**Request for Proposals**

Promoting Digital Marketing Skills for Tour Operators and Hotels in Cox’s Bazar

# **Background**

PRABRIDDHI is a Local Economic Development (LED) project, funded by the Governments of Bangladesh and Switzerland, co-implemented by the Local Government Division (LGD) and Swisscontact. The current phase of the project (September 2020 – August 2025) focuses on further developing the LED approach in participating municipalities of Bangladesh, capacity building of stakeholders and facilitators of LED and anchoring of the approach on national level. The project is being implemented in seven municipalities - Shibganj, Jashore, Bogura, Bhairab, Dinajpur, Kushtia and Cox’s Bazar respectively.

**1.2 Approach**

The PRABRIDDHI project aims to create an improved Business Enabling Environment and support inclusive services for key actors by the municipalities and other providers. A “territorial change management initiative” will be induced to foster Local Economic Development. The project supports the municipalities and local businesses to create a common platform and processes for identifying the key blockages for business growth which impacts wealth and employment generation. At this moment, multiple projects, and investments (financed by GOB as well as development partners) are focusing on the evolvement of municipalities and to upgrade the infrastructure at municipal level. PRABRIDDHI complements these investments by utilising human and financial resources to enhance the competitiveness of municipalities and induce business growth. It also supports private companies through partnerships to reduce the risks associated in piloting new business strategies that create economic opportunities for women, men, and marginalised groups. The project also encourages businesses to adopt green practices and develop sustainable business models, which in turn stimulates economic growth while safeguarding the environment.

* 1. **Context**

Cox’s Bazar is in the southeastern part of Bangladesh, and it was established as a municipality in 1869, and it encompasses an area of 32.90 Square Km. It falls under the "A" category municipalities, signifying its status among the tiers of municipalities in Bangladesh. Home to 167,477 residents, Cox’s Bazar is famous for having the world's longest natural sea beach, drawing millions of tourists both domestically and internationally. However, despite its allure, the local tourism industry faces challenges in effectively reaching potential visitors due to limited digital marketing capabilities among tour operators and hotels.

During the Rapid Economic Assessment (REA) of PRABRIDDHI in Cox’s Bazar, Tour Operator Owners Association of Cox’s Bazar (TOAC) highlighted that tour operators are experiencing a shortage of skill in developing and promoting tourism of Cox’s Bazar and showcasing its tourism products. TOAC currently has around 100 enlisted tour operators and guide houses in which on average 15 persons work in each company. Additionally, there are other associations and independent tour operators, as well as seasonal businesses that operate primarily during peak seasons. These tour operators manage the entire tourist experience from arrival to departure. To effectively execute these responsibilities, they maintain constant communication with hotels, motels, guest houses, tour guides, car rental services, and other related service providers.

Furthermore, Cox's Bazar municipality hosts over 500 hotels, motels, guest houses, and cottages, accommodating more than 120,000 guests. The digital skills of hotels in Cox's Bazar exhibit significant variability. While only a few leading hotels invest in digital marketing and customer service training for their staff, utilize advanced booking systems, online payment platforms, and CRM software, many smaller establishments still depend on traditional methods. This affects the competitiveness of smaller hotels. This also suggests that most accommodation service providers lack effective marketing channels, with most bookings taking place via telephone calls. Most accommodation service providers are not linked with inbound tour operators with package rates. Few people have a professional background in tourism MSMEs. As a result, marketing remains “word of mouth”.

# **Constraints Addressed**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Problem Statements*** | ***Root Causes*** |
| ***Tour operators and hotels in Cox's Bazar struggle with insufficient online presence, resulting in poor visibility of their tour packages and offers in the digital marketplace.*** | * Lack of digital skills and knowledge among tour operators and hotels * Insufficient awareness of online marketing platforms and strategies |
| ***Potential customers have limited access to affordable and attractive tour packages due to ineffective marketing and distribution channels.*** | * Lack of cost-effective and targeted marketing tools * Inadequate marketing budgets * Ineffective promotion and marketing channels |
| ***The range of tour products and experiences offered in Cox's Bazar is inadequate, failing to meet diverse tourist demands and preferences.*** | * Limited access to diverse product offerings from local suppliers/ communities * Lack of market research and understanding of customer demands |

# **Objectives**

The overall objective of this intervention is to enhance the digital marketing capabilities of tour operators and hotels in Cox's Bazar, thereby improving their competitiveness and visibility in the tourism sector.

The specific objectives of the intervention are:

* To provide comprehensive digital marketing training and support to tour operators and hotels in Cox's Bazar.
* To increase the online visibility and engagement of participating businesses, leading to growth in inquiries, bookings, and revenue.
* To establish a model for digital marketing capacity building that can be replicated and scaled across the tourism sector in Bangladesh.

# **Scope of Work**

The broad scope of work under this intervention is to **develop digital marketing skills and capacity of 250 tour operators and hotels in Cox’s Bazar.**

**The timeline for this intervention will be no more than 6 months from the date of contract signing.**

*The detailed scope of work and activities for the intervention should be provided by the interested organization.* ***For the detailed activity plan, please use the provided template in Annex 1.***

# **Technical and financial proposal parameters**

The technical proposal should include:

* Brief profile of the organisation, highlighting relevant experience and expertise in digital skills. The profile should include:
  + Details of technical capabilities and resources available for the assignment.
  + Examples of past projects or case studies demonstrating success in similar initiatives.
  + Any additional relevant information or qualifications
* Comprehensive intervention plan and methodology with breakdown of proposed project activities and their corresponding timeframe. (Template for activity plan has been provided as annex to this document)
* Bidder’s comprehensive business plan/ roadmap for converting project outcomes into long-term revenue streams

**Along with the technical proposal, the bidder is required to submit a financial proposal, in a separate file. The financial proposal will be opened only for organisations scoring 50% and above in the technical proposal.** ***For the financial proposal, a separate template has been attached as Annex 2.***

# **Evaluation Process**

The selection criteria are divided into two parts:

* **Technical Proposal (80% of the total possible score);**
* **Financial Proposal (20% of the total possible score). The service provider will develop a detailed financial proposal as per the overall tasks of this assignment.**

The technical proposal will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

* Experience and expertise with similar initiatives. (20%)
* Experience with Cox’s Bazar Tourism and Hospitality sector. (10%)
* Proposed approach and methodology for digital marketing skills and capacity development. (50%)
* Soundness of the business plan (20%)

In addition to the Request for Proposal (RfP) and budget, it is mandatory for bidders to submit necessary documents demonstrating their legal, taxation and financial status. The documents should be part of the technical proposal and include the following:

* Authorization certificate from a relevant government authority.
* A certificate of incorporation (for individual companies- a trade license);
* Joint-stock registration certificate (if applicable);
* An organizational organogram of key personnel, inclusive of the names of such personnel.
* Tax Identification Number (TIN).
* Other valid papers (Provided by Government institutions).
* Organization profile (if applicable).
* The vendor has to bear all Annual Income Tax (AIT) and VAT. The total amount of VAT should be mentioned in the budget.

# **Submission Guidelines**

Interested bidders should submit the **hard copies** of technical and financial proposals and other necessary documents separately by **Aug 8, 2024,** to the following address:

***Samaun Bhuiyan*** *Coordinator – Business Administration   
PRABRIDDHI: Local Economic Development (LED)   
Swisscontact Bangladesh*

*House 28, Road 43, Gulshan 2, Dhaka 1212*

The Technical proposal should also be sent to [bd.prabriddhi@swisscontact.org](mailto:bd.prabriddhi@swisscontact.org). **‘Submission of application for Promoting Digital Marketing Skills for Tour Operators and Hotels in Cox’s Bazar’** should be mentioned in the subject line of the e-mail. For inquiries and submission of proposals, please contact: [bd.prabriddhi@swisscontact.org](mailto:bd.prabriddhi@swisscontact.org)

Failure to do so will disqualify the tendering organization from the tendering process. If a proposal is not received in the manner specified in the request, it is deemed a non-qualifying proposal and will not be considered.

Swisscontact reserves the right to accept or reject a proposal without providing any reason whatsoever. Please note that if an application does not meet all the above required criteria, the application will be disqualified without further evaluation.

***Annex 1: Detailed Activity Plan Template***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Sl. No.*** | ***Activity*** | ***Deliverables*** | ***Timeline*** |
| ***Part A*** | | | |
| ***A 1*** |  |  |  |
| ***A 2*** |  |  |  |
| ***Part B*** | | | |
| ***B 1*** |  |  |  |
| ***B 2*** |  |  |  |

***Note: More rows can be added to this template.***

***Annex 2: Budget Template***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sl** | **Item** | **Unit** | **Unit No** | **Unit rate** | **Total Cost** | **Remarks/deliverables** |
| **Part A** | | | | | |
| **A 1** |  |  |  |  | **-** |  |
| **Total cost for Part A** | | | | | **-** |  |
| **Part B** | | | | | |
| **B 1** |  |  |  |  | **-** |  |
| **Total Cost for Part B** | | | | | **-** |  |
| **Part C** | | | | | |
| **C 1** |  |  |  |  | **-** |  |
| **Total Cost for Part C** | | | | | **-** |  |
| **Part D** | | | | | |
| **D 1** |  |  |  |  | **-** |  |
| **Total Cost for Part D** | | | | | **-** |  |
| **Total (A+B+C+D)** | | | | | **-** |  |
| **Vat (15%)** | | | | | **-** |  |
| **Total with VAT** | | | | | **-** |  |

***Note: Rows can be added or subtracted from this template.***