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RFP-AFI-2025-03

Request for Proposal





**Provision of Professional Consultancy Services for the
Gender-Responsive Toolkit for Robust MSME Data System**

Data	Specific Instructions / Requirements
RFP Issuance Date	28 January 2025
Proposal Submission Deadline	13 February 2025
Notification of Award Decision	March 2025
AFI Contact Details (submitting questions & proposal)	Procurement & Contracts Office E-mail address dedicated for this purpose: RFP2503@afi-global.org

Alliance for Financial Inclusion

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1. BACKGROUND:

The Alliance for Financial Inclusion

The Alliance for Financial Inclusion ([AFI](#)) is the world's leading organization on financial inclusion policy and regulation. Currently, 90 member institutions make up the AFI network including central banks, ministries of finance and other financial policymaking or regulatory institutions from over 84 developing countries and emerging markets. AFI empowers policymakers to increase the access and usage of quality financial services for the underserved through sustainable and inclusive policies and an effective use of digital technologies.

Policies developed and implemented by AFI members contribute to a range of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). By Setting their own agenda, AFI members harness the power of peer learning to develop practical and tested policy reforms that enhance financial inclusion with strategic support from both public and private sector partners.

AFI has 7 [Working Groups](#) (WG): Consumer Empowerment and Market Conduct Working Group ([CEMCWG](#)), Digital Financial Services Working Group ([DFSWG](#)), Financial Inclusion Data Working Group ([FIDWG](#)), Financial Inclusion Strategy Peer Learning Group ([FISPLG](#)), Global Standards Proportionality Working Group ([GSPWG](#)), Inclusive Green Finance Working Group ([IGFWG](#)) and SME Finance Working Group ([SMEFWG](#)),

As the key source of policy developments and trends in financial inclusion and as the primary mechanism for generating and incubating technical content in the network, the Working Groups serve as "communities of practice". Providing a platform for knowledge exchange and peer learning among policymakers to share, deliberate and deepen their understanding, the working groups offer leadership and expertise in their respective policy fields and support the network to monitor new developments in emerging fields.

The knowledge generated via the working groups is disseminated for implementation by a range of [capacity building activities](#) such as Joint Learning Programs, Member Trainings, Trainings by Private Sector Partners. The practical experience members garner from engaging in peer learning based capacity building is then applied by members as [in country implementation](#) projects which are supported by the provision of financial or technical support to AFI member institutions in conducting activities that aim to deliver financial inclusion policies, regulations, supervisory tools or enablers for the development of policies, such as national financial inclusion strategies.

The working groups receive strategic guidance and insight from the High-Level [Global Standards & Policy Committee](#), while the [Gender Inclusive Finance Committee](#), supports WGs in integrating gender considerations into all aspects of their work and support members in fulfilling their [Denarau Action Plan \(updated 2022\)](#) commitment to promote women's financial inclusion.

AFI members have made further commitments in a range of other accords which can be read [here](#).

The AFI's five regional initiatives complete the AFI platform of services by supporting policy implementation in Africa ([AfPI](#)), Latin America and the Caribbean ([FILAC](#)), the Pacific Islands ([PIRI](#)), Eastern Europe and Central Asia ([ECAP](#)) and the Arab Region ([FIARI](#)).

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND:

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are vital for economic growth, job creation, and social stability. They represent 90% of businesses of which women-MSMEs (W-MSMEs) make up 38% of the total, more likely to be involved in smaller, low-value added and informal activities. Despite its importance, MSMEs, particularly W-MSMEs, face a substantial credit gap, limiting their growth and potential. This gap is estimated to be between \$1.4 to \$1.7 trillion globally for W-MSMEs.

Information asymmetry is one of the main challenges for MSMEs getting access to finance, due to lack of information and MSME "thin files". This issue is worse for W-MSMEs due to structural and social challenges. Furthermore, the lack of reliable and comprehensive data on MSMEs and gender-specific information for W-MSMEs, often hinders effective policymaking, suitable program and product design. To address this challenge, a robust data hub and dashboard system is essential to collect, analyze, and disseminate critical information on MSMEs.

To address this challenge, robust data system on W-MSMEs is crucial. The SMEFWG and FIDWG members agreed to develop a toolkit on Gender-Responsive Toolkit for Robust MSME Data Collection and System. This toolkit is a continuation of the Policy Framework on MSME Data Collection: A Guide for Gender Inclusive Finance.

The importance of accurate and reliable data:

- Mitigate information asymmetry: Bridge the knowledge gap between W-MSMEs and financial institutions, leading to better access to finance and lower intermediation costs.
- Informed policymaking: Identify key barriers and challenges and design relevant gender-sensitive policies that support MSMEs and especially W-MSME growth and development.
- Drive inclusive growth: Promote women's economic empowerment and contribute to overall economic development.

Despite the recognized importance of data, countries are at different stages of data maturity regarding MSMEs and W-MSMEs. Some are just beginning, while others have established infrastructure but may not be effectively using the data for policy development. This bottom-up approach of this project was confirmed by the two working groups (SMEFWG and FIDWG) members, aiming and committed to develop a comprehensive and practical toolkit to guide policymakers, regulators, and other stakeholders at different stages on their MSME and W-MSME sector assessments in establishing and utilizing more robust data systems. The deliverable of this project is a guide tailored to a country's different stages on data collection and processing. It aims to support policy makers and regulators to start the journey of becoming "data-driven" in MSME and W-MSME, thereby improving the use of data in developing strategic policy, implementation and evaluation initiatives.

3. PROJECT OBJECTIVE:

The primary objective of this project is to develop a gender-responsive toolkit to provide practical guidance to policymakers, regulators and other stakeholders on data collection, analysis, and visualization, as well as best practices for measuring and assessing the MSME sector, with a particular focus on W-MSMEs.

The project should:

1. **Establish Robust Data Hubs and Dashboard:** Provide guidance on the technical aspects of setting up data hubs and dashboards, including data sources, data cleaning, and data storage.
2. **Identify Key Gender-Responsive Data Points:** Define core data points that are essential for understanding the MSME sector, such as demographic information, financial performance, operational challenges, and gender-specific indicators.
3. **Develop Data Collection Strategies:** Outline effective strategies for collecting data from various sources, including surveys, administrative records, and digital platforms, ensuring gender disaggregation.
4. **Analyze and Interpret Gender-Disaggregated Data:** Provide tools and techniques for analyzing data to identify trends, patterns, and insights, with a focus on gender-specific challenges and opportunities.
5. **Visualize Data Effectively:** Offer guidance on creating clear and informative data visualizations to communicate findings to policymakers, the public, and other stakeholders, highlighting gender disparities.
6. **Promote Gender-Responsive Policymaking:** Highlight the importance of gender disaggregation in data collection and analysis to identify specific challenges faced by W-MSMEs and inform targeted policies.

TARGET USERS

The toolkit is primarily designed for the following target users:

- **Financial policymakers and regulators:** Central banks, financial regulators, and other government agencies responsible for financial sector development.
- **Government development program leaders:** Government officials involved in implementing development programs and initiatives.
- **MSME industry associations and chambers of commerce:** Organizations representing the interests of MSMEs.
- **Data analysts and data scientists:** Professionals working in data analysis and data science.
- **International organizations:** Multilateral development banks, international financial institutions, and NGOs.

FORESEEN TOOLKIT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The toolkit will be developed through a collaborative process involving the Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI) and an external consultant/expert. The process will include the following steps:

1. Literature Review: A comprehensive review of existing literature on MSME data, gender-responsive policymaking, and data-driven decision-making.
2. Expert Consultations: High-level interviews with experts from various fields, including policymakers, academics, and practitioners, with a focus on gender experts in the MSME sector.
3. AFI Member and partners consultation process: Survey and In-depth consultation process with different stakeholders using advanced MSME data systems to learn from best practices, paying particular attention to gender-inclusive initiatives.
4. Data Collection and Analysis: Collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data from various sources to inform the toolkit.
5. Toolkit Development: Development of the toolkit, including writing, editing, and design, ensuring it is gender-sensitive and inclusive.
6. Pilot Testing: Pilot testing the toolkit with policymakers and other stakeholders to gather feedback and refine the content, particularly on its effectiveness in addressing gender-specific challenges.
7. Dissemination and Capacity Building: Dissemination of the toolkit through workshops, webinars, and online platforms, with a focus on capacity building for policymakers and practitioners on gender-responsive data analysis and policymaking.

FORESEEN KEY FEATURES OF THE TOOLKIT

- Practicality: The toolkit will provide practical guidance and tools that can be easily implemented by policymakers and other stakeholders.
- Flexibility: The toolkit will be flexible enough to adapt to the specific needs and contexts of different countries and regions.
- Gender-Responsiveness: The toolkit will emphasize the importance of gender-responsive policymaking and provide guidance on how to collect, analyze, and interpret gender-disaggregated data.
- Inclusivity: The toolkit will consider the needs of MSMEs from diverse sectors and backgrounds, including rural and urban MSMEs, and those led by marginalized groups.
- Data-Driven Decision-Making: The toolkit will promote data-driven decision-making by providing tools and techniques for analyzing and interpreting data, with a focus on gender-specific insights.
- Disclaimer: This toolkit provides policy options for the readers to consider for countries policy generation strategies and initiatives. The proposed recommendations are not exhaustive.

LEADERSHIP AND FUNDING

The Toolkit will be developed by the Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI) through the Policy Programs and Implementation team with the consultation and support from AFI member institutions representatives who had expressed interest in supporting this project (SMEFWG and FIDIWG members from Subgroup, check Annex A list) to guide and support the project. An external expert will be contracted to support key phases of the research and compilation of insights.

ANNEX A - AFI Members from the SME Finance Working Group and the Financial Inclusion Data and Impact Working Group.

No.	Name	Institution	Role/ Activity	Working Group
1.	Amal Idrissi	Central Bank of Morocco	Leader	SMEFWG
2.	Sesilia Nekwaya	Central Bank of Namibia	Co-leader	FIDWG
3.	Xiomy Ramirez	SB Dominican Republic	Member	SMEFWG
4.	Ana Idalia Portillo	BCR El Salvador	Member	SMEFWG
5.	Esiteri Laisa	Reserve Bank of Fiji	Member	SMEFWG
6.	Norma Qurusu	Central Bank of Solomon Islands	Member	FIDWG
7.	Jolanda Kertopermono	Central Bank of Suriname	Member	SMEFWG
8.	Nathalie Lamothe / Yvrose Joseph	Banque de la République d'Haiti	Member	FIDWG
9.	Nadia Riad Nassif Al-Louh	Central Bank of Jordan	Member	FIDWG
10.	Nik Kamarun	Alliance for Financial Inclusion	Senior Policy Manager	AFI
11.	Luis Trevino	Alliance for Financial Inclusion	Senior Policy Manager	AFI
12.	Audrey Hove	Alliance for Financial Inclusion	Head Policy	AFI

4. SCOPE OF WORK:

The scope and expected deliverables are as follows:

- Gathering primary source of input: finalize survey questionnaire and analyse the results
- Identification of best practices: conduct desktop research and Key Informant Interview (KII) to complement the survey findings
- Benchmarking: compare successful practices against industry standards and benchmarks to identify key success factors. This benchmarking will help in understanding the replicability of these practices in different contexts.
- Impact analysis: incorporate survey analysis result with desktop research and input from the interview

- Development of the Toolkit: consultant develops the Toolkit based on agreed outline.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

By developing and disseminating this gender-responsive toolkit, AFI aims to empower policymakers and other stakeholders to make informed decisions and promote the growth and development of MSMEs, particularly W-MSMEs.

NEXT STEPS

The first draft of this Concept Note is going to be reviewed and discussed internally by AFI Management Unit. Once it is cleared will be submitted to the identified members from the SMEFWG and FIDIWG interested in supporting this project for additional inputs and will finally be submitted for approval to AFI funding institutions to support the project with an external consultant/expert.

5. TIMELINES AND DELIVERABLES:

The project is conceived to be developed during 2025 and is toolkit should be used to support going forward, AFI members and other partners on their aim to consolidate robust assessments on MSME, Women-MSMEs and Women-MSME finance components supporting the respective development policies.

The assignment is expected to commence in March 2025 and end by July 2025. Below is a tentative timeline:

No.	Activity	Jan	Feb	Mac	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
1.	Members give feedback on the draft Concept Notes (CN)- 23 Jan								
2.	AFI Mgmt starts procuring consultant (4 th week Feb)								
3.	Consultant modifies the draft survey Q (1 st week March)								
4.	Circulation of survey Qs (2 nd -4 th week March)								
5.	Consultant conducts desktop research and conduct Key Informant Interview (KII) (2 nd -4 th week March)								
6.	Consultant conducts survey analysis (1 st week April)								
7.	Survey analysis to be reviewed by AFI mgmt. and subgroup members (2 nd week April)								
8.	Consultant delivers draft toolkit (3 rd week April/18 th April)								

9.	AFI Mgmt/ subgroup members present the draft toolkit during the SMEFWG & FIDWG meeting in Seychelles (22 nd - 25 th April) and collect feedback								
10.	Consultant incorporates members' comments and submit for review (3 rd week May)								
11.	AFI Mgmt checking (iThenticate) and subgroup review (2 nd week June)								
12.	Approval from AFI Mgmt (Director PPI) (4 th week June)								
13.	Editing and design (4 th week July)								
14.	Expected to publish (1 st week August)								

6. TRAVEL:

No Travel is expected for this assignment. The consultant(s) will work remotely and undertake virtual meetings to complete the tasks.

7. CONSULTANT EXPERIENCES:

The consultant performing this task must have the following qualifications:

- Open to Firms and individuals
- The team leader should have at least ten (10) years of relevant experience and hold higher degree in a field related to Economics, Finance, Public Policy, International Development, or other related discipline.
- Knowledge and at least seven (7) years of experience in development and financing policies.
- The consulting firm should have a team of experts that have at least five (5) years of experience and knowledge regarding MSME and Women-MSMEs policy development, finance and data collection.
- Good understanding of gender related policies for MSMEs.
- Fluency in English (oral, written and presentation skill) is mandatory
- Ability to maintain and keep confidential information within the scope of the project.

8. REPORTING:

Throughout the contract period, the Consultant will be reporting to AFI's Head Policy Management, Senior Policy Manager Financial Inclusive Data and Impact and Senior Policy Manager, SME Finance.

9. PAYMENT TERMS:

The payment terms/schedule proposed for this consultancy are as following:

Deliverables	Percentage
Upon signing of Contract	20%
Upon submission and acceptance of Survey Analysis	20%
Upon submission and acceptance of First draft toolkit	30%
Upon submission and acceptance of Final toolkit incorporating members' comments	30%
	100%

10. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION:

10.1 Disclaimer

The final decision on selection of a firm for this project rests with AFI management team and with the Inquiry. Only shortlisted and successful firms will be contacted.

10.2 Proposal Submission Information:

Proposals will be due with the following requirements for submission:

Submission Deadline:	13 February 2025
Documents to be submitted with Annexure 1 and 2:	
Firm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Company Registration;• Company Profile;• List of previous or current clientele on similar work;• References with email contact;• Joint-Agreement (if any);• Conflict of Interest Disclosure form;• At least one (1) sample work (link or attachments) if any
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full CVs with list of previous similar work;• Disclosure if individual have a full time or part time employment contract with any organization or government official or indirect involvement in this tender;• Conflict of Interest Disclosure form;• Reference letter (if any);• References with email contact;• At least one (1) sample work (link or attachments) if any

Method of Submission:	By email to AFI's Procurement & Contracts Office at RFP2503@afi-global.org
Submission of Technical and Financial:	<p>Kindly submit the followings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using the template/format given in Annexure 1 (Technical) and Annexure 2 (Financial) and/or additional technical proposal for more information. 2. Technical and Financial proposal must be separated in different pdf. 3. Financial proposals must be USD only. Whereas for Malaysian applicants with Business Registration under Suruhanjaya Syarikat Malaysia (SSM), please submit your financial proposals in MYR. 4. Proposal to be submitted to the designated email address. 5. AFI does not tolerate copyright infringement, including but not limited to infringement, in the form of plagiarism. Consultant or Consulting entity awarded a contract by AFI shall take responsibility to ensure that the authored works, produced in parts or as an entirety of the deliverables stated in this RFP does not infringe on copyrights.
<p>AFI is not bound to accept the lowest quoted bid and reserves the right to disqualify incomplete submission, overlapping submission, non-compliance to the above requirements. Notification of results will only be sent to shortlisted candidates upon completion.</p>	

10.3 Retention of Proposals

All proposals submitted become the property of AFI. AFI will make all reasonable efforts to maintain proposals in confidence and will release proposals only to personnel involved with the evaluation of the project. Proprietary information should be identified in each proposal.

11. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The proposals submitted will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1.	Profile and Overall Qualification	30%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Qualification 	10%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample work - writing experience with English 	20%
2.	Technical experience	40%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant skills in producing technical publications, report writing and other documentation work. 	20%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional and/or global experience 	20%
3.	Adequacy of the proposed work plan and methodology in responding to the Terms of Reference	30%

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical approach and Methodology 	20%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplan 	10%
	Total	100%

Evaluation of technical and financial proposals

AFI reserves the right to award the most suitable proposal based on the evaluation of combined criterion, where bidders are qualified by the combined valuation of the technical and financial proposals, with the following weightage:

- i) Technical Proposal: 70% (Seventy percent)
- ii) Financial Proposal: 30% (Thirty percent)