**Expression of Interest (EoI)**

**Fostering the growth of the Bogura Light Engineering sector through harnessing the power of digital platforms**

# **Background**

## **1.1 Introduction**

PRABRIDDHI is a Local Economic Development (LED) project, funded by the Government of Bangladesh and Switzerland, and co-implemented by the Local Government Division (LGD) and Swisscontact. The pilot phase of PRABRIDDHI came to a successful end by August 2020. Phase 1 of the project started in January 2021 for a period of four years and focuses on further development of the LED approach in participating municipalities, capacity building of stakeholders and facilitators of LED and an anchoring of the approach on national level. Throughout the phase, the project will be implemented in seven municipalities. **Shibganj, Jashore, Bogura,** **Bhairab, Dinajpur and Kushtia** are the six municipalities where the project has been operating. In 2024, PRABRIDDHI will expand its operations in **Cox’s Bazar** municipality.

## **1.2 Approach**

The LED program’s aim is to create a Business Enabling Environment and support better services for key actors by the municipalities and key stakeholders. A “territorial change management initiative” will be induced to foster Local Economic Development. The program supports the municipalities and local businesses to create a common platform and processes for identifying the key blockages for business growth which impacts wealth generation and employment creation. At this moment, multiple projects, and investments (financed by GOB as well as Development partners) are focusing on the evolvement of municipalities and to improve the infrastructure at municipal level. The LED program complements these investments by utilizing resources, both physical and administrative, to foster business growth. PRABRIDDHI supports municipalities and local business associations to identify key activities for economic growth while synergies are made with other initiatives of the government or development partners. The program also supports private companies and businesses through partnerships to reduce the risks associated in piloting new business and growth strategies that create economic opportunities for the poor.

# **Context**

Bogura is the largest municipality of Bangladesh which covers an area of 70 square kilometers and houses about 1 million residents. It is a significant business hub in the northern region. The Light Engineering (LE) sector is a crucial contributor to Bogura's economy, with approximately 800 workshops, including 80 foundries, 700 small to medium workshops, and 20 mechanical and repair workshops. These workshops produce 2,000 - 3,000 types of products annually, generating over Tk 5 billion. The sector fulfills around 90% of Bangladesh's demand for agricultural machinery and spare parts, employing around 100,000 people, with 5 to 10% being women. [[1]](#footnote-2)Following a Rapid Economic Appraisal (REA) process conducted by PRABRIDDHI in 2022 with the public and private sector stakeholders in Bogura, it was discovered that the light engineering sector of Bogura would thrive massively if provided support with digitization, improving production process, driving innovation to the sector, systematic network linkages, and quality assurance. In this connection, to support the development of the light engineering sector and enhance the competitiveness and growth of the sector, PRABRIDDHI signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) in Bogura in 2023 with the Bangladesh Agricultural Machinery Merchant Association (BAMMA), the Bangladesh Engineering Industry Owners Association (BEIOA), and the Foundry Owners Association (FOA).

The following major constraints were identified in terms of marketing and sales upon discussion and participatory analysis with the entrepreneurs of the Bogura LE sector value chain:

1. In the LE sector of Bogura, word-of-mouth publicity, personal connections, referral networks, and existing relationships are the primary means of attracting new clients and retaining current ones. This constrains the growth of the clientele and, consequently, the potential for business expansion.
2. The absence of marketing initiatives by the LE workshops results in a lack of promotion and branding. When compared to the size of each workshop, traditional marketing methods and resources like newspaper and magazine advertisements and promotions are too expensive and not feasible.
3. The industry lacks marketing and promotional efforts, which contributes to the lack of prominence of branding. Additionally, most workshops sell their products under the names of large corporations, raising questions about the industry's credibility.

# **Objectives**

We are seeking expressions of interest from reputable organazations interested in developing, owning, and promoting an e-commerce platform dedicated to showcasing and selling light engineering products from the Bogura region of Bangladesh. The objective is to establish a robust online marketplace that promotes Bogura's light engineering sector, enhances market access, and drives sales growth.

The specific objectives are as follows:

* To develop a user-friendly e-commerce platform tailored to the needs of Bogura's light engineering sector.
* To own and manage the platform, including maintenance, updates, and customer support.
* To implement effective marketing and promotional strategies to drive traffic, increase product visibility, and facilitate sales.
* To foster economic growth and sustainability for Bogura's light engineering industry.

# **Scope of Work**

The selected firm will be responsible for:

* Designing and developing a fully functional e-commerce platform optimized for showcasing light engineering products.
* Implementing robust security features to ensure safe and secure transactions for buyers and sellers.
* Integrating payment gateways and logistics solutions to facilitate seamless transactions and order fulfillment.
* Owning and managing the platform, including ongoing maintenance, updates, and technical support.
* Developing and implementing marketing and promotional campaigns to drive traffic and sales.
* Monitoring platform performance, analyzing user data, and optimizing strategies for maximum effectiveness.

The prospective organization/company should also develop a business model addressing the following elements:

* Detailed description of the revenue generation strategy, cost structure, and sustainability plan for the proposed E-commerce platform.
* Realistic forecasts of financial returns, considering the specific challenges and growth potential of the Bogura LE sector.
* Strategies to sustainably operate and grow the platform, acknowledging the slow-moving nature of the sector.

PRABRIDDHI, the local associations of LE Sector, and the selected organization will jointly develop the implementation strategy and the action plan for the initiative to be detailed in Terms of Reference (ToR), where the business model should come from the potential partner organization.

# **Eligibility Criteria:**

Firms interested in submitting expressions of interest must meet the following eligibility criteria:

* Demonstrated experience and expertise in e-commerce platform development, ownership, and promotion.
* Technical capabilities and resources necessary for platform development, maintenance, and marketing.
* A proven track record of successful projects in similar initiatives.
* Strong presence and working experience in Bogura region
* Financial stability and ability to manage the costs associated with platform development, ownership, and promotion.

# **Submission Process:**

Interested firms are invited to submit their expressions of interest by **7th April 2024** to the following e-mail address: bd.prabriddhi@swisscontact.org. Expressions of interest should include:

* Organization’s profile, highlighting relevant experience and expertise in e-commerce platform development and promotion.
* Proposed approach and methodology for developing, owning, and promoting the e-commerce platform.
* Details of technical capabilities and resources available for platform development, maintenance, and marketing.
* Examples of past projects or case studies demonstrating success in similar initiatives.
* Any additional relevant information or qualifications

# **Evaluation Process**

Expressions of interest will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

* Experience and expertise in e-commerce platform development and promotion.
* Proposed approach and methodology for platform development, ownership, and promotion.
* Technical capabilities and resources available for project execution.
* Alignment with the objectives and requirements outlined in the EOI.

# **Selection Process**

The selection of the successful firm will be based on a comprehensive evaluation of the submitted expressions of interest against the evaluation criteria. Shortlisted firms may be invited for further discussions or presentations to assess their capabilities and suitability for the project.

# **Contact Information**

For inquiries and submission of expressions of interest, please contact:

bd.prabriddhi@swisscontact.org

1. Information source: Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), Bangladesh Engineering Industry Owners’ Association. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)