E-TOURISM: An Innovative Approach for the Small and Medium-sized Tourism Enterprises

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY OF A TRAINING COURSE IN E-TOURISM

Skills for Inclusive Growth (S4IG) program is seeking a highly qualified company or consultant with significant knowledge and experience in providing skills and capacity building on online business development to small and medium size tourism operators.

The Skills for Inclusive Growth (S4IG) program is an initiative of the Australian Government’s aid program and implemented with the Sri Lankan Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training, Tourism Authorities, Provincial and District Level Government, Industry and Community Organisations. The Program will demonstrate how an integrated approach to skills development can support inclusive economic growth opportunities along the tourism value chain in the four districts of Trincomalee, Ampara, Batticaloa (Eastern Province) and Polonnaruwa (North Central Province). In doing this the S4IG supports sustainable job creation and increased incomes and business growth for the marginalised and the disadvantaged, particularly women and people with disabilities.

The current logic underpinning the program is that improved provincial skills development planning and coordination will improve the match between skills demand and skills supply and that the provision of flexible, demand relevant skills supply will improve productivity and incomes along the tourism sector value chain and support lifting the informal sector towards more formal and sustainable income generation and employment. Adopting and implementing strategies to increase access and participation for disadvantaged people (women, youth, and people with disabilities) will result with delivery of more equitable economic and inclusive growth benefits to the poor and support development of local tourism value chains that support local economic aspirations of communities in the four districts.

PROGRAM GOAL
The overall goal of S4IG is to increase the numbers of poor women and men who, as producers, workers and entrepreneurs, participate in and benefit from the expanding tourism industry in Trincomalee, Ampara, Batticaloa and Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka through skills and business development programs.

END OF PROGRAM OUTCOMES
Directly contribute towards the achievement of Sri Lankan Government Tourism Sector, Skills Development and Employment policies by showcasing:

(i) Increased incomes, new jobs created, and new ventures established along the tourism value chain;
(ii) Micro, small and medium sized enterprises operated by participants in S4IG development programs have improved their performance and financial position;
(iii) Program participants are gainfully employed;
(iv) Improved coordination of skills planning and business development services at national, provincial and district levels in S4IG program areas between stakeholders;
(v) Improved participation rates by Women and People with a Disability;
(vi) Innovative, flexibly delivered and quality assured skills and business development services;
(vii) Strengthened skills development system and services for the tourism sector supported by a Skills Development Fund.

Objective of the TOR

- To develop a short-course training content on E-tourism adapted to small and medium size tourism operators to reduce their skills gap in international online marketing and business development using internet technology.
- To deliver the newly developed course to 2 groups (25 participants in each group/ total of 50) of selected Owners and Managers of small or medium size hospitality enterprises in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka.
- To train 20 potential Training of Trainers and facilitators who could replicate the course in their current or new training organisations.

Background of the E-tourism project

The S4IG Program launched the ‘Skills Development Plan and Employment Strategy for Hospitality and Tourism Sector in the Eastern Province’ (SDP) with the Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training in February 2018. A central skills gap identified restraining tourism business development is the lack of knowledge and use of new internet technology. This constraint has been further identified by the Eastern Province Tourism Bureau (EPTB) who have identified this as a key priority in their Tourism Action Plan that was prepared with assistance from the S4IG Program. Currently public and private training providers including NIBM and CINEC are offering various ICT, business marketing and management programs but these are not customized to support tourism businesses. Training delivery is further constrained with many providers not offering flexible delivery options – distance education, on line or e-learning, or modular based programs that allow business owners to undertake training relevant to their needs through self-paced packages. Training providers are often not open in the evenings or on weekends making it more difficult for employers to participate in upskilling or reskilling opportunities.

This proposal is to develop and deliver a set of training modules on E-tourism dedicated to tourism and hospitality Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME). This proposal is supported by S4IG industry stakeholders and has been prioritized in District Skills Strategies and Action Plans approved by District Secretariats in Polonnaruwa (November 2017) and Batticaloa (March 2018). The S4IG Program is currently developing a cooperation agreement with the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA). E-marketing and e-tourism development is a key part of the Government’s national tourism strategy and a priority of SLTDA. The Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management (SLITHM) has also acknowledged the need to upgrade their curriculum with an E-tourism component.

Improving the digital marketing capacity of MSMEs in the 4 Districts of Ampara, Batticaloa, Polonnaruwa and Trincomalee will greatly increase the opportunity for local economic growth and business resilience. Skilling-up existing enterprises with e-marketing skills will support their own growth and contribute to the improvement of the East as a tourism destination. Improved development of this sector has been well recognized as a key driver of change for improved job creation. The e-tourism course and products developed as a result of this proposal will not only support existing business but will be used to facilitate new tourism activity throughout the 4 Districts. The Skill Development Plan developed by S4IG has further identified that a major constraint to local economic development and inclusive growth in tourism and hospitality is the lack of tourism activities available to attract and retain tourists in the 4 Districts. This lack of tourism activity
results in reduced spending by tourists compared with other tourism promoting Districts in Sri Lanka. This is directly attributable to the 30-year period of intense conflict which stymied new venture creation and local economic development.

**Existing situation**

After the end of the conflict the tourism industry has been in a recovery transition process with tourism operators struggling to attract international or higher value visitors. Current accommodation providers and tourism service operators were mainly occupied with NGO staff and domestic visitors and relied on events for increased incomes. Whilst Sri Lankan operators are slowly transitioning out of the conflict economy, the international tourism model and ecosystem has entirely changed with the development of a digital economy. This development, this transformation has now created a large technology gap amongst local operators.

Many local tourism operators have difficulty with creating and managing their product content and publish poor descriptions, photos and social content. They have difficulty in marketing and valuing their product through web-sites, booking services and social media, they do not make good use of all tourism distribution channels and are often not able to effectively identify target markets or contribute to destination marketing opportunities. Enterprises in the 4 Districts are missing out on valuing their products on the web and linking with numerous other third-party web sites. Many operators still rely on manual applications and record their reservations on paper. Room and service inventories are not maintained electronically, and booking are not well managed dynamically or with capacity to stimulate additional activities. Even email management is not always optimized and booking confirmation systems become confused relying on external service providers. Invoicing and accounting systems remain manually managed, providing poor financial analysis resulting with delays and lost value addition opportunities. Very few operators in the 4 Districts are active on Google Ads or Facebook Ads, or are making the best use of Trip-Advisor and other online systems. According to S4IG stakeholder consultations conducted by program staff, stakeholders have a low understanding of the possibilities of online destination marketing and may underestimate the possibilities of internet promotion and therefore do not engage collectively in destination marketing. The resulting outcome for many operators is a somewhat organic growth of the tourism market in which many operators have difficulty promoting their services, having secure income streams, or developing sustainability and business resilience in this highly competitive industry.

It should be noted that international and larger firms have better knowledge and skills and are performing better (Jetwing Group & Cinnamon group). In large companies E-tourism competencies are spread amongst different departments and tasks are assigned to specialists in marketing, sales, front office, back-office or accounting. These firms enjoy competitive advantage as a result and are able to respond to customer demands more effectively. The situation for many small enterprises is that continue to drift further away from the available technology and have become increasingly removed from the tourist and visitor landscape. In many small enterprises technology adaptation work is the unique and sole responsibility of the owner or manager. Analysis from S4IG Program research further indicates that many owners and manager lack these core skills and have limited industry relevant qualifications. This is particularly the case with product or service marketing, e-tourism, branding and promotions, destination marketing. Many MSME Owners and Managers from the four targeted project districts are computer literate but not marketing literate and do not have the skills to make use of all E-tourism opportunities.

Developing demand driven, modern training material with local training providers and assist them to deliver more flexible, relevant and responsive training to enterprises in the tourism sector is proposed. This initiative is not only to be made available to existing enterprises but be available to new entrants seeking support to establish a tourism business. Prospective tour guides and operators, on line booking and payment centres, transport providers, event organisers, food or handicraft makers,
retailers, recreational activity operators and other service providers could more easily launch new ventures and develop market through the use of e-tourism techniques. The program will therefore make sure develop modules become widely available and support current students, women or retirees seeking additional income or more flexible employment to have access to these resources to support their business development.

Exiting programs
There are many training providers in Sri Lanka that provide management and marketing training courses including digital marketing, e-advertising, how to start and fund your business programs online, and a variety of business analytics programs to custom build technology to improve business performance. The NIBM, CINEC and SLIIT along with some State Universities do provide training programs. However, these programs are not customized or offering courses on tourism marketing or e-marketing customized for tourism industry operators. Courses are not generally available through distance education or through part time or other flexible delivery options. This effectively excludes many people that are already working in the industry as they are unable to travel long distances to classes. The course materials reviewed by the S4IG Program are also considered somewhat generic in which a person completes a diploma, a degree or a post graduate certificate/diploma and would then apply this skill and knowledge to a workplace. The existing curriculum is theoretical and offers limited practical application.

In the East training providers, including SLITHM and Eastern University have expressed interest in developing or implementing more specific training in the tourism sector. SLITHM in particular has indicated its willingness to upgrade their curriculum and include E-tourism topics. The opportunity is now available to develop innovative modular training which could be added to existing industry relevant training programs or be part of an executive master class program. Delivery could be done using a skills supermarket approach in which enterprises or operators could select modules based on their needs to support their business development.

SLTDA has proposed to jointly support initial delivery in the East to reward tourism enterprises that will register with SLTDA. The idea is to offer advantages to SLTDA registered operators. The E-tourism course could be one of the several advantages of being registered. SLTDA proposed to publish a Guideline on “E-marketing for Tourism SME” that could be distributed to SLTDA registered operators. An MoU is currently being finalized between the S4IG Program and the SLTDA. The development cost for the course would be S4IG and deliver of number of units would be supported by SLTDA – perhaps through SLITHM. The S4IG Program will also finance implementation through public and private providers in the 4 Districts.

SLITHM has also expressed its strong interest to support in the development and delivery of an e-tourism course. In participating in this project SLITHM could become a ‘preferred provider’ of choice for employers in the 4 districts. For SLITHM the modules to be developed to support e-tourism skills development could be integrated into their current Tourism Management course as well as be delivered as a short course available for existing enterprises seeking to improve their business prospects and growth trajectory.

The Eastern University has also expressed its interest in incorporating e-tourism into their tourism program or make it available to industry as an Executive Professional Diploma. The MSDVT has many students undertaking ICT related training throughout the 4 Districts and are seeking ways for these graduates to be more relevant to the tourism and hospitality sector. The development of e-tourism modules could provide a bridge over which ICT students could be employed or provide services to the tourism sector. Private training providers are also interested in programs that can support new business and employment for graduates. The USAID funded You-Lead Program has indicated that it would support the development and testing of an e-tourism program with S4IG. Should the program
be endorsed by industry users and the Tourism Skills Council, You-Lead has indicated that it would disseminate and support implementation of the e-tourism course nationally.

**Specific Scope of Service**

A qualified consultant/firm will be required to develop the e-tourism training program in consultation with industry stakeholders and the S4IG Program. The S4IG Program has provided an indicative set of modules and module descriptors to guide the development of the course. It is proposed that modules be prepared according to Government specifications for accreditation. Implementation will occur prior to accreditation as the e-tourism course is tested and adjusted to reflect industry requirements. The proposed modules are nominally equivalent to 160 hours of vocational training. Once the course has been tested and adjusted it would then be submitted to TVEC in TVET and UGC in higher education for accreditation and be made available to Training Providers in Sri Lanka.

A completed e-tourism course in short-course modular format. This would include learning materials, trainer notes and instructions, required materials lists for each module and assessment tools and exercises.

**Targeted groups to participate to this course:**

Main target group: Owners and managers of tourism MSMEs in the Eastern Province. Initially in the pilot program preference will be given to existing enterprises providing direct services in the tourism sector value chain particularly leisure, recreational excursions, activities and tours, and the accommodation and handicraft enterprises. New entrants will also be supported that are developing or seeking to develop new activities in the tourism sector.

Subsequent groups 1: Food and Beverage service providers, reservation officers, sales & marketing officers in medium size companies, transportation services

Subsequent groups 2: Public officers in charge of tourism development, destination marketing and information centres at Eastern Tourism Bureau and industry associations

Subsequent groups 3 (ongoing) Students in Tourism Management courses or people seeking to develop new activities or specialized services in the tourism sector

**Expected outcomes**

- 25-30 days (175-210 hours) modular training course on E-tourism will be developed and then disseminated among District, Provincial, national training providers. The modules must be presented with necessary learning materials, assessment criteria and be recognizable to international standards. We would expect approximately 6 modules to be completed.
- 20 capable Trainers to be prepared through a training course (TOT) and are ready to deliver the course in the Eastern Province and in Polonnaruwa district. The service provider will prepare a trainer the trainer course and provide on line mentoring of trainers during the pilot implementation of the new e-tourism modules.
- At the end of the training, the participants will have a much broader understanding of marketing and use of ICT in tourism. They will be able to engage in their own E-tourism activities including
online content development, online marketing & social media, online distribution, will have a better understanding of tourism reservation and accounting software and will be able to manage their product reputation online.

This assignment requires:

1. **Finalize course design:**
The consultant will engage in a short preliminary consultation to verify current knowledge and needs of potential participants in order to verify and fine tune skills needs on E-tourism and finalise content. A short needs assessment report will be submitted to S4IG program for approval prior to preparation of the e-tourism course. This sector assessment will inform the development and content of the e-tourism course and be validated with key program stakeholders – SLTDA, industry associations and S4IG program staff.

The course design will need to define the Volume of Learning (VoL) and clearly state the depth and breadth of learning that will be acquired from each module. Modules will align with specific learning outcomes, standards and/or units of competency to be achieved through training. Expected level of outcome should be clearly identified. The outcome expected from this course is to equip the target group with necessary skills to be able to access and apply e-tourism skills in the enterprise.

**Nominal hours** will need to be assigned to each module. These hours should be an accurate indicator of the duration of supervised structured learning and assessment activity required to sufficiently address the content of the unit.

**Course delivery mode** will support flexible delivery options. This could involve on line training, computer managed learning, self paced or other mode that support the existing workforce to gain and apply these skills into the tourism industry context in the 4 districts being supported by the S4IG program. Mentoring to support implementation should also be considered. The selected consultant will have to propose an innovative, technological and interactive training pedagogy using various training modalities.

**Training schedule** will need to be proposed and be appropriate for the targeted group.

**Course assessment:** The consultant will provide the assessment criteria for each module and ensure it is clearly aligned with achievement of Standards or Units of Competence. This will include reference to:

- **Performance evidence:** Specifies process and product evidence and the frequency/volume of evidence that needs to be collected by an assessor to determine competence.
- **Knowledge evidence:** Specifies knowledge a learner must have to perform the work tasks described in the unit of competency.
- **Assessment conditions:** Specifies conditions, methods, contexts and resources required for assessment.

It is expected that the final course design should be validated by an E-tourism committee consisting of 2 potentially participating SMEs, S4IG staff, Representatives from FCCI and Chambers of Commerce, Industry Associations and representatives of the training providers that will be the ultimate providers of the course (Eastern University and SLITHM and MSDVT/TVEC). The composition and arrangements supporting the effective functioning of the committee will be determined by the S4IG program.
2. Develop course content and training material

To provide modular learning materials aligned with specific standards/units of competence and specified learning outcomes. Learning materials should provide resources for trainers, student workbooks and assessment criteria. The content for each module will be prepared by the service provider and be detailed enough for trained trainers to deliver the training on their own when required through this assignment.

This should include:
- Necessary presentation materials for theory components – trainer notes and resources
- Digital Toolbox with all necessary reference links, software information selected for targeted group, reference documents, guidelines and tutorial videos
- Exercises and practical research
- Implementation assignments.
- Assessment criteria/tools per module.

The material will be prepared and provided exclusively in a digital format, free from Copyright and intellectual property. The use of Free Online Courses, Mooc (Massive Open Online Course) and u-tube tutorials are highly recommended when available and appropriate with or without facilitators support. Each training module should be capable of delivery independently or as a set of modules.

3. Pilot delivery of E-tourism modules

The service provider will test the course as a pilot initially to ensure it is relevant to the context of the 4 Districts and capable of replication by selected training providers. The pilot will involve delivery of all modules to 2 batches of 25 participants in the Eastern Province (total of 50 participants). This will enable the consultant to fine-tune the design and the material. This will then inform completion of the modules, the training the trainers, the validation of the assessment system and evaluate progress of the first participants.

It will be the responsibility of S4IG to recruit potential MSME participants.

4. Training of trainers:

It is expected that a group of 40 trainers will be trained on this skill set to secure duplication and dissemination of the course in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka. The service provider will need to propose a strategy for the training of trainers and an online mentoring system to support their work during the implementation of the e-tourism course. It is expected that the initial train the trainer course would be no more than 3 days.

It will be the responsibility of S4IG to recruit potential trainers (the participants will be trainers from existing training providers or industry experts willing to perform this training).

5. Service Provider / Consultant’s profile

The Consultant/Service provider should have the following qualifications:
- Demonstrated experience in developing e-tourism training content or educational materials in a relevant context;
- Proven experience in developing and delivering e-tourism training and education in a relevant context;
- Demonstrated expertise in supporting tourism business apply online marketing, online tourism and digital world services;
- Have a dedicated pool of trainers and experts specialised on E-tourism subjects;
- Familiar with TVET/skills development system and with NVQ of Sri Lanka;
- Excellent writing and communication skills in English;
- Demonstrated ability to meet deadlines and work under pressure to produce deliverables;
- Excellent networking ability with the stakeholders in the country including government agencies, industries, NGOs, private training organizations, etc;
- Proven ability to develop and deliver creative and innovative work to the tourism industry in a relevant context;
- Provide clear roles and responsibilities of the project team, including current and validated CVs. All functional responsibilities of the key people to be engaged in the development and delivery phases of this assignment must be specified.

All the products, materials and resources provided and/or developed will be provided in a copyright clear format and will become the property of the government of Sri Lanka and the S4iG for distribution, ownership and use throughout the tourism and hospitality sector of the economy. It is at the discretion of the S4iG Program to determine the format, the design, the artwork and the publishing of the materials and resources developed.

**Time line and duration**

The consultant/Service Provider will implement the activities under this TOR for a maximum 60 days period. The assignment is expected to commence from 1st of July 2018.

**Mode of submission of the proposal**

The S4iG Program will provide advice to service providers and developers of training materials to enable the consultant to prepare tender submissions in writing.

Proposal should then be submitted in two parts;

**A) Technical Proposal including**
- Letter of Interest, stating why you consider your firm suitable for the assignment;
- Full methodology on the approach and implementation of the assignment;
- An updated CV of technical personnel proposed for this project
- highlighting qualifications and experience in similar projects;
- three Work/professional references - provide three contact details (addresses, mobile numbers and e-mail addresses) of referees
- institutions and contact details of at least three companies for whom you have undertaken similar project for
- Evidence of learning materials developed in the e-tourism which is the applicant’s own previous work.
- Detailed plan to develop the learning materials.
- Detailed plan to develop two sessions to fine tune the curriculum and TOT training.

**B) Financial proposal**

Indicate consultancy fee and a breakdown of expenses (unit price together with any other expenses) related to the assignment. Detailed break-down of all estimated costs, including
estimated days of field visits, meetings with chamber staff, writing materials, validating materials, travel costs, etc should be submitted. An overall management fee should be specified in the total sum, no additional payments will be made outside of the total budget.

Timeframe and duration of the assignment

- The consultant/ Service Provider will design and develop the e-tourism course requirements under this TOR for a maximum 60 days period. The assignment is expected to commence from 1st of August 2018.
- The service provider will make a proposal to develop and support trainers with implementation of the e-training course.
- A detailed timeline, work plan and e-tourism content outline should be submitted within 10 days of commencing this assignment.
- A development schedule should be provided prior to commencing the development of materials.
- The draft of each module learning material and assessment tool should be provided to S4IG for review, comments and approval in consultation with the proposed e-tourism steering committee.
- The draft training of trainer program should be provided to S4IG for review, comments and approval prior to completion or implementation of the training of trainers.

Deliverables in this assignment

- An inception report that will include the implementation strategy, plus a detailed development schedule will be presented within 10 days of commencement of the assignment;
- 5 copies each of the final training package to be delivered in the following mediums:
  - Printed
  - soft copy

Selection process

There will be two-step selection process. Based on the following evaluation criteria, three shortlisted firms/consultants with highest points will be invited to present their concept to S4IG Program in Sri Lanka or by video conference. The winning offer will be selected after the presentation of the 3 proposals.

Evaluation criteria are as follows:

- Expertise of the company: Samples of previous works of similar nature as well as full list of training products completed and in process: 20%.
- Proposed methodology, approach (creative and innovative ideas) and implementation plan with proposed timeframe for development: 40%.
- CVs of the key team members to be used on the assignment 20%.
- Financial proposal: 20%.

1. Payment terms

Payments of total budget will be processed upon delivery of the following deliverables along with invoice:

1. Detailed timeline, work plan and draft outline (10%)
2. Detailed development schedule (20%)
3. First draft of training package and approval from E-Tourism committee (30%)
4. Deliver the Project documents & all materials (10%)
5. Final training package (20%)
6. Completion of Training of trainers (10%)

2. **General conditions: procedures and logistics**

- The final product i.e. the training materials and project documents, should be delivered to S4IG on an external hard drive no later than October 15th 2018.
- In case of late delivery of services and unsatisfactory performance on behalf of the Contractor, S4IG may refuse to accept delivery of all or part of the services and claim liquidated damages.
- All the products, materials and resources provided and/or developed will be provided in a copyright clear format and will become the property of the S4IG.
- In the event of the consultant ending the contract prior to delivering all agreed upon products, a portion of the payments shall be returned to the S4IG office.
- The contractor undertakes to maintain confidentiality on all information that is not the public domain and shall not be involved in another assignment that represents a conflict of interest to the prevailing assignment. The Contractor shall undertake to refrain from promoting any political or religious beliefs in the E Tourism training package which is the subject of this contract.

Interested companies/consultants should submit the proposals in sealed envelopes. Proposal should contain detailed breakdown of the budget, CV s of the persons involved, previous work experience until the 20th of June 2018.

Team Leader  
Skills for Inclusive Growth program  
5, Rosairo lane  
Batticaloa  
Sri Lanka - 30000

enquiries@inclusivegrowth.com.lk