs. The development of the **Digital Society Development Program** aligns with Objective no. 1 of the Strategy - develop a digital society able to reap the benefits of digital technologies and services.

This Program is expected to further detail the activities Government and its partners should pursue to assure widespread use of digital technologies and services in every aspect of life (social, economic, and political). This includes ensuring every citizen of the country should know of the digital technologies available, how to access to them and possess the ability to use them freely. By deep-diving into the building blocks of a digital society, it becomes clear that the primary dividing lines between those who have been able to adopt digital technologies in their lives, and those who have not, can be described using the five A's: access to affordable, quality Internet; availability of smart devices (possession/ownership); ability to use digital technologies (literacy and skills); awareness of digital content, services and technologies; and their adoption, or the appetite to use them (relevant content/interest).

Achievement of this general objective will be ensured through the following priority directions (see NDTs, p. 22-24).

Expected Results after accomplishing the objective: Completion of the Program and achievement of the objective is expected to help Moldova realize a future where technology empowers individuals, bridges societal gaps, and drives sustainable progress, by addressing several challenges identified:

Addressed challenges	Expected result / focus area
In Moldova, there's a significant gap in internet access and digital skills between urban and rural areas, as well as across different demographic and social groups.	The program should focus on reducing the gap and ensure equal opportunities in education, employment, and civic participation.
It's mandatory to have a workforce equipped with digital skills to effectively attract foreign investment, promote innovation, and stimulate economic growth.	The program should equip citizens with necessary skills for the digital economy.
The need to further improve digital government initiatives to boost efficiency, accessibility, and transparency in public services.	The program should encourage the use of digital tools to improve engagement with citizens.

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Digital platforms can provide new avenues for citizens to participate in decision-making processes and hold public officials accountable.	The program should empower citizens through digital literacy and online civic engagement tools.
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C. Scope of Work

C.1 Objective of the assignment

The objective of the assignment is providing consultancy expertise and contributions to the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization in elaborating and approving the **Digital Society Development Program** for the implementation of the NDTs.

The main objective of the Program is to build a thriving digital society by empowering citizens, transforming education, and fostering active civic engagement.

This ToR defines the tasks and requirements for services of a company or a team of individual experts to support MDED with the development of the Program.

C.2 Key tasks and activities

To reach the objectives above, the Consultants will perform following tasks:

- Review the NDTs to ensure a full understanding of the objective, priority directions, results, and indicators covered by the Program.
- Analyze the current state of digital literacy and technology use across various demographics (age, location, income, etc.).
- Map existing educational programs related to digital skills, identifying gaps and strengths in formal and informal learning opportunities.
- Evaluate the availability and affordability of internet access, computing devices, and relevant infrastructure nationwide.
- Analyze the indicators of success identified for the objective to understand current performance versus the intended targets for the indicators. Analyze existing policies and regulations impacting digital development, identifying potential obstacles and areas for improvement.
- Identify existing programs and initiatives in the Moldovan environment that may be contributing to increasing performance against the objective's indicators.
- Identify different benchmarks and/or case studies – particularly from the EU context- regarding data governance, digital skills, and citizen engagement in the digital sphere that could be applied in Moldova to support further development of the priority directions in the strategy and contribute to increasing performance against the objectives' indicators.
- Conduct a comparative analysis between Moldova's current situation and the identified benchmarks/case studies, highlighting potential areas for adaptation and implementation.

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- Based on the situation analysis, draft the program addressing identified needs and leveraging best practices.
- Document potential laws, regulations, and rules that may need to be changed to enable completion of the program.
- Document the current programs and initiatives along with any newly proposed programs and initiatives that can help drive performance against the objective's indicators to demonstrate how the proposed **Digital Society Development Program** intends to close the gap between the indicator targets and current performance. Quantify the potential costs and time required to carry out the legal and regulatory changes and programs/initiatives necessary to deliver the Program.

In completing these tasks and activities above, the contracted party is expected to provide a **Concept of the Program** and the **Program document**. (see Deliverables section for more information on deadlines).

The Concept Note should have the following structure:

- The name of the document;
- Type of public policy document;
- Addressed issue;
- Purpose of the document;
- Alignment with the National Development Strategy, National Development Plan, Medium-Term Budget Framework, etc.
- Timeframe for document development;
- Involved parties;

The final deliverable expected is the **Program document**, with the following structure:

1. Introduction (description of how the program will contribute to achieving the objective of the strategy, the proposed period for implementation, the parties involved in the development of the program, etc.);
2. Situation analysis (description of the problems in the field or subfield of activity and their causes, including the description of possible consequences in the absence of intervention to solve the problems and their impact on the main vulnerable groups affected, using quantitative and qualitative evidence);
3. General Objective of the Program, (it is highly recommended to use the NDTs General Objective No. 1: "Development of a digital society" as a general objective of the program);
4. Methodology and strategic approach used to identify solutions and actions aimed to achieve the objectives. The strategic concept is clearly articulated and describes the factors considered for identifying solutions and action plan. (**Optional**)
5. The action plan of the program (see the structure of the action plan below);
6. Implementation and reporting framework:
 - **Implementation Timeline:** Specify the period for realizing each action, including deadlines for completion.

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- **Responsible Institutions:** Identify the public authority or institution responsible for carrying out the planned actions, as well as other relevant parties and partners involved in program implementation.
- **Implementation Risks:** Describe anticipated risks and identify measures to mitigate or eliminate them.
- **Reporting Procedures:** Detail monitoring and evaluation methods, ensuring correlation with the reporting and monitoring framework established in the National Digital Transformation Strategy (NDTS).

The **action plan**, as a component part of the program, has the following structure:

1. Specific objectives (As stated in the NDTS, the specific focus of the general objective is defined by its 13 priority directions. Therefore, it is highly recommended to use the priority directions as the specific objectives of the program.);
 2. Actions (concrete measures to be carried out in the short and medium term to achieve the specific objectives) linked to the “specific objectives” and the success indicators for Strategic Objective 1 from the NDTS;
 3. Implementation costs (estimation of the financial and non-financial resources necessary for the implementation of each specific objective and action along with potential funding sources that could be utilized);
 4. Monitoring indicators (indicators for each planned action, with reference (current) and targeted (planned) values). These monitoring indicators – if not the same as the success indicators in the NDTS – should be also linked to one or more KPI for Objective 1 in the National Digital Transformation Strategy;
- The consultants will work closely with AGE, and MEDD in their work on the Program.

C.3 Deliverables and Deadlines

No.	Deliverable	Deadline / Timeframe
1.	The Concept of the Program	July 2024
2.	Concept approved/avis by SC	July 2024
3.	Draft Program with the Action plan	September 2024
4.	Public consultations and Consulted Program with the NCDT	October 2024

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5.	Final Draft Program, to be presented at the Government meeting	November, 2024
6.	PPTs and relevant materials for the NDTC	
7.	Participation in preparatory and follow-up meetings with MEDD, AGE and other relevant parties and follow-up	
8.	Specific sessions delivered offline with the NDTC	
9.	Develop and submit the invoices and a final report	

C.4 Timeframe

The assignment is planned to **commence on April and finish by the end of December 2024**. The exact commencement date and schedule of activities/work plan will be agreed at a later stage.

The assignment requires the services of **a team of experts** with the level of efforts of **up to 45 days each expert (total up to 90 days)**.

C.5 Management arrangements

The place of performance and delivery of the module sessions will be Chisinau.

D. Expertise and Experience

D.1 The consultant's profile

Expert 1 – Legal/Policy Expert and Overall Coordinator

Tasks of expert 1

- Coordination, organization and backstopping of assignment;
- Development and submission of the Concept and the Draft Program
- Organization and moderation of the NTDC meetings
- Participation in preparatory and follow-up meetings
- Quality assurance and reporting during the entire period of assignment;
- Overall responsibility for the advisory support and contributions to the final report (quality and deadlines).

Qualifications of expert 1

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- Master degree in public administration, business administration, economy, ICT, or other relevant fields
- At least 5 years of experience in ICT, public administration, advisory on digital transformation, and/or e-Governance and digitalization, preferably in Moldova.
- Extensive knowledge of public services delivery and digital transformation.
- Proven cooperation with public institutions and international organisations.
- Strong analytical and communication skills; Excellent drafting and presentation skills
- Language (2.1.2): Fluent in English.

Expert 2 – Education Expert

Tasks of expert 2

- Development and submission of the Concept and the Draft Program
- Organization of the NTDC meetings
- Participation in preparatory and follow-up meetings
- Advisory support and contributions to the final report (quality and deadlines).

Qualifications of expert 2

- Master degree in education, ICT, or other relevant fields
- At least 5 years of experience in ICT, public administration, advisory on educational system digitalization, and/or e-Governance and digitalization, preferably in Moldova.
- Extensive knowledge of public services delivery and digital transformation.
- Proven cooperation with public institutions and international organizations.
- Strong analytical and communication skills; Excellent drafting and presentation skills
- Language (2.1.2): Fluent in English.

D.3 Payments

Payments will be made based on activities performed and deliverables elaborated. These are to be presented and approved by Project Manager.

E. Other provisions

E.1 The main contact persons

Project Managers	IPIS
MEDD	Andrei Cusca Email: andrei.cusca@mded.gov.md

E.2. Attachments

National Digital Transformation Strategy of the Republic of Moldova 2023 - 2030