**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**for**

**Digital Caravan Across Serbia – Toward People Centered Services**

# Background Information

Digitalization is increasingly becoming the backbone of any and all functional restructuring in the public sector, an objective driver of change management and a precondition for transformative development. Going digital, being a horizontal measure, is also accelerating the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (in further text: SDG). While it directly falls under SDG 16, e-Governance is contributing to building stronger institutions – effective, accountable and transparent – at all levels.

The Government of Serbia (GoS), elected in June 2017, has prioritized the digital transformation of the national economy and state administration. The Prime Minister's Keynote Address at the Parliament stressed digitalization and education as the most important catalysts of innovations, competitiveness and growth for Serbia in the coming years. It also stressed the need for a rapid digitalization of public administration and provision of integrated, secure and citizen-focused electronic services. This political support materialized in August 2017, when the new Government formed the Office for IT and e-Government (OITeG) and appointed the Prime Minister as head of the Council for Innovative Entrepreneurship and Information Technologies (IT Council).

In addition, the Government of Serbia has requested assistance from the World Bank in supporting the reform efforts, through a loan. To this effect, the World Bank has initiated the Enabling Digital Governance Project (EDGE). The Project, launched back in April 2019, and restructured in June 2024, aims at contributing to development of the digitalization in Serbia, through implementation of the following components:

*Component 1: Foundations for Digital Service Delivery*

The objective of this component is to establish the necessary cross-cutting foundations to support the use of ICTs in the provision of public services to citizens, and businesses, including inter alia, regulations, standards, and digital infrastructure.

*Component 2. Citizen-Centric Digital Services*

The objective of this component is to support the three dimensions of project objectives—access, quality, and efficiency of e-services: (a) integrate change management and citizen engagement activities into this digital transformation process; (b) strengthen the institutional capacity of the OITeG and other key stakeholders for leading and coordinating intergovernmental activities in an agile, user-centric way; and (c) streamline the implementation arrangements through a partnership between OITeG and Public Policy Secretariat (PPS) of the Prime Minister’s office.

*Component 3. Digital Skills Development and Project Management*

This component focuses on the integration of change management, communication, and citizen feedback into Component 2.

For the purposes of effectively managing and coordinating EDGE and future Projects with International Financial Institutions (IFI) financing, the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) has been founded at the OITeG.

Digital literacy is a critical challenge for Serbia's transition to a digital economy. Currently, 51% of the Serbian population is considered digitally illiterate, 14.8% are partially literate, and only 34.2% literate. This puts Serbia below the average of other OECD countries and the European Union, where about 40% of the population is believed to lack adequate digital skills.

A closer look at digital illiteracy in Serbia reveals a gender gap: 54% are women, 45% are men. The 2021 International Telecommunication Union report shows that 78.8% of the female population in Serbia uses the internet, compared to 83.6% of the male population. This digital divide significantly hinders women's use of e-government services, participation in digital education, and pursuit of ICT careers.

To tackle these challenges in previous period, the Serbian government has initiated an extensive national campaign called the Digital Expedition, as part of the Digital Skills Development Strategy adopted in 2020. The campaign's goal was to educate the public on utilizing digital government services, engaging in e-commerce, and responsibly using social media. The inaugural Digital Expedition in 2021 reached 24 cities and towns across Serbia, bringing together over 35,000 citizens for one-day workshops and discussions.

# Objectives

The primary objective of the activity is to apply an already established approach to digital service development, which—based on lessons learned from the previous Digital Expedition—serves as a foundation for improving specific services, enhancing their effectiveness, reducing exclusion, addressing discrimination, and expanding access to a greater number of citizens.

Building on the success of previous digital upskilling initiatives and aligning with the new people-centric approach, the new intervention will concentrate on two main thematic areas:

1. **Digital Upskilling for Various Community Groups**: This includes citizens, children and youth, the elderly, civil servants in local self-governments, startups and small business owners, preferably led by women. The program will be customized to meet the specific needs of each target group or region. Feedback collected will inform the program's design in collaboration with local partners who will continue to engage in digital upskilling efforts.
2. **Engagement of Local Partners**: This involves onboarding local partners to sustain the digital upskilling efforts and maintain ongoing engagement with local municipalities and citizens.

Planned activities may be conducted within some of the following regions: Vojvodina, Belgrade, Western Serbia&Šumadija and Southern&Eastern Serbia, targeting strategically chosen municipalities.

# Scope and Phases

The selected firm will be responsible for executing the following tasks:

The next phase of the Digital Caravan aims to significantly broaden and deepen its geographic coverage across Serbia and enhance local community engagement.

The Digital Caravan will be implemented in five (5) strategically selected municipalities, with the aim of deeper inclusion of local communities and strengthening their digital capacities. In partnership with the selected Consulting firm, the Office for IT and eGovernment (OITEG) will conduct activities in close cooperation with local stakeholders, including self-governments, health centers, civil society organizations, small and medium enterprises, startups, as well as the technology communities.

Based on the framework established in the Inception Report, an Operational Plan will be developed. This plan may include stakeholder mapping, scheduling of key activities, allocation of responsibilities, and resource planning, and it can incorporate a customized engagement plan for each municipality. The engagement plan can be tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of each local community and may include activities targeting different age groups, aiming to foster intergenerational cooperation and develop essential skills for local digital transformation. The timeline and pace of implementation will remain flexible and may be adjusted according to available capacities and local conditions.

The Digital Caravan program can be customized for each municipality while following a general structure that may cover topics and formats such as e-governance, digital skills, open data, digital economy, and digital literacy.

Activities will be tailored to meet the needs of various audiences, including:

* Citizens of various ages: For example, workshops and on-site engagements covering e-services, e-health services, e-identity, e-signature, and e-payment, such as guidance on how to use the e-government portal and make secure online payments.
* Civil servants in local self-governments: For example, interactive workshops to enhance skills and knowledge of e-government and the OITEG offerings (”eZUP”, “eŠalter”, “Pisarnica”…). The program will also improve the capacity of self-governments to engage with citizens and businesses on digital issues.
* Elderly: For example, interactive workshops at local retirement clubs teaching basic digital skills such as using cell phones, internet navigation, messaging apps, e-commerce, e-identity, and the e-government portal, including practical tips like how to send messages via WhatsApp or shop online safely.
* Startups and Small Businesses (preferably women-led): For example, interactive workshops on using eGovernment services for businesses and eRegistration, such as how to register a new business online or submit digital tax forms.

The core program of the Digital Caravan will consist of five main events held in strategically selected municipalities, with the aim of directly engaging local communities and promoting the development of digital skills among diverse target groups. Whenever possible, implementation will be aligned with periods of heightened local activity to maximize community participation. However, the timing, scope, and locations of the activities may be adjusted based on local conditions and logistical considerations. If needed, hybrid or alternative implementation models will be explored to ensure broad accessibility and maintain the quality of community engagement.

The Office for IT and eGovernment together with relevant stakeholders will support and implement the initiative, which will be carried out with local stakeholders. OITEG will also draw on an already existing broad network of public sector partners, civil society and community experts. These include not only local governments, but also civil society organizations, local organizations, universities, the local private sector, science and technology parks, etc.

# Key outputs and indicators

This activity should account for the following outputs and contribute to reaching to listed targets:

* Number of municipalities visited: **5 (five municipalities) –** including cities with more than 100.000 inhabitants, cities with 50.000 – 100.000, and towns with 30.000 – 50.000 inhabitants – Followed by reports on each event, as specified in the Deliverables;
* Increase in number of citizens and businesses accessing e-services available on e-portal: **100.000 (one hundred) users** – supported by official statistics of the number of users on eGovernment Portal, prior and after each event;
* Digital Caravan should serve as a channel for promoting and educating citizens on newly digitalized e-services and in this respect should contribute to overall user satisfaction by at least **5 (five) percent –** followed by additional analysis ofchange in user satisfaction with eServices prior and prior and after each event;
* Part of the objectives of the Digital Caravan is to educate local government officials about services and tools available for their work. This activity should provide trainings for **100 (one hundred)** local government officials – followed by submission of training reports, containing listed participants after each event.

# Deliverables

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *#* | **Deliverable** | **Deadline** |
| *1* | **Inception Report** | *4 weeks after signing the contract* |
| *2* | **Operational Plan*** Detailed plan for conducting the events with defined locations and schedule
 | *6 weeks after signing the contract* |
| *3* | **Report on the First Two Events*** With the analysis of collected citizen feedback and outreach analysis
 | *15 weeks after contract signing* |
| *4* | **Report on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Event*** With the analysis of collected citizen feedback and outreach analysis
 | *29 weeks after signing the contract* |
| *5* | **Final Report*** With the roadmap for further rollout and development of the activity
 | *31 weeks after signing the contract* |

# Timeframe and duration

The Consultant shall provide services under lump sum Contract paid upon acceptance of deliverables. The Consultant shall perform the Services until the Closing Date of the Project is May 31, 2026.

# Consultant Qualifications

* The Consulting firm must demonstrate substantial experience in supporting digital transformation initiatives.
* Proven experience in successfully implementing digital transformation projects in the public sector, particularly those enhancing citizen-centric services, will be considered a strong advantage.
* The consulting firm must have experience working directly with local governments (municipalities and cities), including supporting institutional capacity building, improving digital services, and integrating local administrations into national eGovernment platforms.
* Experience in mentoring, training, implementing digital tools, and maintaining a network of local partners in cooperation with public administration will be considered a strong advantage.
* The consulting firm must have experience engaging a wide range of local stakeholders — including local governments, civil society, academia, healthcare and educational institutions — to support digital inclusion and the sustainable development of local digital capacities.
* The Consulting firm must demonstrate the ability to conduct detailed user experience research and assess local digital needs in order to identify gaps in existing services and develop targeted recommendations for improving digital inclusion and the quality of e-services.
* The Consulting firm must prove expertise in developing methodological frameworks, strategic and operational plans, as well as preparing timely and high-quality reports with analyses and recommendations for key national and local decision makers.
* Experience with projects funded by or carried out in partnership with the World Bank, along with familiarity with digital transformation initiatives, will be highly advantageous.
* Experience in partnerships with relevant government institutions (such as the Office for IT and eGovernment, Ministry of Information and Telecommunication, and others) as well as with international donors and organizations, will be an additional plus.
* The Consulting firm must demonstrate a sound knowledge of the Serbian legal and institutional framework relevant to digital governance and administrative procedures.

# Team and Technical requirements

## Key Expert 1: Project Manager / Team Leader with experience in managing public or donor-funded projects, supporting team coordination, collaborating with various stakeholders, and contributing to project planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

## Key Expert 2: E-GOV Expert with experience supporting digital transformation efforts in public administration, contributing to the development of eGovernment services, and coordinating with stakeholders to improve processes at local or national levels.

## Key Expert 3: Stakeholder and Community Engagement Manager with experience supporting stakeholder engagement, community outreach, and coordinating communication among government bodies, civil society, the private sector, and local communities to facilitate inclusive project implementation.

## Key Expert 4: Digital Skills Training Specialist with experience in supporting the preparation and delivery of digital skills training activities, assisting in the development of training materials, and supporting the overall facilitation of training activities.

## Key Expert 5/6: Event Manager (at least two) with experience in planning, coordinating, and implementing various events, supporting logistical arrangements, and helping engage multiple stakeholders in line with project goals and visibility requirements.

## Non-Key Expert 1: Project Assistant with experience in supporting administrative work for project teams, maintaining documentation, tracking activities, as well as assisting in the organization of meetings or events. Good communication skills are considered an asset.

## Non-Key Expert 2: Financial Coordinator with experience in supporting financial management, budgeting, and reporting, including assistance in monitoring project finance, ensuring proper documentation, and supporting compliance and audit procedures.

## Non-Key 3: Communication Assistant with experience in various communication-related tasks, including supporting outreach activities, assisting in content creation, and contributing to media relations and stakeholder engagement to enhance project visibility.

# Evaluation

The Consultant which obtains the highest score during evaluation of expressions of interest will be invited to submit technical and financial proposals.