

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **Research Institute or Think Tank for Policy Research on Higher Education in Cambodia**

#### **I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

- Project : USAID-Digital Workforce Development (DWD)
- Type of contract : Research Services
- Assignment type : Consulting Firm, Research Institute, or Think Tank
- Duty station : Phnom Penh
- Language : English
- Starting Date: : 01 May 2024

#### **II. BACKGROUND AND PROJECT SUMMARY**

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organisation committed to improving lives and expanding opportunities across Asia and the Pacific. Informed by 70 years of experience and deep local knowledge, our work is focused on governance, climate action, gender equality, education and leadership, inclusive growth, and international cooperation. The Foundation works in more than 20 countries through our 17 permanent country offices and programs across Asia and the Pacific, supported by a headquarters in San Francisco and an office in Washington, DC.

The Foundation is one of the implementing partners of the USAID Digital Workforce Development Project in Cambodia (USAID DWD), which is a five-year (2021-2026) project funded by the USAID through the University of California at Berkeley. The project aims to engage private sector partners to assist with the development of needed, transferable skills, as well as the creation of internship and scholarship models that increase access to quality certifications and bachelor's degree programs for diverse, talented students.

The main objective (goal) of USAID-DWD is to integrate Cambodian youth into more open and free platforms for employable digital skills and/or to pursue higher educational opportunities in ICT nationally, regionally, or internationally. This translates to three specific objectives: (1) Strengthen targeted ICT certification, short courses, and non-degree and degree programs offered by Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs); (2) Enhance the capacity of Cambodian HEIs to meet accreditation standards; and (3) Increase scholarship, internship, and networking opportunities to support practical skill building and linkages to job opportunities for Cambodian youth.

The USAID Digital Workforce Development targets youth from Cambodia. The project works in partnership with local stakeholders, including but not limited to HEIs and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) who will design and implement educational programs aimed at improving professional and educational development for Cambodian youth, which will result in benefits for Cambodia's society as a whole.

#### **III. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF WORK**

Under this project, the Foundation is seeking a research partner to conduct research on “**Alternative Finance Options for Students in ICT-Related Education**” to explore alternative finance options for students pursuing information and communications technology (ICT)-related education and training programs. As the demand for ICT skills continues to grow, it is essential to ensure that financial barriers do not prevent aspiring students from accessing quality education and training in this field. The goal is to identify and evaluate various alternative financing mechanisms that can help students overcome financial constraints and pursue ICT education. However, the specific objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To identify the financial challenges faced by students seeking ICT-related education and training programs,
2. To explore existing alternative finance options available to students in the ICT field
3. To evaluate the effectiveness and feasibility of different alternative finance options
4. To provide recommendations and policy suggestions to enhance access to ICT education through alternative finance mechanisms.

#### IV. DELIVERABLES AND DEADLINE

Milestones	Description Activities	Outputs/Deliverables	Payment	Deadline
1	<p>Review existing documents provided by TAF to get more insight and context into the USAID-DWD project.</p> <p>Write and produce the literature review and research design, methodology (sample size, sampling technique, and more).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submission of a detailed research plan for the Foundation's approval.</li> </ul>	30%	April 2024
2	<p>Draft a research report including recommendations and suggestions.</p> <p>Present the result of the research to USAID-DWD project team and key stakeholders / technical experts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submission of Draft 1 of the research.</li> <li>• Facilitate a validation workshop to present research methods, process, and findings.</li> <li>• Use outcomes of validation workshop to inform Draft 2.</li> </ul>	40%	July 2024
3	<p>Revise the research report based on the comments and suggestions from the workshop and the team's review and comments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submission of final research report.</li> </ul>	20%	August 2024
4	<p>Present the research and findings during the Annual ICT Conference 2024.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the research slides for presentation.</li> <li>• Attend as a presenter for the annual ICT Conference</li> </ul>	10%	August 2024

#### V. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

##### Academic Background:

- The lead researcher should have a master's degree / PhD in education or Higher Education, Social work, Research, Policy, Project or Program Management, Monitoring and Evaluation, or a related field.

## **Experience:**

- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities in exploring alternative finance options for students in ICT-related education.
- In-depth understanding of Cambodia's Micro Finance and funding
- Have a strong partnership, affiliations, or collaborations with organizations and stakeholders in this industry.
- Commit to ethical research practices, data privacy, and compliance with relevant regulations.
- Emphasize the impact and effectiveness of your research in influencing decision-making.
- Proven ability to deliver outputs within strict deadlines.
- Any related experience in working with NGOs and universities would be a plus.
- Commit to ethical research practices, data privacy, and compliance with relevant regulations.
- Be proficient in English (Khmer as a native)

## **VI. APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

An interested firm/organization is requested to submit the following:

1. Organizational background and application (1-2 pages)
2. Proposal with estimated budget (3 pages)
3. Workplan and research team's CVs (1-2 pages)

*Note: The budget allocated for this research activity is between USD14,000 – USD16,000.*

Please submit your application to [recruitment.cambodia@asiafoundation.org](mailto:recruitment.cambodia@asiafoundation.org)

Applications should be submitted by **28 March 2024, at 5:00 pm local time** with the subject **“Research Partner, USAID DWD.”**

**The Asia Foundation  
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Phnom Penh, Cambodia**

*Only short-listed applicants will be contacted.*