



TERMS OF REFERENCE

for the selection of the service provider - consulting company/expert/group of experts - from the Republic of Moldova and/or from the European Union

Services: Elaboration of the analysis regarding the impact of the LEADER approach in the Republic of Moldova and the evaluation of the implementation experience of the first call of the National LEADER Program

Organization: Solidarity Fund PL in Moldova

Type of contract: Services delivery

Contract duration: December 2023 – October 2024 (negotiable)

The deadline for carrying out the task: 30/09/2024

The deadline for submitting the application: 30/11/2023, 23:59

About the organization: Solidarity Fund PL in Moldova is the representation of Solidarity Fund PL, a state foundation, managed and co-financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, created to contribute to the development of neighboring countries.

In 2023, Solidarity Fund PL successfully completed the process of obtaining the EU "Pillar Assessment" certification, joining the group of entities with greater capacities to access European funds.

You can find out more about the activity of Solidarity Fund PL in Moldova [here](#).

Context: In the Republic of Moldova (RM), there are 48 Local Action Groups (LAGs), key actors of the LEADER approach, which cover over 50% of the country's rural territory, with an expected increase of over 70% by 2025. Since its appearance in the RM in 2016 and until now the LEADER approach has gone through several stages of development. Until 2021, the LAGs were functioning thanks to external funding and in 2022 the first call of the National LEADER Program (LP) was launched, expected for the period of 2022-2023, thus institutionalizing the approach by creating a new support measure at the state level. At the moment, LEADER is financially supported both by means of the National Fund for the Development of Agriculture and the Rural Environment (NFDARE), as well as by financial means from development partners.

LP is a new subsidy measure and in the first call 37 LAGs were financed, selected by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry and financed from NFDARE, managed by the Agency for Intervention and Payments in Agriculture (AIPA). Their activity within the program is provided for by the Subsidies Regulation approved by GD no. 277/2022. In order to facilitate the access of LAGs to public sources, Law no. 50/2021 regarding local action groups was created, amendments were applied to several laws and implementation guidelines for LAGs were developed. Previously, LAGs implemented several financing funds with the support of development partners, implementing more than 850 local development projects in the public, civic and entrepreneurial sectors.

A study dedicated to the impact and results of LEADER is important to estimate the existence and size of the added value that LEADER brings to rural areas, to identify the strong aspects and those that need to be improved in the LEADER ecosystem in the Republic of Moldova. Likewise, this could serve as a source for monitoring the level of implementation of the National Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development of the Republic of Moldova 2030, in which result indicators expected to be achieved through the LAGs are introduced and would come up with recommendations for improving the legislative and implementation framework for the next LP calls.

The study will be carried out within the EU4Moldova: Local Communities program. This study will contribute to the achievement of the program's objective of ensuring a conducive environment for

the development of the LP implementation framework within the NFDARE. The evaluation will also contribute to increasing visibility, sharing the LEADER experience in the Republic of Moldova and promoting the continued involvement of the EU in the development of the LEADER approach. To ensure visibility, the study will be published in Romanian/Russian/English and disseminated among local, national and international stakeholders, and the results of the analysis will be presented at a dedicated event.

Existing legal framework:

- Law no. 50/2021 regarding local action groups;
- Government Decision no. 277/2022 regarding the approval of the Regulation on the granting of advance subsidies for local development through the implementation of the LEADER Program;
- Government Decision no. 56/2023 regarding the approval of the National Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development for the years 2023-2030;
- Law no. 71/2023 regarding subsidies in agriculture and the rural environment;
- Law no. 436/2006 on local public administration;
- State budget law, which is approved annually.

Solidarity Fund PL in Moldova invites you to make an offer for the execution of the order.

Description of the acquisition:

Elaboration of the analysis regarding the impact of the LEADER approach in the Republic of Moldova and the evaluation of the implementation experience of the first call of the National LEADER Program.

The necessity of study elaboration derives from:

- The need to collect and process information about the evolution of the results of the projects implemented within the funds from the piloting and multiplication phase of the LEADER approach, in 2016-2023 (post-implementation analysis);
- The need for a comprehensive description of the LEADER ecosystem in general, with concrete data about the actors involved;
- Lack of information on the effects of LEADER on local communities. The need to find an answer not only to the question "if LEADER activities have an effect?", but also "why?", "under what conditions?" and "how?" these activities have an impact and bring added value;
- The need to obtain relevant information and knowledge from the experience of implementing the first call of the LP to advance and strengthen the program as a rural development measure.

The purpose of the analysis is to carry out a holistic and comprehensive study about the changes that the LEADER approach managed to bring in rural areas in socio-economic terms by analyzing the results of local projects and initiatives completed until 2023 and evaluating the experience of implementing the first call of the LP.

The objectives:

- O1:** Analysis of the impact and added value of implementing the LEADER approach at local level;
- O2:** Evaluation of the first call implemented within the LP to identify the aspects that need to be improved or modified for the next editions;
- O3:** Comprehensive description of the LEADER ecosystem in the Republic of Moldova and the definition of the roles of the key actors.

Expected results:

- A holistic and comprehensive analysis of the impact of the LEADER approach on rural development in the Republic of Moldova;
- Considerations and recommendations for improvements or changes to ensure the sustainability of the LEADER ecosystem;

- A detailed evaluation of the implementation of the first LEADER Program call with successes and lessons learned, including aspects that need to be improved or changed;
- A unique and homogenized source about LEADER implementation in the RM, created from the data sources owned by the actors involved;
- Source of information and knowledge for the conceptualization of the Monitoring and Evaluation system for LEADER in the RM;
- Source of information for finalizing the vision and support that will be offered for the LEADER ecosystem strengthening in the coming years.

The process of developing the analysis will be divided into the following stages:

Stage 1. Defining the proposed methodology for developing the study according to research design principles. Validation of tasks, objectives and work schedule.

Stage 2. Data collection. Identifying the broadest spectrum of data sources (MAFI, AIPA, the National LEADER Network (NLN), LAGs, development partners/donors, etc.) that would allow the evaluation of LEADER's impact and the implementation process of the national program.

Stage 3. Carrying out the analysis of the implementation process, the roles of the actors involved and the results of the first call of the LP, held during the years 2022-2023 (approx. until February 2024).

Stage 4. Carrying out the analysis of the evolution and impact of LEADER during the years 2016-2023 (approx. until August 2024).

The analysis shall be carried out using the desktop method, field visits, interviews, focus groups, etc.

Stage 5. Visual editing of the analysis with the addition of graphic elements.

Stage 6. Consultations

- Conducting consultation meetings with interested parties in the given study;
- Description of the profile of the parties consulted and the manner of carrying out the consultation process;
- Collecting suggestions and introducing adjustments following the consultations.

Stage 7. Formulation of findings and recommendations

- Comparison of the LEADER implementation mechanism in the Republic of Moldova with that in the EU by describing the most important similarities and differences, in a succinct table form;
- Formulation of conclusions and recommendations that will contribute to the efficiency of the LEADER national Program implementation process and increase the impact of LEADER in the Republic of Moldova.

Expected deliverables:

- Presentation of the table of contents with a description of the structure of the analysis;
- Performing the analysis according to the described stages and the agreed methodology;
- Presentation of the analysis at the intermediate and final stages;
- Finalizing the analysis based on the conclusions, recommendations and objections received following the consultation process.

Consultation and reporting:

The process of analysis elaboration and deliverables will be reported to SFPL in Moldova. It will be consulted with MAFI, AIPA, NLN and LAGs.

Eligible applicants: Legal person/consortium of legal persons/natural persons or natural persons registered in the Republic of Moldova and/or in the European Union/consortium of national and

international experts in the field of rural development and LEADER, economic, social, data analysis and other relevant fields.

Conditions for participation in the procurement process:

- At least 3 years of work experience in the field of LEADER and/or experience in providing consulting services and carrying out analyses/studies/evaluations or developing strategies/programs in the field of rural development, LEADER, agriculture or related fields;
- The provider has a team of consultants or the natural person has education and/or experience in economics, finance, statistics, law, agriculture or other relevant fields;
- At least 3 years of experience in the development of min. one policy document/study/evaluation etc. similar to that described in the Terms of Reference.

The application will contain:

For natural persons:

1. The updated CV with the description of the experience;
2. Copy of the higher education diploma;
3. Contact data (name, surname, mailing address, e-mail address, telephone number);
4. The portfolio: the list of analyses, studies, evaluations or other strategic documents developed;
5. The plan for carrying out the analysis (the proposed methodology), including specific questions that would be addressed by the analysis, the method of data collection, verification and validation, the stages and terms proposed for the elaboration;
6. Price offer (the prices indicated by the offeror must be fixed, without VAT and/or other taxes);
7. [Statement of Compliance](#).

For legal entities:

1. The CVs of the company's experts, who wish to be trained in the development of the analysis;
2. Contact data (company name, address of the official headquarters and mailing address, e-mail address, contact person data, telephone number);
3. Extract from the state register with a term of no more than 1 year from the date of its issuance;
4. The portfolio: the list of analyses, studies, evaluations or other strategic documents developed;
5. The plan for carrying out the analysis (the proposed methodology), including specific questions that would be addressed by the analysis, the method of data collection, verification and validation, the stages and terms proposed for the elaboration;
6. Price offer (the prices indicated by the offeror must be fixed, without VAT and/or other taxes);
7. [Statement of Compliance](#).

The evaluation criteria of applications:

Evaluation criteria	Maximum score awarded
The experience and education of the specialists of the company/natural person, i.e. work experience in the field of LEADER/rural development and/or experience in providing consulting services and carrying out analyses/studies/evaluations or developing strategies/programs in the field of rural development, LEADER, agriculture or related fields – at least 3 years	30 points
The plan for carrying out the analysis (the proposed methodology)	30 points

The portfolio with the list of analyses, studies, evaluations or other strategic documents developed	20 points
<p>The financial offer, respecting the quality/price ratio</p> <p><i>*The evaluation of the "financial offer" criterion will be based on the following formula: $P = P_{min}/P_{of} \times 20$ points, where: P_{min} - the lowest proposed price P_{of} - price presented in the examined offer P - the number of points awarded to the examined offer according to the price criterion, rounded to the whole number.</i></p>	20 points

Note: The employing organization may request, if necessary, additional relevant documents. The selected provider will be contacted for the interview/negotiation of the contract.

The application shall be sent to the email address: procurements@solidarityfund.md, with the title of the message: Analysis services - LEADER.

NB! Questions regarding the application can be sent to the email address: procurements@solidarityfund.md no later than 3 days before the deadline for submitting the application.

** The applicant has the right to independently establish the limits of the confidentiality of the data provided and to state which of the documents attached to the offer are confidential.*

*** Personal data will be processed by Solidarity Fund PL in Moldova for the purpose of carrying out the procurement process, in accordance with the provisions of the legislation in force and internal rules. The provision of personal data is carried out voluntarily. The refusal to provide data leads to the impossibility of concluding the contract with Solidarity Fund PL in Moldova. Individuals have the right of access to their personal data, their portability and rectification. Personal data can be transmitted to development partners, auditors, public legal bodies, lawyers - for the purpose of controlling Solidarity Fund PL in Moldova, protecting rights, resolving disputes. Personal data will not be transmitted to other third parties without the prior consent of the applicant. Any questions regarding personal data can be directed to Solidarity Fund PL in Moldova by e-mail info@solidarityfund.md.*

**** In order to make the procurement process transparent, the results of the call with the information on the selected provider (name/surname, first name, service provided, price, period) will be published on the website of Solidarity Fund PL in Moldova. Participating in the call by sending the documents means accepting the publication of the results of the competition, except for information marked as confidential.*

This activity is carried out with the support of the "EU4Moldova: Local Communities" program, financed by the European Union, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland - Assistance to Poland; implemented by the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the Solidarity Fund PL (SFPL) in Moldova.