**PRIMARY EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**Impact Evaluation specialist for the School Grants Program**

1. **Background of the Project**

The Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP) objective is to improve conditions for learning in primary education in North Macedonia.

The Project supports the Government of North Macedonia’s initiatives geared to:

* improve learning environment at the primary level;
* increase number of primary education teachers with proven professional practice in two core teacher professional competencies i.e. teaching and learning and creating a stimulating learning environment;
* improve quality of teaching practices; and
* implement school improvement plans that use performance data and monitoring tools for improving student learning.

The project is organized around three main elements that need to be aligned in order to be complementary to each other:

*Component 1* focuses on school-level interventions, which are closest to students and most likely to impact learning while also mitigating and recovering learning losses generated by COVID-19. Two enabling elements are system-level reforms that would create the necessary enabling conditions so the school teachers are empowered with data on learning and up-to-date training.

*Component 2* aims to develop a comprehensive national assessment program to inform both school improvement planning and professional development programs, serving to link the school and system levels.

*Component 3* aims to operationalize the professional competences for educators, improve in-service professional development, and begin to reform pre-service teacher professional development. Together, these elements will provide adequate information, tools, training and support to create effective and improved conditions for learning and ultimately increase student achievement.

Component 4 supports strengthening sector management, project management and monitoring and evaluation.

The project activities are targeted toward building the foundation of a modern and efficient primary education system that is orienting all parts of the system toward learning.

The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) is the main implementing agency of the Project in close cooperation with the National Examination Center (NEC), the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE) and the State Educational Inspectorate (SEI). Direct beneficiaries of the project are primary education students, but focused support isgiven to those students who are vulnerable (Roma, girls, students disproportionally affected by the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic) which are expected to benefit from improved learning and physical environment in the schools as well as from better-trained teachers. Primary education teachers, school principals, and Multi-Professional Support Teams (MPSTs) will benefit from more efficient professional development and career advancement, teaching aids, and grant program to implement their school improvement plans.

**1.1. Specific information/background regarding the assignment**

The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) through the Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP) has started with activities aiming at improving the quality assurance system. The primary objective is to modernize and synchronize the self-evaluation and the integral evaluation systems as well as provide advice for improving the School Improvement Plan (SIP) scheme. The school improvement cycle that currently exists is in a phase of revision to ensure that the schools’ decision-making autonomy is harnessed towards school improvement and school teams can clearly identify the benefit from the self-evaluation and production of SIPs. The SIPs produced must convincingly demonstrate ways to improve student learning outcomes, entitling some schools to receive grants to implement their ideas.

Following a thorough evaluation of the quality assurance mechanisms and practices in primary schools, coupled with the revision of SIPs, a Grant Program is being developed. This program aims to address the identified deficiencies highlighted by the quality assessment, while also fostering mechanisms that encourage school accountability through the sharing of information.

The primary objective of the Grant Program is to ensure that students in primary education reap the benefits of enhanced teaching and learning quality, as well as the overall functioning of schools. This, in turn, will lead to improved academic achievements and contribute to better student performance in international assessments.

As an additional goal, the Grant Program is expected to encourage the development of staff capacities in schools for the successful implementation of processes related to monitoring the quality of the school's operation, using various sources of information during developmental planning and taking specific measures for promoting the quality of work.

The Grant Program will support activities related to specific topics from the following four areas of the work of the schools, defined in the framework of Indicators for the Quality of Work of the Primary Schools (IQWS), revised within the Project in 2023:

Area 1: Planning and implementation of teaching and learning

Area 2: Student achievement

Area 3: School climate

Area 4: Management, leadership and policymaking

The Operational Manual for implementing the Grant Program for Improving the quality of work of the Primary Schools is in a process of preparation and it will contain all the information, as well as the rules and procedures to be followed when applying, awarding grants on a competitive basis and implementing the grants.

The key instrument for implementing the grants will be the Agreement signed between the MoES on the one hand and a Primary School on the other.

**2. Objective of the assignment and scope of work**

The objective of this consultancy assignment is to measure the effect of the implemented grant activities during the overall period of the implementation of the Grant Program (foreseen to be implemented in the school years 2023/2024 as pilot phase and 2024/2025).

More specifically, the Consultant shall:

•Propose and agree with the MoES on the grant program Impact Evaluation methodology to be applied and design the respective data collection tools for its successful implementation (structured questionnaire, focus groups if any, etc.);

* Propose the sample size and sampling strategy for the surveys;
* Organize the process of data collection. During the first round of piloting phase (2023/2024) having that the outreach of the program is small, the data collection process is to be done by the Consultant with the support of the MoES and PEIPProject Management Unit (PMU). The consultant shall propose data that needs to be collected. The baseline data collection shall be done before the program launch (September 2023);
* In the next year of the implementation of the Grant Program (2024/2025) due to the increased coverage of the program, the Consultant may require the support from professional high-quality survey firm that would be selected by the MoES under a separate procurement procedure. In this regardthe Consultant shall assist the PEIPPMU in drafting Terms of Reference for selection of the firm to carry out the surveys and to provide professional guidance to the company in the data collection and data entry process;
* Based on the collected data the consultant shall analyze the data so as to arrive at a statistically sound identification of the impact (effect size) of the selected interventions;
* Draft the reports on the impact of the Grant measures and suggest possible improvements and redesign if needed;
* Work together with the MoES to prepare a plan to disseminate the results of the Evaluation.

The consultant will work under the overall guidance of the PEIP Project Director. The consultant will work closely with the Grants Coordinator and Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist at the PEIP PMU.

**3. Reporting obligations, key deliverables and milestones**

The consultant shall prepare and deliver the following reports:

1. Study design, structured questionnaire for the baseline and follow-up surveys or any other tool that is suggested by the study design;
2. Reports on the effect of the Grant program for each school year prior and during the implementation of the program- baseline and follow up reports (estimated reporting for the school years 2023/2024 (baseline report) and 2024/2025 (follow up report).

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|  | **Deliverables** | **Timeline** |
|  | Inception Report, including draft survey instruments/methodology for the baseline study | September 2023 |
|  | Data collection report for the baseline | December 2023 |
|  | Reports on the effect of the Grant program for the baseline | February 2024 |
|  | Inception Report, including draft survey instruments/methodology for the follow up study | September 2025 |
|  | Data collection report for the follow up | December 2025 |
|  | Reports on the effect of the Grant program for the follow up | February 2026 |
|  | Presentations and other reports, as requested by PMU | As necessary |

4**. Qualifications and requirements**

The Consultant selected for this task should have:

* Master’s degree in economics or similar discipline;
* Experience with at least 2 IE undertaken in the past 10 years.
* Proven relevant experience in impact evaluation in education;Experience with impact evaluation in developing countries, particularly inNorth Macedonia and/or the Western Balkan region would be an advantage;
* Proven analytical, problem-solving and quantitative skills, including statistical packages;
* Proven ability to build capacity of government officials;
* Excellent oral and writing skills in English;
* Publication track record is desirable;
* Experience on World Bank or other IFIs projects will be an advantage;
* Excellent English language skills.

**5. Contract Arrangements**

* The contract for this assignment will be until February 2026. Expected start of services is July 2023.
* The Consultant is expected to work in North Macedonia. If the Consultant does not reside in North Macedonia he/she must be available online and must be able to travel to North Macedonia as needed. It is anticipated that work will require at least two trips to North Macedonia.
* The contract will be lump sum. Payments will be based on deliverables and payment requests in line with the terms and conditions stipulated in the contract.