CCDG
CENTRE DE LA CEDEAO
POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT DU
GENRE

EGDC
ECOWAS GENDER
DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Terms of Reference

SELECTION OF AN INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANT

SELECTION OF AN INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANT FOR THE DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT, DEPLOYMENT AND OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM OF THE ECOWAS GENDER DEVELOPMENT CENTER.

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February 2025

Content

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 Presentation of the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre (EGDC)

The ECOWAS Gender Development Centre (EGDC) is a specialized institution within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) mandated to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in the region. Its mandate is firmly anchored in the promotion and integration of gender perspectives in all ECOWAS policies, programmes and initiatives. By actively collaborating with Member States, civil society organisations, development partners and other stakeholders, EGDC strives to translate international, continental and regional commitments into concrete and measurable results. Through evidence-based advocacy, capacity building and strategic direction, EGDC seeks to address persistent gender gaps, ensure the full participation of women in economic, social and political spheres, and support the region's efforts to achieve sustainable and inclusive development.

1.2 Objectives of the digital ecosystem project

As part of its vision for greater gender equality, the EGDC is undertaking the development of a comprehensive digital ecosystem. The main objectives of this initiative are to enhance public and stakeholder access to reliable and up-to-date information on gender issues, enable transparent collaboration among Member States, and facilitate knowledge exchange with partners across the region. Central to this effort is the integration of key gender data and indicators from the ECOWAS Gender Observatory (ECOGO) to inform policymaking and promote data-driven decision-making. By creating a robust and user-friendly online platform, the EGDC aims not only to improve transparency and communication, but also to strengthen its institutional visibility and credibility at the regional and international levels.

1.3 Scope and limits of the project

This digital ecosystem project involves the provision of several interdependent elements by the hired Individual Consultant. These include:

- Design and develop a fully functional multilingual website that aligns with ECOWAS standards and the identity of the EGDC.
- Configuring a content management system (CMS) to provide flexible and scalable content administration.
- Integrate a web application firewall (WAF) and other security measures to protect the platform from cyber threats.
- Establish a secure, cloud-based collaborative workspace that enables EGDC staff, national focal points and authorized partners to co-create, share and efficiently manage documents and multimedia resources.
- Seamlessly integrate ECOGO data streams to present gender-related indicators, trends and analysis in an accessible and visually appealing way.

- Deploy an artificial intelligence (AI) system to assist in content analysis, synthesis and knowledge improvement for decision makers.

It is important to note that the Consultant's responsibilities will be limited to the technical implementation, integration and training on the use of the system. No organizational restructuring of EGDC operations, no production of original content, nor any substantial editorial services are foreseen. Instead, the company will provide the tools and technical support necessary for EGDC staff and Member States to effectively manage and use the newly developed ecosystem. By clearly delineating these boundaries, the project ensures a focused, efficient and sustainable implementation.

2. COMPONENTS OF THE DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM

2.1 EGDC website

The Individual Consultant will design, develop and launch a multilingual, user-friendly and fully responsive website for the EGDC. This platform will serve as the institution's central digital presence, showcasing its mandate, activities and impact. The site will present institutional information, thematic resources, news, events, opportunities (such as vacancies and calls for proposals) and multimedia content in an organized and easily navigable manner. In order to facilitate efficient content management and ensure clear operational workflows, user roles will be established, including for administrators, editors, contributors and general visitors. The Individual Consultant must ensure that the website complies with WCAG accessibility standards, enabling inclusive access for all users, regardless of device or ability.

2.2 Content Management System (CMS)

A robust and scalable CMS will be implemented to streamline content publishing, editing, and translation. The selected CMS must support multilingual operations, enabling EGDC to communicate effectively with diverse audiences across the ECOWAS region. Key features include a flexible page builder for advanced layouts, plugins for interactive forms and surveys, document management tools to organize downloadable files, and galleries for images, videos, and infographics. The CMS structure should support intuitive content updates, routine maintenance, and easy integration with future platform enhancements.

2.3 Security Dashboard / Web Application Firewall (WAF)

To meet the highest cybersecurity standards, the consulting firm will configure a web application firewall and implement a comprehensive security dashboard. These measures will protect the ecosystem from common threats such as SQL injections, cross-site scripting (XSS), spam, and malicious bots. The WAF must offer real-time monitoring, threat detection, alerting capabilities, and detailed logging of suspicious activities. The solution must comply with all data protection regulations and cybersecurity best practices to ensure the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of EGDC's digital environment.

2.4 Cloud Collaborative Workspace

A secure, cloud-based collaborative workspace will be established to facilitate seamless internal and regional cooperation. This workspace will allow EGDC staff, Member State gender focal points and approved partners to share documents, co-edit files in real time, manage version history and engage in instant messaging and video conferencing. Project management features, such as task assignment, calendars and shared directories, will support effective teamwork and improve project oversight. Strong authentication methods, encryption at rest and in transit, and granular authorization settings help protect sensitive content and ensure compliance with data protection requirements.

2.5 Integration into the ECOWAS Gender Observatory (ECOGO)

The consultant will integrate ECOGO data into the EGDC website, establishing a direct connection with ECOGO APIs or data feeds. This integration will enable the automatic retrieval and display of regularly updated gender indicators, metrics and statistical analyses. User-friendly visualizations – such as graphs, interactive maps and sortable tables – will make complex datasets more understandable and actionable for policymakers, researchers and the public. To maintain uninterrupted service, caching strategies and fallback modes should be implemented to handle cases where ECOGO data are temporarily unavailable, to ensure constant access to essential information.

2.6 Artificial Intelligence (AI) System

An AI system will be deployed, either locally on secure servers or in a compliant cloud environment, to enhance the platform's analytical capabilities. This AI solution will support tasks such as summarizing long reports, extracting key insights from large volumes of data, interpreting visual content (such as images and graphs), and automating routine administrative actions. By leveraging the insights provided by AI, the EGDC and its stakeholders can make more informed decisions and respond quickly to emerging trends. All data processed by AI must remain confidential and secure, in full compliance with ECOWAS data protection standards and all relevant legal frameworks.

3. INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE AND STRUCTURE OF WEBSITE CONTENT

3.1 Navigation and menu hierarchy

A well-structured and intuitive navigation system will guide users seamlessly through the website and help them find the information they need. The Individual Consultant will propose a menu hierarchy organized around five main sections:

- **Our work:** Presentation of the thematic areas, current programs and strategic initiatives of the EGDC.

- **Resources/Impact:** Provide direct access to publications, research findings, briefing notes and multimedia materials that present results and good practices.
- **Events & News:** List of upcoming workshops, conferences, webinars and trainings, as well as the latest announcements and press releases.
- **Opportunities:** Highlighting job offers, internships, consultations, scholarships and public procurement notices.
- **About us:** Presentation of the mandate, mission, structure, partnerships and contact details of the EGDC.

This structure will be complemented by breadcrumbs and internal cross-links, so users always know where they are and how to go back. The design will be responsive to accommodate different screen sizes and devices, improving overall usability and user satisfaction.

3.2 Content Types and Formats

The website will offer a wide range of content formats to meet the diverse interests of its target audiences. Key content types include policy documents, research reports, thematic articles, videos, photo galleries, event calendars and downloadable resources such as PDFs or spreadsheets. Job vacancies, calls for proposals and public procurement notices will be clearly displayed and easily sorted by date or category.

To improve discoverability and user experience, the consultant will implement robust taxonomy features, including categories, tags, and filters. These tools will allow visitors to quickly locate relevant documents, thematic resources, or event information based on keywords, topics, or specific parameters such as publication date or location.

3.3 Branding and accessibility

The Individual Consultant will ensure that the visual elements of the website reflect the ECOWAS and EGDC brand identities, incorporating approved colour schemes, logos and typography. The overall aesthetic should reflect professionalism, credibility and a sense of regional cohesion. Design decisions will prioritise clarity and consistency, ensuring that brand elements do not detract from the accessibility or readability of the content.

Compliance with WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standards is mandatory. This includes providing alternative text descriptions for images, ensuring sufficient contrast between text and background, and facilitating keyboard navigation for users with motor disabilities. Adjustable font sizes, subtitles for multimedia content, and compatibility with screen readers will further enhance the platform's inclusivity, ensuring that all users – regardless of their abilities or devices – can fully enjoy the website's offerings.

4. SGC FEATURES AND PLUGINS

4.1 Multilingual Support

To address the linguistic diversity of the ECOWAS region, a dedicated multilingual plugin will be integrated into the CMS. This solution allows for the efficient creation, management and synchronization of content in multiple languages, ensuring that updates and revisions remain consistent across all language versions. A user-friendly language selector will allow visitors to easily select their preferred language, making the platform more accessible and inclusive. By streamlining the translation workflow, the plugin will help maintain uniform terminology, reduce errors and foster effective communication across the region.

4.2 User Interaction and Forms

Engagement with stakeholders and the public is crucial to the EGDC's mission. The consultant will install a reliable form builder plugin to create and manage various forms, including contact requests, event registrations, surveys, and application submissions. These forms will be configured with anti-spam measures and data encryption to protect sensitive user information. Integration with a secure messaging or email service will ensure that form submissions are quickly and reliably transmitted to the appropriate personnel, improving the responsiveness and transparency of user interactions.

4.3 Editing and layout tools

To facilitate simple, non-technical content updates, the content management system will feature a visual page builder. This tool will allow administrators and editors to design layouts, insert media, and organize content blocks without having to write code. Additionally, Advanced Custom Fields (ACFs) will be used to create structured, metadata-rich content types. This approach ensures consistent formatting, simplifies content entry, and improves the flexibility and scalability of the website over time.

4.4 Media Management

The platform will integrate media gallery and lightbox plugins to showcase images, videos, and infographics in an engaging and user-friendly way. By organizing media assets into categories, tags, and collections, staff can efficiently locate, update, and repurpose visual content as needed. Performance improvements, such as image compression, responsive sizing, and lazy loading, will reduce page load times and improve the overall user experience, especially for users on slower networks or mobile devices.

4.5 Document management

A dedicated document management plugin will streamline the organization, retrieval, and distribution of reports, publications, and policy documents. The plugin will offer features such as category-based file repositories, version control to manage document updates, and role-based access permissions to protect sensitive documents. Users can quickly find and download relevant files, while administrators provide centralized monitoring of document lifecycles and access rights, ensuring efficient and secure content handling across the ecosystem.

5. SECURITY AND ADVANCED PROTECTION

5.1 Threat Prevention

The consulting firm will implement a comprehensive set of security measures to protect EGDC's digital ecosystem from common cyber threats. A Web Application Firewall (WAF) will be configured with custom rules to detect and block malicious activities, including SQL injections, cross-site scripting (XSS), and automated bot traffic. All connections will be secured via HTTPS, with strict enforcement of strong password policies for user accounts. The platform will also benefit from regular security patches, timely plugin and CMS updates, and adherence to industry best practices to maintain a resilient and secure environment.

5.2 Monitoring and alerting

To ensure proactive defense, the system will integrate real-time threat detection and automated response mechanisms. Suspicious IP addresses will be automatically banned, while DNS blacklists and intrusion detection systems will help identify known sources of malicious traffic. Comprehensive logs will collect detailed information on all intrusion attempts, system events, and user actions, providing a valuable resource for incident response and forensic analysis. These logs will contribute to the continuous improvement of the security posture, allowing administrators to refine rules and remediate emerging vulnerabilities.

5.3 Secure Administration and Recovery

Maintaining operational integrity and business continuity is a top priority. The consulting firm will provide secure administration tools to securely change configurations, regularly verify the integrity of core files, and perform automated backups of critical data and system configurations. In the event of a failure or security breach, a well-documented disaster recovery plan—including offsite backups and rigorously tested restoration procedures—will ensure rapid and effective system recovery. These measures will minimize downtime, protect the institution's reputation, and maintain the trust of stakeholders and end users.

6. ONLINE COLLABORATIVE WORKSPACE

6.1 Collaboration Features

The Individual Consultant will implement a secure, cloud-based collaborative workspace tailored to EGDC's business needs. This workspace will support a variety of productivity-enhancing features, including real-time document co-editing, version control to track changes and roll back to previous iterations, and integrated messaging for quick, direct communication between team members and partners. Video conferencing capabilities and shared calendars streamline the coordination of virtual meetings, trainings, and project schedules. Seamless integration with commonly used office productivity tools will enable staff and focal points to

work efficiently in familiar environments while ensuring consistent updates and easy file sharing.

6.2 Access controls and authorizations

Robust security measures will be implemented to protect sensitive information exchanged within the collaborative workspace. Granular role-based permissions will ensure that users only access resources that are essential to their tasks, minimizing the risks associated with unauthorized viewing or editing. Multi-factor authentication (MFA) will strengthen login processes, while end-to-end encryption and encrypted data storage protect files at rest and in transit. Compliance with applicable data protection regulations, as well as comprehensive audit trails documenting user activities, will promote accountability, compliance, and the ability to respond quickly to potential security incidents.

6.3 Website and AI Integration

The collaborative workspace will not operate in isolation. Specific documents approved for public release can be easily published on the EGDC website, ensuring a rapid transition from internal editing to external release. In addition, secure integration with the AI system will allow authorized users to provide selected datasets or internal documents for advanced analysis, automated summaries, and idea generation. Strict data access controls will regulate the scope of the AI, ensuring that only approved data is analyzed and that sensitive or confidential documents remain protected. This approach uses the collaborative platform as a strategic asset, improving both operational workflows and the quality of information made available to the public.

7. INTEGRATION INTO THE GENDER OBSERVATORY (ECOGO)

7.1 Data Recovery and API

The consultant will establish a secure and reliable connection with the ECOWAS Gender Observatory (ECOGO) through well-documented APIs. This involves implementing secure authentication methods to ensure authorized access to data and protect the confidentiality of transmitted information. The system will efficiently handle various data formats – such as JSON or XML – while preserving important metadata, version identifiers and contextual details. By adhering to standardized data exchange protocols, the platform can reliably consume, store and update ECOGO's gender-related indicators, statistics, reports and other datasets.

7.2 Automated Updates and Synchronization

To keep information current and relevant, the consultant will set up automated synchronization processes at predefined intervals. These scheduled tasks will retrieve the latest data from ECOGO and refresh the displayed metrics and visualizations. Caching mechanisms will ensure fast response times and mitigate the impact of network latency or temporary ECOGO

downtime. In cases where ECOGO data is temporarily unavailable, the system will switch to a fallback mode, displaying the most recent cached data with a notification to users, thereby maintaining service continuity and information accessibility.

7.3 Visualization and analysis

The integrated data will be transformed into user-friendly and interactive visualizations – including sortable charts, graphs, maps and tables – directly embedded on the EGDC website. These dynamic displays will help policymakers, researchers and stakeholders quickly understand trends, comparisons and regional distributions of gender indicators. In addition, the platform's artificial intelligence capabilities will provide deeper insights by summarizing reports, highlighting trends and identifying key areas for progress or challenges. By combining ECOGO's raw data with intuitive visualizations and AI-powered interpretation, the digital ecosystem will strengthen evidence-based decision-making and support continued work towards gender equality in the ECOWAS region.

8. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM

8.1 Model Capabilities and Functions

The consultancy will deploy an advanced AI model capable of handling a wide range of text-based analytical tasks. These include summarising long reports, extracting key insights from large datasets, identifying patterns in qualitative and quantitative information and providing multilingual support tailored to the ECOWAS region. The AI model must also be configurable to understand regional contexts, terminologies and policy frameworks, to ensure that its outputs are both accurate and relevant to the EGDC's operating environment. By delivering these capabilities, the AI system will enable EGDC staff and stakeholders to quickly make sense of complex information, reducing manual workloads and improving the quality of decision-making.

8.2 Internal use cases

The integrated AI system will streamline a range of internal processes. It can support reporting by synthesizing raw data, comparing regional indicators, and providing coherent summaries. Linked to ECOGO's datasets, AI can highlight gender-related trends, identify areas for improvement or concern, and provide recommendations for future interventions. In the EGDC's daily operations, AI will summarize email threads, highlight key action points in meeting notes, and support administrative tasks, such as creating templates, developing agendas, or proposing standardized responses to routine inquiries. Together, these applications save staff time, improve operational efficiency, and enable them to make more strategic and informed decisions.

8.3 Privacy and Compliance

All AI-related processing will take place in a secure and controlled environment, either on authorized local servers or within a compliant and regionally hosted cloud infrastructure. Strict data protection measures, including encryption, role-based access controls and rigorous audit

logging, will protect sensitive data. The Consultant must ensure full compliance with applicable data protection regulations, ECOWAS standards and EGDC's internal data governance policies. This includes respecting data sovereignty, preventing unauthorized data extraction or sharing and maintaining the confidentiality of documents and analyses processed by AI. Such safeguards will maintain stakeholder trust and support the responsible and ethical use of AI within the EGDC digital ecosystem.

9. TECHNICAL AND PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

9.1 Accommodation and infrastructure

The consultancy will provide a scalable, fault-tolerant, cloud-based infrastructure designed to ensure that the EGDC's digital ecosystem remains accessible, reliable and secure under varying load conditions. High availability configurations, such as redundant servers, database replication and failover mechanisms, will minimise downtime and mitigate the risk of single points of failure. In order to efficiently deliver content to diverse users across the ECOWAS region, a Content Delivery Network (CDN) will be integrated, ensuring low latency and consistent page load times even during peak periods. Load balancing will ensure that requests are distributed equally across servers, optimising overall performance and user experience.

9.2 Performance Optimization

Achieving and maintaining optimal site performance is critical to user satisfaction and engagement. The consultant will implement several performance improvement strategies, including server-side and browser-side caching to speed up page delivery, script and stylesheet minification to reduce file sizes, and image optimization techniques such as compression, responsive sizing, and lazy loading. Load and stress testing will be conducted at regular intervals to assess system behavior under normal and extreme conditions, to identify potential bottlenecks before they impact users. Performance metrics such as response times, throughput, and resource utilization will be continuously monitored, allowing for proactive tuning and timely adjustments.

9.3 Maintenance and Updates

A dedicated test environment will be set up to securely test updates, new features, and security fixes before applying them to the live system. This approach ensures that changes are thoroughly checked for compatibility, stability, and performance impact, avoiding disruptive downtime or unintended consequences. The consulting firm will regularly update the CMS, its plugins, WAF configuration, Cloud-Based Workspace Hub components, and AI model to take advantage of the latest enhancements, fix bugs, and address new security vulnerabilities. By adhering to a structured maintenance schedule ( ) and applying patches promptly, the platform will remain robust, efficient, and well-protected against evolving threats over the long term.

10. TESTING, ACCEPTANCE AND LAUNCH

10.1 Functional tests

Before the digital ecosystem goes live, the Individual Consultant will conduct extensive functional testing to ensure that each component works as expected. Every feature – from site navigation, multilingual content display and form submission to ECOGO data retrieval, AI-generated summaries and security protocols – will be assessed against the agreed terms of reference. This process confirms that all features are present, working properly and ready for real-world use. Any anomalies or bugs discovered will be documented, prioritised and resolved before moving on to the next testing phase.

10.2 Performance and security testing

Beyond confirming functionality, it is essential to validate the resiliency and security of the platform under various conditions. Load testing will simulate high traffic scenarios to ensure that the system remains responsive, stable, and efficient, even during peak usage. At the same time, penetration testing and vulnerability assessments will identify potential security vulnerabilities, allowing the consultant to strengthen defenses against cyber threats. Proactively addressing these findings helps maintain the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of the platform throughout its lifetime.

10.3 User Acceptance Testing (UAT)

Involving EGDC staff, gender focal points, and other stakeholders in user acceptance testing ensures that the solution aligns with real-world workflows and user expectations. Participants will navigate the platform's features, interact with content, test collaboration tools, and assess the clarity of data visualizations. Their feedback on usability, relevance, and accessibility will guide the final round of improvements. By taking this feedback into account and making necessary adjustments, the consultant can obtain formal acceptance from EGDC, meaning the platform is ready to be launched to the public.

10.4 Commissioning process

The final stage of deployment involves meticulous preparation and clear communication. The consultant will perform full backups, verify DNS configurations, and conduct a controlled launch to minimize downtime or unexpected issues. Stakeholders and end users will be informed of the go-live schedule, so they can anticipate and prepare for the platform's availability. Immediately after launch, the consultant will provide initial support, closely monitor site performance, and verify operational stability. This diligence ensures a smooth transition from development to production, fostering confidence in the new digital ecosystem.

11. TRAINING, DOCUMENTATION AND SUPPORT

11.1 Training sessions

The consulting firm will deliver targeted training sessions, either on-site or virtually, to equip different user groups with the skills they need to effectively manage and use the new digital ecosystem. Administrators will learn how to oversee the CMS, control access permissions, and monitor system performance. Editors and contributors will be trained on how to create, update, and organize multilingual content. WAF operators will understand how to review security logs, respond to alerts, and adjust firewall rules. Staff and focal points will learn how to leverage the cloud-based collaborative workspace, co-edit documents, manage projects, and host virtual meetings. In addition, dedicated sessions will focus on integrating AI-driven analytics into daily workflows, demonstrating how to summarize reports, extract insights from ECOGO data, and streamline administrative tasks. Practical exercises and real-world examples will reinforce learning, ensuring participants gain confidence and retain the knowledge required for ongoing operations.

11.2 Documentation and knowledge transfer

To support the effective and sustainable use of the new platform, the Individual Consultant will produce comprehensive documentation tailored to different user roles. This includes user-friendly manuals detailing routine tasks, administration guides covering system configuration and advanced features, and API documentation explaining data endpoints and integration methods. FAQs and troubleshooting references will provide quick guidance on common issues, reducing reliance on external support. By ensuring that EGDC staff can consult clear and accessible documents, the documentation will promote self-sufficiency, encourage continuous improvement, and minimize downtime due to uncertainty or misconfiguration.

11.3 Ongoing Support and Maintenance

Following the launch and training phase, the Consultant will provide ongoing support services to resolve technical issues, assist with adjustments, and contribute to the implementation of system enhancements. A dedicated help desk or ticketing system will be established, supported by Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to ensure response times and escalation procedures. The Individual Consultant will periodically review the platform's performance, security posture, and evolving needs, proposing enhancements and capacity building sessions as needed. This proactive approach ensures that EGDC's digital ecosystem remains resilient, secure, and fully aligned with its business objectives, even as technologies advance and the organization's needs evolve over time.

12. DURATION, DELIVERABLES AND BUDGET

12.1 Duration of the project

The Individual Consultant **presents** a complete project schedule **with a total duration of three (03) months** , covering all main phases: needs analysis, design and development, system integration, testing, training and final launch. This schedule is strictly **aligned** with the EGDC implementation priorities.

Project Phases over 3 months (12 weeks)

1. **Phase 1 (Weeks 1-3) – Analysis and Design**
    - **Analysis of needs** and validation of functional and technical specifications.
    - **Work organization** (distribution of tasks, definition of milestones).
    - **Preliminary design** of the platform, selection of technologies and production of models.
2. **Phase 2 (Weeks 4 to 8) – Development and Integration**
    - **Development of key features** (website, CMS, WAF, collaborative space, AI integrations).
    - **Setting up security configurations** and web application firewall.
    - **Integration of ECOGO data** and verification of technical and functional conformity.
    - **Regular monitoring** and progress reports to ensure deadlines are met.
3. **Phase 3 (Weeks 9-12) – Testing, Training and Launch**
    - **Comprehensive testing** (functional, performance and security).
    - **User training** (administrators, contributors, EGDC staff).
    - **Final launch** : putting into production, validation of the stability and availability of the system.
    - **Operational transition** : platform deployment, initial monitoring and minor corrections if necessary.

This approach guarantees **on-time delivery** , minimises disruption and ensures **effective takeover** of the solution by the EGDC and its stakeholders.

12.2 Main expected results

At the end of the assignment, the Individual Consultant will deliver a fully functional and secure digital ecosystem. The main results are as follows:

- **Website:** A multilingual, user-friendly and accessible site, with intuitive navigation, responsive design and integrated multimedia resources.

- **Security and WAF:** A web application firewall configured to mitigate threats, combined with real-time monitoring and logging tools.
- **Cloud Collaborative Workspace:** A fully operational platform enabling co-editing, project management, secure file sharing, and integrated communication tools.
- **ECOGO Integration:** Seamless retrieval of data from the ECOWAS Gender Observatory, with automated updates, caching and fallback modes.
- **AI System:** An operational AI engine capable of analyzing, summarizing, and providing data-driven insights to support decision-making and workflow optimization.
- **Documentation and Training Materials:** Comprehensive manuals, guides, FAQs and recorded sessions that enable EGDC staff to operate, maintain and adapt the system independently.
- **Test Reports and Production Ready Environment:** Proof of successful functional, performance and security testing, as well as a stable production environment ready for public access.

12.3 Budget allocation

The Individual Consultant will present a transparent and detailed budget of the costs associated with each component and phase of the project. This budget includes:

- **Development and Integration:** Expenses for CMS configuration, WAF installation, cloud-based workspace deployment, AI integration and ECOGO data incorporation.
- **Hosting and Infrastructure:** Costs for cloud hosting, CDN services, load balancing, backups, and security certificates.
- **Third-party licenses and services:** Fees for premium plugins, professional themes, use of AI models or advanced visualization tools.
- **Training and documentation:** Costs related to the creation and organization of training sessions, the production of user manuals and the carrying out of knowledge transfer activities.
- **Maintenance and Support:** Expected expenses for the mandatory six-month support period, covering bug fixes, updates, performance monitoring and potential system enhancements.
- **Contingencies and recurring expenses:** Provisions for unexpected developments, ongoing subscriptions or renewal fees to ensure the long-term viability and adaptability of the platform.

This clear budget structure will allow the EGDC to assess financial feasibility, compare costs to available resources and plan future extensions or improvements in a predictable and strategic manner.

13. SELECTION CRITERIA FOR THE INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANT

13.1 General qualifications of the Individual Consultant

The consultant must have the following profile:

- Hold a Master degree or equivalent in the field of communication, journalism, human development, gender issues, sociology or development science, information and communication technologies (ICT), the web and/or any other field related to ICT and web databases; etc.
- At least ten (10) years' experience in communication, journalism, regional development and gender, including at least three (3) years at regional level, particularly in West Africa or internationally;
- At least five (5) years' experience in designing communication strategies and plans;
- At least five (5) years' experience in writing reports, articles and developing web content and social media;
- At least seven (7) years' professional experience in IT development, website development and computer graphics design;
- Have produced several dynamic websites;
- At least three (3) references (institutional website development) within the last five (5) years in the region (provide copies of completion certificates or contracts). Development assignments with the Drupal CMS are an asset;
- Sound knowledge of application/website security, search engine optimization, and legal compliance, particularly in terms of personal data protection;
- Perfect written and spoken command of one of the ECOWAS languages (French, English or Portuguese) and knowledge of the 2 other languages;
- Excellent computer skills (MS Office: Word, Excel, Power Point);
- Good knowledge of ECOWAS, its member states and partners.

13.2 Experience and technical expertise of the Individual Consultant

The Individual Consultant must have a proven track record in developing large-scale, institutional-focused digital platforms. This includes experience in implementing robust Content Management Systems (CMS) capable of handling multilingual content, complex navigation, and large document libraries. The Individual Consultant must also demonstrate solid experience in configuring and operating Web Application Firewalls (WAFs) or equivalent security solutions to ensure comprehensive protection against cyber threats. In addition, the selected Individual Consultant must have verifiable expertise in deploying cloud-based collaborative workspace platforms and integrating advanced artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities for content analytics, data-driven insights, and automation of administrative tasks. Familiarity with African regional contexts and multilingual settings is essential – candidates

should demonstrate sensitivity to linguistic diversity, regional frameworks and cross-border cooperation.

13.3 References

In order to assess the capability and reliability of the Individual Consultant, the candidate must provide a substantial portfolio of references. Ideally, this portfolio should include between 17 and 50 detailed references from projects comparable in scale, scope and complexity. These references should highlight the Consultant's experience working with regional organizations, international agencies, government bodies, NGOs or other high-level institutions. Each reference should clearly state the project objectives, the specific contributions of the Individual Consultant, the technologies and methodologies employed and the measurable results achieved. Testimonials from proven clients or contact information for reference checks will enhance credibility and assist the EGDC in assessing the performance of the Individual Consultant.

13.4 Innovation, sustainability and long-term support

Beyond technical skills, the selected Individual Consultant must demonstrate a forward-looking approach to solution design and service delivery. Innovative solutions that anticipate future trends, embrace emerging technologies, and enable long-term scalability are highly valued. The Individual Consultant must be committed to sustainable development practices, ensuring that the digital ecosystem remains adaptable, secure, and performing over time. This includes providing a defined roadmap for ongoing maintenance, timely updates, and proactive enhancements that keep pace with technological advancements and evolving EGDC requirements. The ability to build lasting partnerships—supporting EGDC's growth, providing training as needed, and remaining responsive to changing strategic objectives—is a key differentiator in the selection process.

13.5 Language requirements

Fluency in one of the three ECOWAS working languages (English, French, Portuguese) is required. Good linguistic knowledge (written and oral) of a second working language of the Commission would be an asset.

13.6 Candidate's application file

It will consist of :

- A letter of expression of interest, including a deadline for availability;
- A recent CV detailing professional experience and similar assignments;
- Three professional references (full names, functions, e-mail and telephone contacts);
- Certified copy of highest diploma;
- Copies of work or service certificates listed in the curriculum vitae;
- A detailed methodology and work plan for carrying out the assignment.

NB: Incomplete applications will be rejected.

13.7 Dossier de candidatures requis du candidat

Applications must be received no later than **February 24, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. GMT**, by submitting physical copies or by e-mail to the following addresses:

Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA) Procurement Department SICAP Complex, Point E, 1st Floor, Building A Av. Cheikh Anta Diop x Canal IV, Dakar, Senegal Tel: +221 33 859 18 18. (In a sealed envelope marked "[SCI012] Selection of an individual consultant, design, development, deployment and operationalization of the digital ecosystem of the ECOWAS Gender Development Center").

Email: **procurement.ccdg@giaba.org** Subject: **"[SCI012] Selection of an individual consultant, EGDC's Digital Ecosystem".**

NB: Applications which do not bear the words [SCI012] Selection of an individual consultant, CCDG Digital Ecosystem » in the subject line will not be considered.

13.8 Selection method

The consultant will be selected according to the qualification-based selection method as defined in the ECOWAS Public Procurement Code.

The consultant with the highest score will be invited to submit a financial proposal for negotiation.

The EGDC reserves the right not to respond to this expression of interest.