

Universal Service Fund

(A company set up under Section 42 of the Companies Ordinance 1984)

Request for Submission of Proposals (RFP)

For

"Hiring of Services of a company/firm for "Empowerment of Craft SME/MSMEs through e-Commerce: Developing, and Managing the Value Chain"

"Tender ID: USF/SP-ECOMM/2018/SME-MSMEs-EMPOWERMENT"

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1. INTRODUCTION

Through the Universal Services Fund (USF), the Government of Pakistan is committed to minimize the Information and Communication gaps among various sections of society. Therefore, USFCo has been established under the Ministry of IT & Telecom to spread the benefits of telecom revolution to all corners of Pakistan.

USF aims to utilize Information & Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the delivery of IT and e-Services to bridge the digital divide in un-served and under-served areas. Through this RFP, USF aims to facilitate a comprehensive e-Commerce value-chain and ecosystem and assist in the crucial factors determining the functionality of the ecosystem, allowing any partner or player to take advantage of the e-Commerce ecosystem created by USF for economic opportunities among craft SME/MSMEs (Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises).

Definition of Craft SME/MSME: An SME/MSME with 20-250 artisan affiliates.

The ecosystem proposed by USF will follow an "end-to-end e-Commerce model," and will include a management firm/company or consortium "bidder" as the facilitating parties in the entire value cycle. The project "Empowerment of Craft SME/MSMEs through e-Commerce: Developing, and Managing the Value Chain" is designed to address aspects of creating a successful e-Commerce value chain.

The detailed scope of work is given in ToRs, which includes onboarding existing craft SME/MSMEs, developing an e-Commerce platform and marketing/branding the e-Commerce platform etc. USF invites sealed bids from suitably qualified firms/companies, which are registered with the Sales Tax, Income Tax authorities of FBR, and are included in Active Tax Payers List (ATL).

2. BIDDING PROCESS

- a. A national or international Company/Firm/consortium (dully registered for business purposes) will be selected after an open, competitive and transparent bidding process in accordance with Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) Ordinance, 2002, and Rules, Regulations and Guidelines made thereunder.
- b. The eligible Bidder will be entitled to receive detailed bidding documents/information package from USF website (https://usf.org.pk/procurements).
- c. A Company/Firm/Consortium will be selected after an open, competitive and transparent bidding process by Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) Ordinance, 2002, and Rules, Regulations, and Guidelines made thereunder:
 - i. The bidding process shall be a single stage, two envelopes as per PPRA Rules, 2004, Clause 36(b).
 - ii. Applicants will be required to submit their technical and financial proposals in two separate sealed envelopes. The envelopes shall be marked as "Technical Proposal" and "Financial Proposal" in bold and legible letters to avoid confusion.

- iii. A Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method will be used for evaluation of Proposal.
- iv. Bid Security, in the shape of a demand draft or pay order in the name of 'Universal Service Fund,' shall be provided in a separate envelope as part/along with the technical proposal.
- v. Initially, only the envelope marked "TECHNICAL PROPOSAL" shall be opened. The envelope marked "FINANCIAL PROPOSAL" shall be retained unopened in the custody of USF.
- vi. USF shall evaluate the technical proposals in a manner prescribed in this document without reference to the price and reject any proposal which does not conform to the specified requirements.
- vii. Financial Proposals of only the technically qualified applicants will be opened.
- viii. Financial proposals of the applicants, unable to qualify the technical evaluation will be returned unopened.
 - ix. USF shall award the contract to the highest ranked Bidder, selected through the process described at section 9.1 of the RFP.

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Bidders must comply with the below-mentioned clauses:

- a. Bidders must have a minimum three (03) years working experience on e-Commerce projects at the local level and/or international level from the date of registration with concerned authorities.
- b. In case of international bidders, the bidder shall be a registered firm or company in their respective country. For a consortium partner registered in Pakistan, NTN and Sales Tax Registration are mandatory and must be Active Tax Payer verifiable through ATL. The international bidder shall comply with applicable laws concerning Federal, Provincial & Local taxes and specific eligible parameters defined in this RFP; and bidder from eligible source countries as defined under the rules, laws statues or relevant instructions of Federal/Provincial Government are eligible.
- c. In case of consortium, one member of the consortium shall be identified as the consortium leader and the leader's experience will be considered for clause "a".
- d. The consortium leader shall also enter into all contracts on behalf of consortium and shall otherwise be responsible for consortium performance.
- e. Local Bidder must be registered with Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) for Income and Sales tax and will provide National Tax Number and Sales Tax registration certificates, as per the applicable government regulation, in the proposal.
- f. Local Bidder's name must be on Active Taxpayers List (ATL) of FBR for Income tax and sales tax as on the date of bid submission and onward throughout the project tenure in compliance of the Eligible Bidders (Tax Compliance) Regulations, 2015.

- g. The Bidder shall provide an undertaking that the Bidder itself or its partner in case of consortium have not been declared black listed by any Government/Semi-Government institutions.
- h. The Bidder annual turnover should be more than PKR 100,000,000 (Pak Rupees hundred million only) for the each of last three completed financial years as per Annual Audited Financial Statements.
- i. Bidders shall submit Copy of following documents from relevant authorities;

In case of Local	Incorporation certificate from Security and Exchange	
Company	Commission of Pakistan (SECP).	
	2. Valid NTN and STRN Certificates	
	3. Active Status in ATL	
In case of Local	1. Form-C issued by registrar of Firms	
Firm	2. Valid NTN and STRN Certificates	

In case of international companies/firms, following shall be required:

- Certificate of registration in the country of origin
- Tax details as per tax rules in the country of origin
- j. In case, any bidder claims exemptions from tax due to any reason given under the law, it shall provide tax exemption certificate, from concerned authority. Otherwise Failure to present any of these documents at the time of bid submission shall lead to be ineligible for registration.
- k. Incomplete or partial bids will be rejected.

4. GENERAL CONDITIONS/INSTRUCTIONS

- a. The bidder will be selected after an open, competitive and transparent bidding process in view of Rule 20 of the Public Procurement Rules (PPR).
- b. Proposals shall be submitted in English language as per Rule 6 of the PPR,
- c. All prices mentioned in the Financial Proposal shall be in Pak Rupees (PKR).
- d. Each page of the Technical and Financial Proposal shall be signed by an authorized representative of the Bidder. The representative's authorization shall be confirmed by power of attorney accompanying the proposal.
- e. For clarification on any item of this RFP, the bidder may send a written request, up till ten (10) days before the proposal submission date.
- f. All clarifications shall be uploaded on the USF website at the specific tender's web page. No request of clarification on any item shall be accepted or responded after aforesaid stipulated time.
- g. USF may reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to the acceptance of a bid or proposal. USF shall, upon request, communicate to any bidder who submitted a

- bid or proposal, the grounds for its rejection of all bids or proposals, but is not required to justify those grounds as per as per Rule 33 of the PPR,
- h. USF may increase or decrease the scope of project as per provisions of Rule 42 of the PPR, and the total value of the contract may be decreased or increased up to the 15%.
- i. The bidders shall bear all costs associated with the preparation and submission of their respective bids and USF will, in no case, be responsible or liable for those costs, regardless of the conduct or outcome of the bidding process.
- j. The project is to be completed and executed within thirty six (36) months from the date of signing the contract.
- k. The successful bidder shall ensure to complete the Milestone-1 within three (03) months of signing the contract and Milestone-2 within six (06) months of signing the contract., Milestone-3, 4, & 5 shall be achieved within time period of contract duration as per Section 11. In case Milestone 1,2 are delayed beyond its stipulated time, the Liquidated Damages at the rate of 0.5% of milestone value per week for each week delayed beyond the final date of completion a milestone will be imposed. In case such delay exceeding two (02) weeks beyond the final date of each Milestone, USF may terminate the contract after deduction of the said Liquidated Damages and USF will have the right to en-cash the Performance Guarantee.
- I. USF will inspect all the services thoroughly and will issue a Provisional Acceptance Certificate (PAC) upon successful acceptance of each milestone. In case services found below specification/sub-standards or to be inconsistent with criteria provided, it shall be rejected and revised by bidder in accidence with the instructions of USF with no additional cost. Upon successful completion of all five milestones, USF shall issue a Final Acceptance Certificate (FAC).
- m. Bidders are under obligation to read and understand complete information package/bid documents and submit a compliance statement along with their bidding documents, USF shall not be responsible towards the Bidders for any of their claim or complaint which may arise in result of non-reading or misreading the bid documents/information package by Bidders.
- n. USF is the originator of information package/bidding documents, any clarification or interpretation communicated by USF, whether in response of a query or otherwise, shall be deemed final, conclusive and will remain unquestioned.
- o. The successful bidder will be issued Letter of Intent (LoI), and bidder shall submit Letter of Acceptance (LoA) within seven (7) days from the date of issuance of LoI. Upon submission of LoA and the successful bidder shall susequently submit required Performance Guranttee within ten (10) days. A formal contract will be signed within 10 days after the submission of performance Guarantee and subject to USF's Board approval.

- p. If there is more than one qualified bidder, i.e., they have quoted equal prices in a financial bid, the tied qualified bidders shall be notified by USF, and they will submit revised financial proposals in compliance with the RFP. The revised bid amount must be either equal to the originally submitted bid or less than previous bid amount. The revised financial proposal shall be submitted in a sealed envelope that is securely closed, and which could not be possibly opened without visual evidence thereof.
- q. USF will reject award of contract if it determines that the Bidder recommended for award of contract has, directly or through an agent, engaged in corrupt, fraudulent, collusive or coercive practices in competing for the contract in question.
- r. USF requires that Bidders, Suppliers, Contractors, and Consultants under its contracts, observe the highest standard of ethics during the procurement and execution of such contracts. In pursuit of this policy, the USF defines, for this provision, the terms set forth below as follows:
 - "Coercive practice": is impairing or harming, or threatening to impair or harm, directly or indirectly, any party or the property of the party to influence the actions of a party improperly;
 - ii. "Collusive practice": is an arrangement between two or more parties designed to achieve an improper purpose, including to influence the actions of another party improperly;
 - iii. "Corrupt practice": is the offering, giving, receiving or soliciting, directly or indirectly, of anything of value to influence the actions of another party improperly.
 - iv. "Fraudulent practice": is any act or omission, including a misrepresentation, which knowingly or recklessly misleads, or attempts to mislead, a party to obtain a financial or other benefit or to avoid an obligation.
 - v. "obstructive practice": is deliberately destroying, falsifying, altering or concealing of evidence material to the investigation or making false statements to investigators in order to materially impede USF investigation into allegations of a corrupt, fraudulent, coercive or collusive practice; and/or threatening, harassing or intimidating any party to prevent it from disclosing its knowledge of matters relevant to the investigation or from pursuing the investigation.
 - vi. "RFP" means this Request For Proposal.
 - vii. "Services" means the Scope of Work defined in the ToRs.

5. BID SECURITY AND PERFORMANCE GUARANTEE

 a. A bid security in the form of a CDR/Pay Order/Demand Draft, in the name of '<u>Universal Service Fund'</u>, of value Pak Rupees Five Hundred Thousand Only (PKR) 500,000) must be attached in a separate envelope, with the technical proposal otherwise the unopened proposals shall be returned and bid will be rejected. Failure to submit bid security along with proposal shall lead to disqualification and the proposal shall not be evaluated.

The Bid Security Envelope shall be marked with the following:-

"Bidder: [Name]"

"Tender ID: USF/SP-ECOMM/2018/SME-MSME-EMPOWERMENT."

"BID SECURITY"

- b. Payment of bid security in a form other than that is specified in clause 5(a) shall not be entertained and accepted. USF shall return such bids unopened to the respective bidder(s).
- c. Bid Security of technically qualified Bidders will be released after ten (10) days of the signing of the contract with the successful Bidder.
- d. Bid Security of bidders, which do not technically qualify, shall be returned with the unopened financial bid after ten (10) days from the date of issuance of the technical evaluation result.
- e. Performance Guarantee equivalent to 10% of the contract value in shape of Irrevocable Performance Bank Guarantee will be submitted, within the stipulated time as mentioned in Letter of Intent (LoI), by the successful Bidder. In case of non-submission of Performance Bank Guarantee by the Bidder, USF may cancel the LoI and shall proceed accordingly.
- f. The Performance Guarantee submitted by successful bidder will be valid for thirty-eight (38) months or any extended period, as the case may be.

6. TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

Technical Proposals to be submitted by the applicants shall comply with the requirements laid down in the RFP and ToR as per templates available in the Annex B of the ToR.

The Technical proposal shall be marked with the following:-

"Bidder: [Name]"

"Tender ID: USF/SP-ECOMM/2018/SME-MSME-EMPOWERMENT."

"TECHNICAL PROPOSAL"

The technical proposal shall be submitted in the prescribed format as given below:

- a. Technical Proposal submission application/covering letter from the head of the company/firm or an authorized representative of the applicant covering the key features of technical solution. (Form A1 of Annex B of ToR)
- b. If bidder is a local company, Copy of registration certificates with relevant authorities i.e. incorporation certificate from SECP, Form-C issued by registrar of Firms shall be required along with tax registration certificates from FBR.
- c. The following documentation will be provided as part of the technical proposal:
 - i. Brief description of the Company/firm (Form A2 of Annex B of ToR)
 - ii. Organizational Structure

- iii. Major areas of expertise
- iv. Outline of work experience with references to work on similar projects, name of the client along with their references, and project details for all the projects that are similar in nature and scope to this project. (Form A2.1 of Annex B of ToR)
- v. Detailed methodology, approach, technology and work plan to cover all requirements of RFP and ToR within the project timelines specifically mentioning the roles and responsibilities of proposed resources. (Form A3, A.3.1, A.3.2 of Annex B of ToR)
- d. Details of proposed project team including CVs, registration certificates with relevant professional bodies where applicable, complete address and contact details (mobile & email). (Form A4 of Annex B of ToR)
- e. Mockup of e-Commerce Platform, mobile application to demonstrate the look and feel of the platform and application. These may be hosted online or at a permanent storage media.
- f. Audited financial statements of the Bidder for the last three years, prepared in accordance with internationally accepted accounting principles, including an income statement, balance sheet & cash flow statement.
- g. Details of customer support services to be provided during the term of the project.
- h. Compliance with each clause and sub-clause of RFP and ToR, cross-linked with the submitted Technical Proposal, must be attached. Following conventions shall be used in the compliance checklist;
 - Fully Complied (FC)
 - Not Complied (NC)
- i. Additional Information, which can facilitate USF in the evaluation of technical proposal (If Any).

7. FINANCIAL PROPOSAL

The bidder shall submit Financial Proposal in a separate sealed envelope as per the available templates in the Annex B of the ToR. Envelop shall be marked with the following:-

"Bidder: [Name]"

"Tender ID: USF/SP-ECOMM/2017-18/SME-MSME-EMPOWERMENT."

"FINANCIAL PROPOSAL"

"Do Not Open With the Technical Proposal"

The Financial Proposal shall include the following:

- a. A lump sum cost along-with the activity cost breakup inclusive of all applicable taxes shall be provided.
- b. All prices shall be in Pak Rupees. Any exchange rates fluctuations shall be the responsibility of the bidder and USF shall not give any price escalation on that account. The bidder will be responsible for paying any fee, taxes, duties or charges required for successful completion of the project.

- c. The proposal must remain valid for 180 days after the submission date.
- d. USF will deduct taxes at the time of the payment as per government rules and regulations.

Financial Proposal must consist of the following:

- a. Financial Proposal Submission Application (Form B1 of Annex B of ToR)
- b. Summary of costs (Major Heads including but not limited to onboarding, Platform development, Digital/conventional bank Accounts, Fulfillment and Customer Support inclusive of taxes) (Form B2 of Annex B of ToR)
- c. All other Operational Expenses to be quoted in the bid, including but not limited to Staff Salaries, Utilities, Engagement Activities, Professional Services, Consulting Assignments, Advertisement Expense, Legal fees, License fees and Insurance, etc. (Form B2 of Annex B of TOR).
- d. Cash flow projections based on CAPEX & OPEX (Form B3 of Annex B of ToR)
- e. Proposed Transaction Fee Model (Form B4 of Annex B of ToR)

Bidders are required to follow the above-mentioned structure while preparing their financial proposals.

8. Submission, Opening, and Receipt of Proposals

- a. The original proposals (Technical and Financial Proposal) shall be prepared without any interlineations or overwriting.
- b. Two printed copies (one original and one Copy) and one soft copy, for each Technical and Financial Proposal, on a USB Drive shall be submitted.
- c. The envelopes shall be packed and prepared as per clause 2 c (ii)of the RFP.
- d. The technical proposals must be delivered at the address given below on or prior to 27th April 2018 at 1500 Hrs (Pakistan Standard Time).

Chief Technology Officer

Universal Service Fund, 5th Floor, HBL Tower, Jinnah Avenue Blue Area, Islamabad, Pakistan

Tel: (92-51) 9212308-09 Fax: (92-51) 9214261

Email: projects.tenders@usf.org.pk

- e. Technical Proposals shall be opened the same day, i.e., 27th April 2018 at 1530Hrs (Pakistan Standard Time), in the presence of all the bidders who choose to be present.
- f. The evaluation of Technical Proposals will be carried as per the evaluation criteria given in Section 9 of the RFP. The results of the technical evaluation will be communicated to all the bidders, who submitted their technical proposals. The financial proposals of the bidders who do not technically qualify will be returned unopened.

- g. Financial proposals of the technically qualified bidders will be opened publicly, for which the time and date will be communicated to the qualified bidders.
- h. The bid found to be the highest ranked based on the evaluation criteria 9.1 of the RFP shall be accepted.

9. EVALUATION CRITERIA

USF will evaluate the proposals by their compliance with the RFP, ToR, evaluation criteria, and the point system as specified in Table I below.

Table I- Evaluation Criteria

Sr. No.	Skill & Experience	Weight
	Experience in running and managing a scalable e-Commerce platform and app with a minimum of 20,000 active users	
	> 5+ years = 5 marks	
	> 3-5 years = 3 marks	
	> 0-3 years = 0 marks	
	Experience in running marketing campaigns (ATL & BTL) of over	
	rupees one million in the last five years	
	10+ marketing campaigns = 5 marks	
	5-10 marketing campaigns = 3 marks	
1	1-4 marketing campaigns = 2 marks	20
	Experience in conducting market assessment for identification of SME/MSMEs	
	> 5+ market assessments = 5 marks	
	1-3 market assessments = 3 marks	
	0 market assessments = 0 marks	
	Experience in engaging with craft SME/MSMEs in work experience &	
	apprenticeship	
	> 3+ years = 5 marks	
	➤ 1-3 years = 3 marks	
	Proposed e-Commerce platform, IT infrastructure, hosting services,	
	mobile app	
	 Proposed System Specification, Design, Security & Operations & Maintenance of e-Commerce platform 	
	Front End Design with e-Commerce functionalities = 2 marks	
2	Back-End Design with e-Commerce functionalities= 2 marks	
2	 Admin Panel Dashboard with Reporting Mechanism in line with ToRs = 2 marks 	24
	System Architecture & Design of e-Commerce Platform in line with ToRs= 2 marks	
	System Functional Specs in line with ToRs= 2 marks	
	Data Architecture & Database design in line with ToRs = 2 marks	

	 Security Features in line with ToRs= 2 marks Operations & Maintenance Process in line with ToRs = 2 marks Proposed iOs/Andriod App in line with ToRs = 4 marks Proposed e-Commerce Platform Infrastructure, Services Infrastructure & Hosting Requirement Cloud infrastructure requirement with justification in line with ToRs = 2 marks Bandwidth requirement with justification in line with ToRs = 2 marks 	
	Proposed Business Plans	
	Proposed Project Management plan with business model in line with Table 4 and learning.	
	 ToRs – 4 marks Disbursement Plan along with cash flow projections in line with 	
	business plan 2 marks	
	Proposed Craft SME/MSMEs e-Commerce onboarding plan for target	20
3	number of craft SME/MSMEs - 4 marks	20
	Proposed marketing plan for platform – 4 marks	
	Digital Media Plan = 2 marks	
	Print/TVC plan = 2 marks	
	Proposed logistics plan - 2 marks	
	Proposed quality control and assurance plan – 2 marks	
	Proposed real-time strategies and adaptability plan – 2 marks	
	Qualification of Proposed Team Members	
	Project director with 10+ years of relevant experience – 6 marks	
	Proposed relevant e-Commerce development team – 12 marks Trans and development with 5 years a of relevant synamics as 2	
	Front-end developer with 5 years + of relevant experience = 2 marks	
	 Back-end developer with 5 years + of relevant experience = 2 marks 	
4	 Mobile Application developer with 5+ years of relevant experience 	18
	= 2 marks	
	QA/QC specialist with 5+ years of relevant experience = 2 marks	
	Digital marketing specialist with 5+ years of relevant experience =2 marks	
	Craft SME/MSMEs on-boarding specialist with 5+ years of relevant	
	experience = 2 marks	
	Mockup and story board of the Platform & app with following features:	
5	Landing page	5
	User journey/Storyboard of e-Commerce Platform	J
	Financial Soundness	_
6	> Turnover of over 200 million annually in the last three years - 8	8

	 marks Turnover of above 150 Million up to 200 million annually in last three years -5 marks Turnover of above 100 Million up to 150 million annually in the last three years - 3 marks 	
7	Proposal Presentation covering the proposed solution	5
	Total Technical Score	100
	Minimum for qualification	80

Bidders shall be required to submit a copy of their presentation with proposals. Actual date of presentation shall be communicated to the bidders during evaluation process. A proposal shall be rejected during technical evaluation if it does not comply with the RFP and ToR or if it fails to achieve the minimum score.

9.1 Combined Score

For technically qualified proposals final scoring will be done as per following:

a. Technical Score (S_t) shall be calculated as follows:

$$S_t = \frac{\text{Technical Score Obtained by bidder}}{\text{Total Technical Score}} * 80$$

b. Financial Score (S_f) shall be calculated as follows:

$$S_f = \frac{Lowest \, Bidder's \, Cost}{Bidder's \, Cost} * 20$$

c. Total Score shall be the sum of both Technical score and Financial Score:

Total Score,
$$S_T = S_t + S_f$$

d. All technically qualified Bidders will be ranked based upon the combined technical and financial score.

10. AWARD OF CONTRACT AND KEY TIMELINES

USF shall award the contract to the highest ranked Bidder. After signing of the contract, USF shall return the unopened Financial Proposals of the non-qualified Bidders.

- a. A letter of Intent (LoI) will be issued to the highest ranked bidder, acceptance of which shall be provided within seven days of issuance of the LoI.
- b. The bidder, to whom LoI has been issued, will have to submit the performance guarantee within 10 days of issuance of LoI.
- c. After submission of the Letter of Acceptance and Performance Bank Guarantee, it is expected that the contract will be signed within ten (10) days of receipt of Performance Bank Guarantee by USF, failing which USF may issue LoI to the next highest ranked bidder.

11. MILESTONE SCHEDULE

Following shall be the payment milestones:

MILESTONE	PAYMENT TRIGGER	PERIOD	PAYMENT
Milestone1: Submission of Business plan with all associated plans and market assessment	PAC (Provisional Acceptance Certificate) issued upon acceptance of completion of deliverables mentioned in ToRs.	Within 3 months of signing of contract	5%
Milestone 2: Development of e- Commerce Platform and launch with at least 100 SME/MSMEs on- boarded	PAC (Provisional Acceptance Certificate) issued upon acceptance of completion of deliverables mentioned in ToRs.	Within 6 months of the contract signing	5%
Milestone 3: 5% Cumulative increase in sales of at least 100 SME/MSMEs	PAC (Provisional Acceptance Certificate) issued upon acceptance of completion of deliverables mentioned in ToRs.	On achievement of target within contract duration	20%
Milestone 4: 10% Cumulative increase in sales of at least 400 SME/MSMEs	PAC (Provisional Acceptance Certificate) issued upon acceptance of completion of deliverables mentioned in ToRs	On achievement of target within contract duration	30%
Milestone 5: 20% Cumulative increase in sales of at least 1000 SME/MSMEs	FAC (Final Acceptance Certificate) issued upon acceptance of completion of deliverables mentioned in ToRs	On achievement of target within contract duration	40%

12. TIMELINES FOR BIDDING PROCESS

Following timelines will be followed during the bidding process:

Sr No	Events	Date
1	Launch of RFP and ToR	27 th March 2018
2	Bid Submission Date	27 th April 2018
3	Financial Bid opening	TBD

13. TERM OF THE PROJECT

The term of the project will be for three years from the effective date. After completion of term of the project, further extension in the contract may be decided through mutual consent of the parties.