SCM /Tender Ref #:	RFP 03 2023/24

Request for proposals for:	**Policy Assessment for Harnessing Technology and Innovation for the Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women.**

1. BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

Gender equality is a constitutional human right in South Africa. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 provides for the establishment a democratic system of government committed to achieve equality between men and women, as well as all people of all races by providing for the prohibition of racial, gender and all other forms of discrimination. Section 9 (2) of the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2) (Constitution of the RSA 1996) stipulates that: "[E]quality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken."

The 67th Commission on the Status of Women session in 2023 considered the priority theme: Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The National Development Plan (NDP) identifies science, technology and innovation as a primary driver of economic growth, job creation and socio-economic reform. Central to this identification is the emphasis of the 2019 White Paper on Science, Technology and Innovation on the themes of inclusivity, transformation and partnerships. The White Paper is aimed at improving policy coherence, developing human capabilities, expanding knowledge, improving innovation performance and increasing investment. Comprehensive regulatory frameworks and legislation over digital technologies and services, as well as multi-stakeholder efforts and initiatives, are crucial in the provision of and access to affordable and reliable connectivity and ICTs to close the gender digital divide and in the protection and respect of women's and girls' rights online and offline.

Emerging technologies have the potential to help achieve a large number of the SDGs and may contribute greatly to improvements in the well-being, education, health and livelihoods of women and girls. Innovation and digital tools provide opportunities for greater access to information, education and skills and opens possibilities for increased employment and business opportunities. They allow for services that improve access to health, legal and financial services, and allows traders to access global markets for their products. Digital access also helps raise women and girls' awareness of their rights, increase

their civic engagement and expression of ideas and opinions, their participation in creative and cultural practices, leisure and in connecting with peers.

The department undertakes research on specific government priorities to determine the responsiveness of government's programmes and policies to the needs and priorities for women, youth and persons with disabilities. The policy assessment provides a unique opportunity for South Africa to undertake an analysis to determine the responsiveness and impacts of innovation and technology policies and programmes on women in all their diversity. The assessment also provides an opportunity to identify pathways, opportunity areas to improve the access and participation in technology and innovation. It is against this background that the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities is inviting potential service providers to submit proposals to undertake a policy assessment on "Harnessing Technology and Innovation for economic empowerment of women, youth and persons with disabilities''.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT / PURPOSE

According to the United Nation's Secretary General's report (2023), digital technologies are rapidly transforming society, simultaneously allowing for unprecedented advances to improve social and economic outcomes for women and girls, but also giving rise to profound new challenges that may perpetuate and deepen existing patterns of gender inequalities. Since 2020, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19-pandemic has magnified the unequal race of digital transformation within and across countries and shown how this is being layered over structural and systemic barriers, which translates into unequal opportunities for women and girls.

The digital revolution brings immense potential to improve social and economic outcomes for women. However it also poses the risk of perpetuating existing patterns of gender inequality. A significant digital gender gap remains, limiting the equitable realisation of the benefits of digital transformation across high -, low - and middle-income countries.

Globally, 62 per cent of men are using the internet compared with 57 per cent of women. While that gender digital divide has been narrowing across all regions, women remain digitally marginalised in many of the world's poorest countries, where online access could potentially have its most potent effect. The gaps are rooted in long-standing and persistent stereotypes, which also have an impact on women's participation and leadership in innovation processes. Studies have identified a "gender equality paradox", showing that these stereotypes are even stronger among high-achieving students in countries

that rank higher on some gender equality indices or in sectors that require disruptive technical skills and offer higher wages**.**

3. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF PROJECT

The purpose of the assignment is to undertake an in-depth review of the legislative and policy frameworks and interventions / programmes at national level on technology and Innovation in South Africa, using a gender lens, and through a feminist theoretical framework, to assess the extent of gender mainstreaming for the socio-economic empowerment of women in the sector. The study should also focus on key gender gaps, access and participation, human endowments and economic opportunities. Furthermore, the assessment should involve undertaking an analytical review to identify key entry points for harnessing technology and innovation for economic empowerment, access and participation by women, young women and persons with disabilities. The assessment will also involve an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunity and threats with regard to the advancement of the interest of women, youth and persons with disabilities.

The findings of the policy assessment will contribute to knowledge building to inform interventions, implementation, and evaluation of science, technology and innovation programmes for the promotion of access, participation and economic empowerment of women, young women and persons with disabilities. Specifically, the study seeks to address the following questions:

3.1. What are the current legislative and policy frameworks that guide South Africa on Science, technology and innovation?

3.2. To what extent does the current legislative and policy framework consider women, young women and women with disabilities (access, participation and economic empowerment)

3.3. What are the key enabling policy provisions that support access, participation and empowerment of women, in all their diversity?

3.4. How have these gender gaps changed over time and across different groups (women, young women and women with disabilities) especially in the context of access, and participation?

3.5. What are the barriers that constrain advancements in gender equality in Technology and Innovation?

3.6. What are the pathways and priority areas where urgent actions are needed to support bridging key gender gaps?

3.7. What are the country specific needs, opportunities, specific drivers and constraints to women accessing and benefitting equally from the advancement of technology and innovation;

3.8. What are the practical recommendations that will provide an effective enabling environment to promote access, participation and economic empowerment of women, young women and women with disabilities?

4. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY / APPROACH

The assessment should be based on the application of a mixed method of primary and secondary research to enable the triangulation of results. The assessment should also combine an extensive review of secondary literature including analysis of relevant data and statistics as well as primary research by conducting qualitative interviews and roundtables with stakeholders representing governmental and non-governmental stakeholders (including academia, civil society organizations, and donor agencies), science and technology agencies.

Case studies and benchmarking exercise should be used to illustrate some of the opportunities for action to bridge gaps based on their success in other country contexts and their potential for replicability in the South African context.

The study must include country-level gender and technology and innovation diagnostics, technical assessments, and policy analyses for evidence-based policymaking. The potential service provider should provide a detailed methodology which describes the assessment focus area as well as the envisaged approach.

5. DELIVERABLES AND TIME FRAMES

Description	Expected date	% of project (Payment)
Project Inception	September 2023	10%
Literature review		
Best-practices and benchmarking	October 23	20%
Data collection: Participatory methodologies & consultations	October-Nov 2023	
Development and submission of Policy Assessment Report (Draft 1)	December 2023	20%
Consultation and validation	Jan – Feb 2024	20%
Submission of final report	March 2024	30%
Management Response	April 2024	
Implementation Plan/ Improvement Plan	April 2024	
Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	April 2024	

6. PROJECT MANAGEMENT / REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

The prospective service providers/ bidder should provide a clear project plan with timelines indicating how the project deliverables will be met and how the project will be managed, i.e. reference to all phases activities related to the assignment. Ensure that there is a dedicated team for the duration of the project with proven experience on gender equality and women's empowerment.

The prospective service provider will report to the Chief Director: Research and Knowledge Management in the DWYPD. A project management team comprised of the DWYPD officials and the representatives from the prospective service provider will be established. Furthermore, a Project Steering Committee will be established to provide guidance

7. PEER REVIEW

The prospective service provider should provide details of how the final deliverable/ report will be peer reviewed.

8. QUALITY ASSUARANCE MECHANISMS

The service provider should provide a detailed quality assurance mechanisms which will be applied throughout the study to ensure that the processes are rolled out in line with the industry standards and principles.