

TERMS OF REFERENCE

TON: Women Entrepreneurs Leveraging Innovative Finance in Tonga (WE-LIFT) Project

Position: Procurement and Contract Management Officer (National)

I. Project Background

1. Tonga's small, climate-vulnerable economy offers limited and uneven opportunities for entrepreneurship, particularly for women. Although women comprise a significant share of the private sector, they remain largely excluded from formal finance and tailored support services. Structural barriers—including rigid collateral requirements, restricted land ownership rights, and the absence of gender-responsive financial products—continue to constrain women's access to credit. While short-term, high-cost microfinance can provide temporary relief, it often reinforces cycles of debt rather than enabling sustainable business growth. Government initiatives have attempted to address financing gaps, but these efforts frequently lack effective targeting, coordination, and integration with business development services (BDS), resulting in financial dependency rather than long-term financial empowerment. The broader BDS ecosystem remains weak, fragmented, under-resourced, and largely unresponsive to women's distinct needs, including unpaid care responsibilities, sector-specific risks, and differing stages of enterprise development. These challenges are compounded by the absence of robust sex-disaggregated data and market analytics, which obscures the economic contributions and financing needs of women entrepreneurs and limits evidence-based policy making and investment decisions.

2. In response, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), in collaboration with the Government of Tonga, has designed the proposed Women Entrepreneurs Leveraging Innovative Finance in Tonga (We-LIFT) project. The project is financed through an Asian Development Fund grant under the Sustainable Development Goal 5: Transformative Gender Agenda thematic window and is structured using a financial intermediation modality. The We-LIFT project aims to accelerate women entrepreneurs' access to finance and strengthen their entrepreneurial and financial capabilities by: (i) establishing Tonga's first risk-sharing facility to ease collateral constraints and unlock bank lending to women entrepreneurs through partial credit guarantees; (ii) introducing an enablement fund that provides grants to improve the bankability of informal micro and small enterprises; and (iii) delivering tailored BDS through a proposed business advisory hub, designed to align with the daily realities of women entrepreneurs and strengthen their financial, digital, and business management skills. In parallel, the project will strengthen sex-disaggregated data systems to inform the development of inclusive financial products, targeted support services, and policies that advance gender-responsive private sector development in Tonga. The Ministry of Finance (MOF) will serve as the executing agency, while the Ministry of Trade and Economic Development (MTED) will act as the implementing agency, working closely with the National Reserve Bank of Tonga (NRBT), partner financial institutions (PFIs), and other key stakeholders.

3. Given this context, the Government of Tonga, in collaboration with ADB, is seeking the services of a Procurement and Contract Management Officer to support the project-related procurement and contract management activities in line with ADB's Procurement Regulations and relevant national requirements.

II. Purpose of the Assignment

4. The Procurement and Contract Management Officer will provide dedicated procurement and contract management support to the We-LIFT Project to ensure that all project-related procurement and contract administration activities are planned, executed, and monitored in a timely, transparent, and compliant manner. The Officer will support effective project start-up and implementation by ensuring adherence to ADB Procurement Regulations and relevant national requirements, while promoting value for money, efficiency, and accountability.

III. Scope of Work

5. The Procurement and Contract Management Officer will be responsible for managing and supporting all project-related procurement and contract administration activities in the inception phase. This includes preparing, updating, and monitoring the procurement plan; coordinating and administering tendering processes; preparing procurement documentation and evaluation reports; and supporting contract award and administration in close coordination with the Project Manager, Project Accountant, MTED, and ADB. The Officer will facilitate early procurement during project inception, monitor procurement progress and risks, maintain complete and auditable procurement and contract records, and ensure timely resolution of procurement-related issues and approvals. The Officer will also provide procurement-related inputs to project reporting, audits, and review missions; conduct market research and provide technical advice to support sound procurement planning and contract management; and support capacity-building activities for MTED and PMU staff on ADB and national procurement procedures. All activities will be carried out in accordance with the principles of economy, efficiency, transparency, fairness, and accountability to support effective and timely project implementation.

IV. Detailed Tasks

6. The Officer will be responsible for all project-related procurement and for ensuring effective contract administration in accordance with ADB and national requirements. Key responsibilities include:

- (i) Prepare, update, and monitor implementation of the project procurement plan, ensuring alignment with approved project schedules, budgets, and implementation arrangements.
- (ii) Prepare and manage procurement documentation, including bidding documents, requests for proposals, evaluation criteria, and templates, in accordance with ADB Procurement Regulations and relevant national procurement requirements.
- (iii) Coordinate and manage the tendering process, including advertising, responding to clarifications, organizing bid openings, and supporting evaluations, ensuring transparency, fairness, and procedural compliance.
- (iv) Support bid and proposal evaluations, prepare bid evaluation reports, and submit recommendations for contract award to the relevant approving authorities.
- (v) Ensure all procurement processes and records comply with ADB Procurement Regulations and are complete, accurate, and audit-ready.
- (vi) Facilitate early procurement during project start-up by prioritizing critical contracts and packages required for timely project implementation.

- (vii) Support contract administration in coordination with the Project Manager and Project Accountant, including monitoring deliverables, timelines, contractor performance, payments, and contract variations.
- (viii) Maintain a comprehensive and well-organized filing system for all procurement and contract-related documents, correspondence, and performance records.
- (ix) Liaise with ADB, the MTED, and other relevant government agencies to address procurement-related queries, obtain clearances, and facilitate timely approvals.
- (x) Monitor procurement progress and risks, identify delays or compliance issues, and recommend corrective actions to support efficient and timely delivery.
- (xi) Provide procurement-related inputs to quarterly progress reports, audits, and review missions, including updates on progress, challenges, and lessons learned.
- (xii) Conduct market research and provide technical advice on procurement planning, cost estimates, and contract management approaches to enhance value for money.
- (xiii) Support the delivery of training and capacity-building activities on ADB and national procurement procedures for MTED and PMU staff.
- (xiv) Ensure that all procurement activities adhere to the principles of economy, efficiency, transparency, fairness, and accountability.
- (xv) Perform other procurement and contract management–related duties as required to support effective project implementation and compliance.

V. Qualifications

7. The Officer should hold a degree in engineering, business administration, finance, law, or a related discipline, with at least 5 years of relevant experience in procurement and contract management. Demonstrated experience implementing procurement under ADB- or other multilateral development bank–financed projects, including strong knowledge of their Procurement Regulations, is required. Familiarity with Tonga’s procurement laws and procedures, strong analytical and organizational skills, and proven experience in coordinating with multiple stakeholders are essential. This is a nationally based position; however, if a suitably qualified national candidate is not identified, recruitment may be extended to candidates from the Pacific region and ADB Pacific developing member countries.

8. Eligibility of Government Officials: In accordance with ADB Procurement Directive 3.16(d), government officials and civil servants in Tonga are eligible to apply only if all of the following conditions are met:

- (i) They are not being hired by the same government agency where they were employed immediately prior to the assignment. (“Immediate” is generally interpreted as approximately one year.)
- (ii) Their engagement does not create a conflict of interest with their previous public role or responsibilities.

9. Applicants who may fall under this category are advised to seek clarification from the implementing agency where needed.

VI. Output/Reporting Requirements

10. The Procurement and Contract Management Officer will, at a minimum, be responsible for the following outputs/reports:
 - Project procurement plan and regular updates.
 - Bidding documents, request for proposals, evaluation reports, and contract documents.
 - Inputs to quarterly progress reports and review missions.

VII. Line of Reporting, Duration, and Location of the Services

11. The Officer will report to the Project Manager within the PMU, with overall oversight provided by the Project Director (MTED representative). The services will be provided on an intermittent basis over a total of 33 person-months, with inputs expected to be most intensive during project inception and the early stages of implementation. Once all major project procurements have been completed, responsibility for day-to-day contract administration will be handed over to the Project Manager and Project Accountant, with the Project Manager overseeing contract performance and the Project Accountant managing payment processing and financial controls. The Officer will continue to provide support on an as-needed basis for any remaining procurement actions, contract variations, or compliance-related matters. The assignment will be based in Nuku'alofa, Tonga.

12. The Procurement and Contract Management Officer's performance will be assessed against the responsibilities and tasks outlined above. All deliverables shall be prepared in English and submitted within the agreed timelines and at a level of quality and detail commensurate with the required outputs. Performance will be monitored on an ongoing basis. In the event of unsatisfactory performance, misconduct, incompatibility with the PMU team, MTED, or ADB staff, or other material adverse circumstances, the contract may be terminated with fifteen (15) days' written notice at the discretion of the Government of Tonga, with concurrence from ADB.

13. The assignment is on a time-based contract. Payments will be made upon submission of monthly invoices and timesheets, subject to satisfactory performance and delivery of agreed outputs and reports. The assignment will be subject to annual performance reviews, and continued engagement will be based on satisfactory performance and operational requirements.

