



Terms of reference – Invitation procedure

‘Independent Evaluation of SDC’s Performance in Vocational Skills Development from 2017-2023’

Mandate for the period of 10.10.2023 to 30.12.2024 In Switzerland and globally

This procedure is based on the Federal Act of 21 June 2019 on Public Procurement (PPA, SR 172.056.1) and the Ordinance of 12 February 2020 on Public Procurement (PPO, SR 172.056.11).

28th July 2023

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1 Abbreviations

AC	Award criteria
Asia-LAC Division	Asia - Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Division (cf SDC Organisation)
CHF	Swiss Francs
CLP	Core Learning Partnership
DAC	Development Assistance Council (of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD)
DC dVET	Donor Committee for dual Vocational Education and Training
EC	Eligibility criteria
E+C	Evaluation and Controlling unit
E+E section	SDC's Economy and Education Section (cf SDC Organisation)
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
FOBBIZ	Swiss Forum for Skills Development and International Cooperation
GTC	General Terms and Conditions of Business
IC Strategy	Swiss International Cooperation Strategy 2021-24
IC-VPET	International Cooperation in Vocational and Professional Education and Training (IC-VPET) coordination group
LNOB	Leave no one behind
MENA–Europe Division	Middle East and North Africa (MENA) – Europe Division (cf SDC Organisation)
MDGs	(United Nations) Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
PPA	Federal Act on Public Procurement
PPO	Federal Ordinance on Public Procurement
PSD	Private Sector Development
PSE	Private Sector Engagement
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
SEVAL	Schweizerische Evaluationsgesellschaft
VAT	Value added tax
VPET	(Swiss) vocational and professional education and training (system)
VSD	Vocational Skills Development

2 Purpose of this document

These specifications describe the objectives that are to be pursued and achieved with this object of procurement. It regulates the procedure and form of the submission of tenders and, together with the General Terms and Conditions of the FDFA, the Federal Act of 21 June 2019 on Public Procurement ([PPA, SR 172.056.1](#)) and the Ordinance of 12 February 2020 on Public Procurement ([PPO, SR 172.056.11](#)) serves as the basis for the present procedure.

In the case of an invitation procedure, at least three bids shall be collected, if possible, and the Terms of Reference must also be placed on the [FDFA mandates platform](#). The contract is awarded to the most advantageous tender.

3 Goal and content of the mandate

The senior management of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has instructed the Evaluation and Controlling unit (E+C) to mandate an independent evaluation of SDC's important portfolio in the field Vocational Skills Development (VSD). SDC evaluations serve the triple purpose of informing **strategic steering**, fostering **institutional learning** and contributing to **accountability towards the Swiss Parliament** and public.

For the period of 10.10.2023 to 30.12.2024 E+C will contract an evaluation team which is independent of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and SDC¹ and has not been involved in activities covered by this evaluation, including backstopping mandates to support and accompany SDC in the field vocational skills development and related activities (see also EC 10 in annex 1a/EC).

3.1 Background

Education and training are widely recognized as catalysts for sustainable development, poverty reduction, economic growth and the creation of just and peaceful societies. Vocational skills development (VSD), in particular, can make a crucial, multi-faceted contribution to the reduction of poverty. It bridges the world of education with the world of work: individuals are better skilled and increase their chances of accessing decent employment and earning a better income. A skilled workforce can raise companies' productivity and competitiveness, which in turn can lead to improved economic growth and the creation of new employment opportunities. Through contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals SDG 4 (Inclusive Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), VSD also has an impact on SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

For more than six decades, SDC has used VSD as a means of contributing to the development of partner countries and reducing poverty and inequality. As one of the few donors which has always remained active in VSD², SDC has acquired valuable field experience and knowledge on systemic issues and possible good practices. SDC has been working hand in hand with competent specialized Swiss implementing partners and in

¹ Independence means that the members of the evaluation team have not worked for the FDFA, especially the SDC, in the past five years (except having conducted other external evaluation mandates) or have any other strong linkages or dependencies with the FDFA. Involvement in any type of operational activities on behalf of SDC (project planning or implementation or back-stopping) in any thematic field in the past five years would be considered a conflict of interest. However, involvement in non-operational mandates such as evaluations, (feasibility) studies, mapping exercises and other such activities, regardless of their thematic field, will not be considered a conflict of interest.

² The 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium brought a distinct decline in VSD activities on the global level. With the discussion and implementation of the MDGs, donors targeted their investments on literacy and basic education, leaving aside secondary levels and vocational training. SDC was one of the few donors which remained strongly committed to VSD.

collaboration with the Swiss academia, various Swiss federal agencies and other donors. Drawing inspiration from the dual vocational education and training system of Switzerland, SDC works closely with public authorities and the private sector to help develop VSD systems and to design training programmes tailored to the needs of the market and to each specific context.

While VSD has been a cornerstone of Swiss development cooperation for over six decades, it has gained more importance as a foreign policy instrument since the 2010s. Against the backdrop of economic crises and rising unemployment rates, especially among young people, at the global level, interest in the Swiss vocational and professional education and training (VPET) system has grown exponentially and Switzerland has made it one of its flagships in international relations. SDC's bilateral engagement in VSD has experienced a growth since 2015. This growth was further reinforced with [Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2017–2020](#), in which the Federal Council defined basic education and VSD as priorities and substantially increased the resources allocated to these areas (by 50% compared to the period 2013- 2016). While the [IC Strategy 2021-24](#) is less explicit about VSD, it confirms its importance at different levels. VSD is at the core of the first goal and it contributes to all three others:

- a. Contributing to sustainable economic growth, market development and the creation of decent jobs (economic development)
- b. Addressing climate change and its effects and managing natural resources sustainably (environment)
- c. Saving lives, ensuring quality basic services, especially in relation to education and healthcare, and reducing the causes of forced displacement and irregular migration (human development)
- d. Promoting peace, the rule of law and gender equality (peacebuilding and governance)

Between 2017 and 2022, SDC had a portfolio of 101 VSD projects, or projects with VSD components, in 45 countries³. The average of annual expenditures for VSD activities amounted to more than 32 million CHF, meaning that VSD activities accounted for 2.8% of SDC's bilateral activities⁴. From 2017-2022, in average 48% of SDC VSD activities (excluding core contributions) were realized through Swiss NGOs; 14% through foreign state institutions, 12% through United Nations organizations, 9% through the private sector and 9% through foreign or international NGOs.

For a more comprehensive description of SDC's understanding, approaches, priorities and the current portfolio in the field of VSD kindly refer to the sections 3.1 to 3.3 of the **Approach Paper** for the present evaluation (Annex 3).

3.2 Prior involvement

No potential tenderers were involved in preparing the invitation procedure or drafting the Terms of Reference. All tenderers who meet the criteriaset are invited to submit a bid.

3.3 Purpose, Objectives and Scope

The last independent thematic [evaluation on SDC's VSD activities](#) was carried out in 2011 and there is hence a clear need to review SDC's current orientation on VSD and to assess SDC's performance.

The overall purpose of this thematic independent evaluation is to inform the process of strategic steering, foster institutional learning and contribute to accountability towards the Swiss Parliament and public. The framework for this evaluation is set by the two latest Dispatches on Switzerland's international cooperation (2017-20 and 2021-24). The evaluation

³ Based on SAP data collected and compiled by E+C on 31.01.2023

⁴ SDC's South, East, HH bilateral activities without core contributions to CH NGOs (average of 1,132,476,810 CHF)

shall thus cover the activities implemented during a period of seven years (2017-2023) and assess the contribution of SDC's VSD portfolio to the achievement of the goals of the IC Strategies (with a focus on goal 1 of the current Dispatch, see section 3.1) as well as to the goals of SDC main guiding documents for VSD⁵. It shall combine a forward- and backward-looking approach to produce findings relevant for strategic planning and steering under SDC's new management structure and for accountability purposes.

In line with the above-mentioned purpose, the evaluation shall assess, along the OECD-DAC criteria⁶, the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of SDC programmes and projects in Vocational Skills Development. The evaluation shall look at interventions within the three framework credits in the competency of SDC (bilateral development cooperation, development cooperation with Eastern Europe, humanitarian aid). While the evaluation shall focus on SDC's bilateral portfolio, it should also look at opportunities for international policy dialogue in VSD, in particular in the multilateral arena.

The evaluation should include:

- The identification of results (and rate of achievement), successes, difficulties/challenges (including failures) as well as good practices of how VSD is being implemented within SDC (backward-looking);
- An assessment of how and to which extent 'good practices' can be systematically applied within SDC as well as recommendations on how to further strengthen SDC positioning in the field of VSD at the programmatic, policy- and political level at national, regional and internal level (forward-looking);

The evaluation should give a particular focus to the following two VSD aspects:

a) **Involvement of the private sector:**

The evaluation shall assess to which extent SDC's projects manage to involve the private sector in the planning, organising and co-financing of VSD (to the extent possible in each given context)⁷. It should identify good practices and opportunities to improve the involvement of the private sector in VSD. It should also assess the complementarities of VSD and Private Sector Development (PSD) in SDC projects. In addition, the evaluation should assess if there is more potential for Private Sector Engagement (PSE)⁸.

b) **VSD systems' development:**

The evaluation should assess to which extent SDC's work ensures VSD systems' development, meaning here the development of the architecture, the set-up, the governance, and the operational structures and processes of national systems (including the private sector), their institutions and their services. It should identify good practices and opportunities and it should define which approaches allow to get the best results and to reach the highest scaling-up effects in the different contexts.

⁵ [SDC Thematic Guidance on Basic Education and Vocational Skills Development](#); SDC's [Employment and Income Medium Term Orientation 2015–2019](#); country cooperation programmes with their specific goals and thematic indicators (ARIs and TRIs) which contribute to the IC strategies

⁶ For details, see e.g. [Better Criteria for Better Evaluation](#).

⁷ See the four functions of the private sector in VSD (provider of expertise; co-financer; host of training processes; decision-maker) described in the article [The role of the private sector in vocational skills development](#) (2015)

⁸ PSE refers to SDC and one or several private sector partner joining forces on an equal footing for an impact driven development intervention. Co-ownership and co-funding of the intervention is what differentiates PSE from other forms of interaction with the private sector, such as contracts awarded to the private sector or interventions aimed at supporting local companies in the SDC's partner countries. See [SDC Handbook on Private Sector Engagement](#) (p.7) for more details on PSE.

The evaluation shall duly take into consideration that the different SDC divisions⁹ have differing mandates, priorities and modes of interventions. Strengthening the nexus was one of the priorities of the reorganization that took place at SDC in 2022 and therefore the evaluation shall assess how well the nexus works for VSD interventions and processes, and whether there has been change (or whether change is expected to take place) as compared to SDC's previous organizational structure.

The evaluation should also look at SDC's institutional and organizational set-up, which is largely decentralized for VSD (head office provides primarily advisory services and assures knowledge management and learning in VSD). The evaluation should identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current set-up, and it should provide recommendations on how to strengthen the current organizational structure in order to enhance the quality of VSD programming (including division of labour between SDC divisions and between headquarters and the field, budget allocation, knowledge management, coordination, etc.).

The evaluation will provide **findings, conclusions and recommendations** on whether and how SDC's approaches can be strengthened from a **strategic** and **operational** point of view.

3.4 Content of the mandate

a) Indicative evaluation questions

The question catalogue below is a first draft and has been developed by EC and reviewed by the Core Learning Partnership (CLP)¹⁰. During the inception phase, the appointed evaluation team will further refine and prioritize the questions in consultation with EC and the CLP.

Relevance – Is the intervention doing the right things?

The extent to which a program is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor and continue to do so if circumstances change.

- 1) To what degree do SDC's VSD projects and programs systematically and sufficiently take into account context specificities, including the political economy of the partner countries? Are chosen VSD approaches (in particular according to SDC's typology tool described in the Approach Paper in Annex 3, section 3.3. p. 8) and projects matching the target group's and partner countries' needs, policies and priorities?
- 2) To what extent do VSD projects and programmes consider an inclusive, gender and LNOB sensitive approach in order to reach the poor, disadvantaged, and women? How do SDC's VSD projects contribute to extending or influencing gender traditions and thinking in terms of education, training and employment?
- 3) Do SDC's targeting and project design in VSD interventions (both geographic and beneficiary) allow to reach scale (in the cases where this is a stated goal of the project)?
- 4) What opportunities and good practices exist to diversify SDC's VSD portfolio beyond the outreach to jobseekers from vulnerable groups to potential job creators and multipliers?

⁹ Prior to the SDC's reorganisation in mid-2022 there were four operational domains: South Cooperation, Cooperation with Eastern Europe, Humanitarian Aid, and Global Cooperation. Under the new structure these have been reorganised into 6 operational divisions: MENA–Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia-LAC, Thematic Cooperation, Multilateral Affairs & NGO and Humanitarian Aid & SHA.

¹⁰ See Annex 3 (Approach Paper), section 3.10 "roles and responsibilities" for details about the role of the CLP, as well as Annex C of the Approach Paper for the "list of CLP members".

Coherence – How well does the intervention fit?

The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.

Internal:

- 5) To which extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with SDC's PSD activities?
- 6) What opportunities exist to work with other SDC global programs and divisions (such as migration and climate change)?
- 7) To which extent is VSD integrated within SDC humanitarian responses and what are the existing opportunities to develop VSD in emergency contexts?
- 8) To which extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other IC-VPET members' VSD work in development cooperation?

External:

- 9) To which extent are VSD interventions compatible with and complementary to interventions of other VSD actors and donors in the countries of intervention? Are synergies with other donors used strategically (co-financing to other projects particularly to other DC dVET members, basket funding, policy dialogue, etc.)? To which extent are existing (national) systems and structures used for implementing VSD activities?
- 10) To which extent does SDC contribute and position itself in VSD coordination at national, regional and global level?
- 11) How are SDC projects perceived (in the case study contexts assessed through this evaluation), compared to the interventions of other donors? What are SDC's strengths, added values and weaknesses?

Effectiveness - Is the intervention achieving its objectives?

The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups.

- 12) To what extent did SDC's VSD interventions achieve (or are expected to achieve) their intended objectives (outputs, outcomes and impacts) in particular with regards to improving the access to and quality of the training system and the employability of the beneficiaries? Which factors contributed to or hindered the effective achievement of the intended objectives?
- 13) In which contexts are VSD interventions most effective and in which least? Which approaches (according to SDC current terminology described in the Approach Paper in Annex 3, section 3.3. p. 8) allow to get the best results and to reach high scaling-up effects in the different contexts?
- 14) To which extent were the results effective for different demographic groups? To which extent were they inclusive and equitable amongst beneficiary groups and to which extent were key principles such as non-discrimination, accountability and leave-no-one-behind taken into account during the implementation?
- 15) **Private sector:** How is the private sector involved in the planning, organising and co-financing of SDC's VSD interventions? Is SDC working effectively with the private sector and ensuring that the full potential of the private sector (including the informal private sector) is used in its VSD interventions? Which kind of collaboration has been more effective depending on the contexts? What are the results, good practices and opportunities? To what extent does the private sector benefit from SDC's VSD interventions? Is there more potential for PSE?
- 16) **System's development:** To which extent do SDC's interventions strengthen multi-stakeholder systems, what are the results? Is SDC working with the right approaches in order to promote VSD systems' development? What are SDC's good practices and opportunities? How effective is SDC at national policy dialogue?

- 17) To which extent does SDC manage to reinforce permeability / flexibility and inclusion between the formal and non-formal VSD system (such as recognition of prior learning, national qualification framework, NQF, legal reforms)?
- 18) Is Switzerland having an active role in VSD international policy dialogue (and being listened to)? What opportunities exist to engage more in policy dialogue at the regional and global levels?
- 19) To which extent is SDC's current VSD organizational and institutional set-up conducive for the achievement of VSD-related objectives under the IC Strategy 2025-28?

Efficiency - How well are resources being used?

The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.

- 20) Are SDC and its implementing partners using financial and human resources efficiently for the implementation of VSD programs? How efficient are SDC's specific instruments and processes to plan, implement, manage and steer VSD activities, both at SDC's headquarter and in the cooperation offices?
- 21) **SDC's VSD institutional set-up:** How is VSD steered and organized at the institutional level within SDC? What works well and what could be improved, and why? How efficient is the collaboration between the different entities responsible for VSD within SDC? How is VSD thematic knowledge used? Is it available? Are there differences between Head quarter and cooperation offices?
- 22) How efficiently are VSD activities planned, divided and coordinated between SDC and its project partners (including implementing partners, private sector partners and governmental partners)? Is there a clear and efficient division of roles between SDC and its project partners?

Impact - What difference does the intervention make?

The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.

- 23) What observable higher-level effects (intended or unintended, positive or negative) of VSD programs on beneficiaries, on partners (e.g. collaborators of the private sector), on formal education systems (including infrastructure) and informal VSD systems (e.g. traditional apprenticeship models), as well as on the labour market productivity can be evidenced? How significant were those changes? What contextual factors are favouring or hindering the impact of VSD interventions?
- 24) Do projects scale-up and have SDC projects been leveraged by other interventions (e.g. taken over by national governments)? What were the facilitating factors in those cases?

Sustainability - Will the benefits last?

The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.

- 25) How sustainable are SDC's VSD interventions? Does SDC manage to create local expertise and does it have well-thoughts exit strategies? What evidence is available with regard to sustained change? Which factors enhance the sustainability of SDC interventions in the different contexts? How are SDC's modalities of interventions contributing to or hindering sustainability? Which are the most effective incentives to convince partners to engage in the long-run?
- 26) To what extent do VSD interventions address challenges in a systemic way, taking into account the interactions with environmental, social, economic and governance elements?

b) Methodology

The independent evaluation team will assess the evaluation objectives and questions in a neutral and objective way. The overall evaluation approach should represent an adequate mix of formative and summative elements. Selected steps from within developmental evaluation are to be considered, where appropriate.¹¹ Developmental evaluation is tailored to complex environments and sees the evaluator as combining the rigour of evaluation (evidence-based and objective) with the role of enhancing a programme's capacity, by means of using evidence in reflective thinking on its work. SDC's staff should learn during the entire evaluation process - not just at the end.

The evaluation team shall review and assess existing facts, processes, tools and instruments. The evaluation team shall use or develop adequate rubrics and instruments for assessing all information, interviews etc. within the evaluation. Their findings, conclusions and recommendations shall be evidence based and formulated in an open, constructive, and non-judging manner. The findings and recommendations are expected to inform SDC's strategic and operational decision making, to enhance institutional learning, and to inform SDC's constituency, the Swiss parliament and the public. The evaluation is expected to make use of a series of **different methodological instruments**, such as the following:

- Portfolio Analysis of SDC's engagement in VSD;
- Review of relevant documents from SDC (e.g. evaluation reports; credit proposals; end of phase reports; guiding documents), from SDC's partners (program and evaluation reports, case studies, etc.), and from other donors (for comparison), as well as research;
- 8-10 case studies with 3 to 5 field missions if appropriate, including interviews with SDC's field staff, projects and programmes, and policy stakeholders;
- Interviews and/or focus group discussions with SDC staff in Berne from all divisions and with selected cooperation offices (virtual communication);
- Interviews with other relevant persons, especially from implementing partners, knowledge partners and other donors; It is suggested to interview the VSD backstoppers of the E+E section, selected members of FOBBIZ, DC dVET members, SECO, relevant academic partners).
- Online surveys as assessed relevant.

The evaluation team will develop a **rigorous and appropriate methodology** during the inception phase, together with a **Theory of Change**, which will set the framework for the evaluation. It is important that the methodology is appropriate for assessing both the operational and institutional aspects of the evaluation. The **indicative key questions** are only suggestions and shall be reviewed by the evaluation team during the inception phase.

The **Core Learning Partnership** (CLP) shall provide inputs when the evaluation team is drafting the recommendations, – while the responsibility remains within the evaluation team. Therefore, elements of **participatory / developmental evaluation** can be integrated. Including such an approach will not only increase the utility of the evaluation, but will also support SDC's on-going commitment to develop stronger analyses, program designs, as well as capacities in monitoring and evaluation.

The **roles and responsibilities** of all parties involved in this evaluation are described in detail in section 3.10 of the Approach Paper (Annex 3).

¹¹ Terminology by M. A. Patton. Summative evaluation measures outcomes against pre-determined goals and frameworks while formative evaluation can assist in continuous improvement. See Patton: Developmental Evaluation. Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use (2011).

c) Deliverables

The evaluation will produce the following deliverables:

Inception Report

An Inception Report is prepared by the evaluation team after an initial review of relevant documentation and some initial interviews. It shall present:

- A summary of the results of the portfolio analysis;
- The results of a first round of interviews and the desk review;
- Conceptual framework(s) to be used in the evaluation (including a draft Theory of Change which presents SDC's logic regarding the thematic priority areas);
- The key evaluation questions and methodology;
- An analytical framework for answering the evaluation questions with rubrics or assessment scales that will be used for assessing the information, data sources and collection, sampling and key indicators;
- The rationale for the selection of case studies, respectively countries that will be visited, considering a balanced choice between geographical regions, types of interventions and contexts, ongoing / completed interventions, etc. In doing so, the evaluation team shall consider differences related to context (developing countries, countries in transition, etc.);
- A first draft list of interviewees. During the mandate the interview list will be developed together with the tenderer.

The Inception Report also includes a **timeline for the evaluation process**. It shall explain the **strengths, weaknesses and limitations** of the proposed process and methodology and list the **means used to address** these limitations. The evaluation team should suggest a **tentative structure** of the final report.

The Inception Report will be written in English and should **not exceed 20 pages**, excluding annexes. It will be addressed to E+C, and will be discussed with the CLP in Bern.

Evaluation Report

- A fit-to-print **evaluation report** in English containing **findings, conclusions and recommendations**. The conclusions must be clearly derived from the findings and the recommendations must be clearly based on the conclusions.
- The evaluation report should **not exceed 30 pages** (including an executive summary; excluding annexes), and must be coherent with the formatting guidelines of EC. The report should contain clear references to the important information / data available in the annexes. The **executive summary** should correspond to the DAC-Standards and should not exceed **2 to 3 pages**.
- Additionally, a short and concise presentation (PowerPoint) shall be prepared by the evaluation team for SDC's use.
- The quality of the evaluation report (and process) will be assessed based on quality criteria as detailed in the 'Evaluation Quality Assessment' (cf. Approach Paper Annex 3, page 25/26).

Communication products

Communication is key – both for institutional learning within SDC and accountability towards the Parliament and the public. The following **deliverables** with regard to communication are required:

- Meetings with the Core Learning Partnership (CLP) at key moments of the evaluation;
- Regular exchange with E+C;
- Presentation of the Final Report to the Directorate of SDC (and potentially prior to that: presentation of intermediate results to the Directorate);
- Key messages for external communication, which are clear, concise and easy to understand. These key messages will be used for the production of fact sheets for external communication.

a) **Process**

The following work plan suggests the dates and responsibilities for the different activities of the evaluation process. This work plan can be adapted during the evaluation process.

Activity	Date	Responsibilities
1st CLP meeting in Bern: Discuss Approach Paper	28.06.2023	E+C / CLP
Finalize Approach Paper;	13.07.2023	E+C
Procurement process (see section 3.6 for details)		E+C
2nd CLP meeting: Kick-off (with evaluation team) + first round of interviews for inception phase (in Bern and on phone)	11.10.2023	CLP / Evaluators / E+C
Elaboration of the Inception Report: evaluation objectives and questions, evaluation design, methodology	28.11.2023	Evaluators
3rd CLP meeting (in Bern): Feedback to Inception Report (with evaluation team)	6 / 13.12.2023	Evaluators / CLP / E+C
Finalization of the Inception Report (incorporation of comments by SDC)	14.12.2023 – 07.01.2024	Evaluators
Handing in Inception Report	07.01.2024	Evaluators
Desk-study, logistic and administrative preparation of evaluation visits, workshops, etc.	Jan-Feb 2024	Evaluators / E+C
Interviews with stakeholders, partners, focus group and workshops, if relevant	Jan-Feb 2024	Evaluators
Field visits in up to 5 countries	Feb-Mar 2024	Evaluators
4th CLP meeting (in Bern): Capitalization workshop on intermediate results (with evaluation)	Beg. April 2024	CLP / Evaluators / E+C
Data analysis and elaboration of Draft Report	Apr-May 2024	Evaluators
Handing in Draft Report	Mid-June 2024	Evaluators
5th CLP meeting: Feedback on Draft Report. Review of lessons learnt and recommendations (with evaluation team)	End of June 2024	CLP / Evaluators / E+C
Handing in Final Report	July 2024	Evaluators
6th CLP meeting: Debriefing and first thoughts about Senior Management Response	End of July or August 2024	CLP / E+C
Presentation at SDC Directorate and SDC staff	End of August 2024	Evaluators, E+C
SDC Senior Management Response	Aug – Sept - Oct 2024	E+C / Directorate
Publication and Dissemination	November 2024 – January 2025	E+C

b) Evaluators's profile

SDC's Evaluation and Controlling specialist service will contract an evaluation team that is independent¹² of the FDFA, especially of SDC.

The evaluation team should offer expertise regarding evaluation and partnership development, innovative thinking, the ability to combine established methods with new approaches and to discuss, evaluate and share results with stakeholders throughout the evaluation process.

The evaluation team shall consist of a **team of at least two experts** with complementary expertise and experience. More particularly, the evaluators are expected to bring along the following evaluation and subject matter expertise and experience:

- Experience and up-to-date thematic knowledge in the field of VSD, including on the approaches of SDC.
- A good understanding of project implementation in development cooperation including approaches in fields related to VSD, such as PSD.
- Knowledge of the Swiss VPET system;
- Experience in evaluating bilateral (and multilateral) development cooperation; professional experience and proven skills in robust evaluation methodologies and in evaluating strategies, programmes, partnerships, and institutional processes/change; ability to apply the DAC-OECD and SEVAL¹³ (or equivalent) evaluation standards;
- Strong analytical and editorial skills, ability to synthesize and write intelligibly for different audiences.

Furthermore, the evaluators are expected to have:

- Knowledge of SDC's organizational and institutional set-up;
- Ability to steer complex processes involving a multiplicity of stakeholders through participatory methods;
- Competency with gender equality and governance issues (experience in the application of gender sensitive evaluation methodologies is an added value);
- Ability to work and communicate in English, plus excellent writing skills in English. French and German comprehension of at least one team member is a must (good reading skills). Good communication in French and German is an additional asset;
- Experience in developing communication content for a wider public.

3.5 Estimated amount

A total number of **130-170 working days** may be allocated to the evaluation team (international and local experts). These working days should also include the allocation for international trips to 5 SDC partner countries in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe as well as 6 working visits to Bern (Switzerland). The costs of the trips have to be listed separately (see structure of the financial offer, Annex 4a). The trips will have to be approved by E+C.

The exact number of field visits and the destination countries as well as the number of the trips to Switzerland will be defined during inception phase.

¹² Independence means that the members of the evaluation team have not worked for the FDFA, especially the SDC, in the past five years (except having conducted other external evaluation mandates) or have any other strong linkages or dependencies with the FDFA. Involvement in any type of operational activities on behalf of SDC (project planning or implementation or back-stopping) in any thematic field in the past five years would be considered a conflict of interest. However, involvement in non-operational mandates such as evaluations, (feasibility) studies, mapping exercises and other such activities, regardless of their thematic field, will not be considered a conflict of interest.

¹³ <https://www.seval.ch/standards-kompetenzen/standards/>

All the price details must be indicated in CHF excl. VAT. The price excl. VAT includes in particular insurance, allowances, social costs, transport, customs, etc.

The tenderer will not be reimbursed for any costs arising from the preparation or submission of bid.

3.6 Timetable of the invitation procedure

Date / Deadline	Activity
28.07.2023	Invitation of at least 3 tenderers and publication of the mandate on the FDFA mandates platform
09.08.2023	Expression of interest in submitting a tender by email: deza.evaluation-controlling@eda.admin.ch
14.08.2023	Deadline for submitting questions by email: deza.evaluation-controlling@eda.admin.ch
18.08.2023	Sharing of the questions and answers with all the interested tenderers
08.09.2023	Deadline for submission of tenders
Mid-September 2023	Evaluation of submitted bids
Beginning of October 2023	Information of the tenderers by means of individual dispositions: Awarding of the contract and notification of the not considered tenderers
Beginning of October 2023	Signing of contract
11.10.2023	Contract start date

4 Eligibility criteria

The tenderer must duly fulfil without limitation or modification the eligibility criteria listed in annex EC. The tenderer must also provide, where indicated, the necessary evidence with the submission of the bid. **Confirmation of the fulfilment of the eligibility criteria must be given in 'Annex EC: Confirmation of Eligibility Criteria and documents to be submitted'.**

Only those tenderers who fulfil all formal requirements and eligibility criteria will be evaluated on the basis of the award criteria. The other tenderers will be excluded from the further procedure.

5 Award criteria

The following table shows the award criteria (AC) and the corresponding weightings, on the basis of which the bids will be evaluated.

AC	Award Criteria	Weighting
AC 1	Understanding of the mandate	20%
AC 1.1	Clarity and Quality of the Technical Offer	40%
AC 1.2	Appreciation of the expectations and requirements	60%
AC 2	Proposed methodology, approach and timeline	25%
AC 3	Qualification, experience and expertise of the organisation	10%
AC 4	Qualifications of the personnel to be deployed (CVs)	25%
AC 5	Financial Offer (FO)	20%
AC 5.1	Clarity and Quality of FO	20%
AC 5.2	<p>Overall price</p> <p>The overall price is to be submitted in CHF (excl. VAT) only together with the budget form as per Annex 4a of the tender document and to include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 field visits (flight and expenses) • 6 working visits to Berne • Per diem • Hotel • Other expenses <p>Please also refer to the Annexe 4b (Fact Sheet on Compensation for Feed and Expenses)</p> <p>The overall amount (excl. VAT) across the mandate will be estimated using the following formula:</p> $\text{Score} = M \times \left(\frac{P_{\min}}{P} \right)^2$ <p>P = Price of the bid being assessed</p> <p>P min = Price of the cheapest bid</p> <p>M = Max. points (= score 5)</p> <p>Exponent = Exponent in formula (=2)</p>	80%
	Total	100%

Each further award criterion will be evaluated according to the following score table:

Score	Fulfilment and quality of the criteria	
0	Cannot be established	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not possible to assess • No information
1	Very poor fulfilment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very limited achievement of the criteria • Insufficient, incomplete information
2	Poor fulfilment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited achievement of the criteria • Information without sufficient relevance
3	Average fulfilment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal achievement • Average quality, minimum requirement fulfilled
4	Good fulfilment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good achievement • Very good quality
5	Very good fulfilment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very good achievement • Outstanding quality

6 Structure and content of the bid

In the interests of comparability of the submitted documents, the tenderers are expected to adhere to the following **structure of bids**. Each part of the bid is to be submitted as a separate pdf document (in total 3 pdfs).

Order of PDFs	Contents	Max. Pages	EC/AC
	Cover letter (email) with signature(s)	1	-
1	Annex 1a/EC: Confirmation of Eligibility Criteria – filled in and duly signed, incl supporting documentation, to evidence full compliance with ECs		EC 1-10
	Annex 1b: Self-declaration form 'Proof of Compliance with the conditions of participation' of the Federal Procurement Conference FPC AND Annex 1c: Self-declaration form 'pursuant to Article 29c of the Ordinance on measures in connection with the situation in Ukraine' of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)		EC 2
	'Tenderer Information' form (EC 3
	Legal documents		EC 5
	Written proof of experience – References		EC 6
	Written confirmation of human resources for the mandate		EC 7
	Written confirmation of contact partner (SPOC)		EC 8
	Documentary evidence of the language skills of the key individuals		EC 9
	Technical Offer		
2	Understanding of the mandate	3	AC 1 (1.1 and 1.2)
	Proposed methodology, approach and timeline	5	AC 2

	Qualification, experience and expertise of the organisation	2	AC 3
	Qualifications of the personnel to be deployed (CVs)	max 3 pg. per CV	AC 4
3	Financial offer in CHF (excl. VAT) according to the budget form in annex 4a	Narrative (1 pg.) + budget form	AC 5 (5.1 and 5.2)

7 Administrative Aspects

7.1 Official name and address of the contracting authority

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC
Evaluation and Controlling Specialist Service
Freiburgstrasse 130
3003 Berne

The SDC's Evaluation and Controlling Specialist Service is in charge of the awarding procedure and also acts as direct contracting authority towards the tenderer.

7.2 Deadline and address for submitting bids

The complete bid (format pdf) must be submitted to deza.evaluation-controlling@eda.admin.ch by **08.09.2023, 23:00 Swiss time** at the latest. Bids received late cannot be taken into consideration. They will be returned to the tenderer.

The email must mention “**Independent Evaluation of SDC's Engagement in the Field of Vocational Skills Development**” in the reference line. Tenderers must confirm in the e-mail the binding force of the bid. The receipt of the bids submitted via email will be acknowledged via email at the latest until 11.09.2023. Please come back to us if you don't get a confirmation then (mails might get lost in spams).

In all cases the tenderer must retain proof of the timely submission of the bid.

The bis can be submitted in the following languages: English.

7.3 Expression of interest in submitting an offer and receiving documents

Interested tenderers can express their interest by email until **09.08.2023** and will receive the annexes to these terms of reference.

7.4 Answering questions

No individual information is given to the tenderers. Any **questions** must be **submitted by 14.08.2023** to deza.evaluation-controlling@eda.admin.ch. Questions submitted late cannot be answered. The document with all questions received and their answers will be sent to all tenderers by 18.08.2023.

7.5 Type of procedure

Procurement is carried out by invitation o tender in accordance with the Federal Act on Public Procurement of 21 June 2019, PPA, SR 172.056.1.

It is **not** possible to appeal the award.

7.6 In accordance with GATT / WTO agreement or treaty (as applicable)

This is a public contract under Annex 5 no. 1 let. d PPA. There is no right of appeal.

7.7 Evaluation and adjustment of bids

Tenders are evaluated in accordance with Art. 38 PPA. Tenders may only be adjusted at the contracting authority's specific request. Adjustments must be undertaken in accordance with Art. 39 PPA and subject to the conditions set out therein.

7.8 Bidding consortia

Consortia of tenderers are permitted. If the SDC concludes the contract with several contractors (consortium), all parties must sign, having first designated a person to represent the consortium vis-à-vis the SDC. The representative is expressly authorised to act for and on behalf of the consortium members. The consortium members shall be jointly and severally liable. The tenderer lists all members and their roles.

7.9 Subcontractors

Subcontractors are permitted, subject to the prior approval of the awarding entity. If the tenderer engages subcontractors in order to carry out the work, the tenderer will assume overall responsibility. It must list all the subcontractors involved, together with the roles allocated to them.

Any contractual delegation by the contractor of performance of all or part of the present contract to subcontractors shall be subject to the prior written consent of the contracting authority. Subcontractors and their personnel must satisfy all conditions stipulated in the present contract and the appendices thereto. The contracting authority shall be liable solely to the contractor. In the event that the contractor delegates performance of all or part of the contract, the contractor shall bear sole liability for the acts of any subcontractors. As a general rule the tenderer is required to make the characteristic supply.

7.10 Multiple tenders by single tenderers, consortia and subcontractors

Consortia members are allowed to participate exclusively in one bid. The tenderer lists all members and their roles.

Single tenderers are allowed to participate exclusively in one bid.

Subcontractors are allowed to participate in different bids.

7.11 Validity of bids

180 days after the deadline for receipt of bids.

7.12 Languages of invitation document

The invitation documents are available in English.

7.13 Language of the procedure

The present procurement procedure is conducted in English. This means that all statements on the part of the awarding authority are made at least in this language.

7.14 General Terms and Conditions of Business (GTC)

The General Conditions of Business (GTC) of the FDFA for mandates (type A and type B) – version May 2021 shall be deemed to have been accepted by the contractor on submission of the bid.

7.15 Conclusion of contract

The contract is concluded subject to the prior approval of credits by the FDFA.

8 Further information

8.1 Confidentiality

The parties shall keep confidential any facts and information that are not generally known or in the public domain. In case of doubt, all facts and information shall be treated as strictly confidential. The parties shall take all measures, to the extent that they are commercially reasonable and practicable in technical and organisational terms, to ensure that confidential facts and information are properly protected against access by, or disclosure to, unauthorised third parties.

Any transfer of confidential information by the contracting authority within its own organisation (or within the Federal Administration), or to any third parties appointed, is not deemed to constitute a breach of the obligation of confidentiality. The foregoing also applies to tenderers to the extent that the disclosure of confidential information is required for the performance of the contract, or provisions of the contract are disclosed within the organisation.

The tenderer may not, without the contracting authority's written consent, publicise the fact that a cooperation arrangement with the contracting authority is or was in effect or cite the contracting authority as a reference.

The parties shall ensure that their employees, subcontractors, suppliers and any other third parties appointed comply with the foregoing obligations of confidentiality.

8.2 Integrity clause

Tenderers undertake to take all necessary measures to avoid corruption and, in particular, agree not to offer or accept payments or other advantages.

Tenderers who breach this integrity clause are required to pay a contractual penalty to the contracting authority amounting to 10% of the value of the contract or at least CHF 3,000 for each instance of breach.

The tenderer notes that any breach of the integrity clause will generally result in cancellation of the award or early termination of the contract for good cause by the contracting authority.

The parties shall inform each other of any well-founded suspicions of corruption.

8.3 Property rights

All industrial property rights which arise in the course of the performance of the mandate shall pass to the contracting authority.

9 Annexes

No.	Annex
1a	Annex EC: Confirmation of Eligibility criteria and documents to be submitted
1b	Self-declaration form 'Proof of Compliance with the conditions of participation' of the Federal Procurement Conference FPC
1c	Self-declaration form 'pursuant to Article 29c of the Ordinance on measures in connection with the situation in Ukraine' of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)
2	'Tenderer Information' form
3	Approach Paper "Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance in Vocational Skills Development from 2017-2023"
4a	Budget form for legal entities, organisations and self-employed persons
4b	Fact Sheet on Compensation for Feed and Expenses