



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Provision of Technical Advice to support the implementation of the ECOWAS Ecommerce Strategy

I. CONTEXT

E-commerce and the digital economy offer new opportunities for regional integration, economic growth, industrial diversification and job creation in the ECOWAS region. Increased use of the Internet over the last 10 years mirrored in the increase in mobile Internet coverage, and a strong commitment by governments in the region to digital transformation to deliver on economic, social and environmental development goals, highlight the region's ambitions and the progress achieved. The ECOWAS region has 41% internet penetration this is a great stride from a mere 2% in 2005. More people are using the internet for commercial purposes. This increase has partly been influenced by a rise in internet penetration, the adoption of mobile devices, the development of innovative payment systems and a growing youth population.

Despite all positive factors that create an optimistic forecast for e-commerce in the region, there are still gaps when the prerequisites for cross-border e-commerce in each of the 15 ECOWAS member States are considered. These challenges relate to barriers that hamper trade facilitation, costly and unequal access to ICT infrastructure and services, insufficient online consumer protection and confidence, the low uptake of business and e-commerce skills, as well as the absence of specific data on e-commerce-related activity in the region. In addition, to provide evidence-based policy direction to advance adoption and innovation in the sector.

In July 2023, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) developed the ECOWAS E-commerce Strategy (ECS) with the objective to support ECOWAS Member States in their efforts to use technology to accelerate structural change and development, and foster regional integration, including through economic diversification, job creation and more inclusive trade activities.

The strategy is guided by all ECOWAS, African Union (AU) and African-led initiatives in ecommerce and digital development (such as the African Union's vision 2063, the African Digital Transformation Strategy), the African Continental Free-Trade Area (AfCFTA), and other relevant programmes/projects implemented by the eTrade for all Initiative and other

development partners and will also directly support the Community's efforts to promote regional cooperation and integration.

The strategy is composed of the following four strategic goals: (i): Institutional Strengthening; (ii) Secure trust along the e-commerce supply chain from producers to consumers; (iii) e-commerce intelligence: Improve access to e-commerce statistics and market information in ECOWAS; and (iv) Foster inclusion for e-commerce development in ECOWAS with a focus on Women, Youth, people with disabilities, and informal cross-border traders (ICBTs).

The ECOWAS Commission, with the support of the World Bank, is seeking to recruit a regional consultant to support the implementation of ECOWAS Ecommerce Strategy.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The objective of the assignment is to provide Technical Advise to ECOWAS in the implementation of the ECOWAS Ecommerce Strategy with a view to supporting intraregional trade, job creation and economic diversification in the ECOWAS region by leveraging on the power of technology and connectivity.

The TA would support the ECOWAS Commission and member States in creating an enabling environment for the development of e-commerce and the digital economy to enhance regional cooperation and integration on e-commerce and the digital economy.

III. DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Working under the overall guidance of the Commissioner for Economic Affairs & Agriculture at the ECOWAS Commission, and under the direct supervision of the Director of Trade Directorate, the consultant is expected to perform the following activities:

- a. Support the ECOWAS Commission in the regional coordination of the implementation, and monitoring of the ECOWAS E-commerce Strategy. This includes assisting organization of the meetings and activities of the Regional E-Commerce Committees and ensuring sustainability and inclusivity of practices to improve E-commerce.
- b. Support the ECOWAS Commission to strengthen ministries of trade with a view to supporting domestic and cross-border e-commerce development, including by preparing standard terms of reference (guidelines) on e-commerce for ministries responsible for trade.
- c. Support the ECOWAS Commission to enhance trust along the e-commerce supply chain from producers to consumers by assisting with the preparation of a strategy and consulting with relevant stakeholders to ascertain measures to be put in place to achieve this.

- d. Support the ECOWAS Commission in its efforts to improve access to statistics and market information relevant to e-commerce in ECOWAS, in collaboration with a data collection consultancy on cross-border e-commerce.
- e. Support the ECOWAS Commission to develop programmes to strengthen the capacities of digital entrepreneurs, particularly women and youth, to drive and contribute to the development of e-commerce and digital trade in the region.
- f. Support the ECOWAS Commission to identify and coordinate with technical partners on the implementation of E-commerce development activities in the region.
- g. Ensure effective coordination with all the ECOWAS Commission's Departments and offices involved in the administration of the E-Commerce Strategy;
- h. Support ECOWAS member States in the implementation of the ECOWAS ecommerce strategy including by assisting Member States in securing technical and financial support to undertake e-commerce readiness assessments or developing E-commerce strategies.

IV. DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE

The following deliverables for this assignment are as follows:

#	Deliverable	Description	Timeline
1	Plan to Improve Access to E-Commerce Statistics and Market Information	Draft a report to facilitate better access to comprehensive e-commerce statistics and market information in ECOWAS member states, in collaboration with the consultant working on data collection on E-commerce.	Months 1-2
2	Capacity Building Plan on e-Commerce Development for Ministries of Trade	Design and implement a plan to enhance the capacity of ministries of trade to support domestic and cross-border e-commerce development.	Months 1-12
3	Secure Trust Along the E-Commerce Supply Chain Strategy	Design activities to improve trust from producers to consumers including working in collaboration with a consultant to develop a strategy to secure trust along the ecommerce supply chain in ECOWAS member states	Months 8-12
4	Plan to Strengthen Capacities of Digital Entrepreneurs	Develop and implement training programs to enhance the skills and capabilities of digital entrepreneurs, with a focus on women and youth in ECOWAS member states	Months 6- 18
5	Report of the Regional E-Commerce Committee Meetings, reports of	Support the ECOWAS Commission in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the ECOWAS E-commerce Strategy at a regional level. Assist member	Months 1-18

	activities support to Member States etc.	states in the practical implementation of the ECOWAS E-commerce Strategy through guidance and support. Support organization of the meetings and activities of the Regional E-Commerce Committees and ensuring sustainability of practices to improve E-commerce.	
6	Strengthen Institutional Coordination	Support the ECOWAS Commission in identifying and coordinating with technical partners/donors to support implementation of the ECS. Support inter-departmental coordination on the implementation of the ECS within the context of the Internal Working Group on E-commerce at ECOWAS Commission.	Months 1-18

V. EXPECTED DURATION AND LOCATION

The expected duration of the assignment is eighteen (18) months.

The consultant is expected to be based in Abuja during this assignment. All travel costs and DSA will be paid separately according to prevailing ECOWAS or World Bank rules and regulations.

VI. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Qualifications and skills

- Advanced university degree (i.e. master's degree) in Trade, Law, Economics, Digital Transformation, E-Commerce, ICT, Development Studies or related field with relevance for the assignment

Professional experience

- At least seven (7) years of proven experience in trade policy formulation, regional integration and development, or related areas
- At least three (3) years of proven experience in Digital Trade/ Ecommerce
- Proven experience in at least one of each following groups of fields:
 - 1. Digital experience**
 - digital startups
 - digital development
 - digital marketing
 - 2. Indicators experience**
 - indicators frameworks
 - data analytics, or related areas.

Language

The Consultant must demonstrate proficiency in English and French. Knowledge of Portuguese can be an asset.

VII. CONTACT

For further information, please contact Mr. Kolawole Sofola, Director – Trade at ksofola@ecowas.int, keeping in copy Mr. Alpha Bah at abah@ecowas.int