Call for Proposal

World Smart Cities Outlook

Technical support to conduct a global assessment on smart cities

October 2023

Reference:	KIB-11102023
Grant Amount:	Budget ceiling for this call is USD 50,000.00
Published:	11 October 2023
Submission Deadline:	26 October 2023, 11:59 pm, East Africa Time
Submission:	Applicants shall submit their CFP response by email until the specified deadline above to ig-pcsc@un.org to the attention of Roberta Maio roberta.maio@un.org

1. Key Information

Lead Organization Unit:	UN-Habitat, Innovation Unit, Knowledge and Innovation Branch
Region/Country:	Global
Maximum proposed value:	Budget ceiling for this call is USD 50,000

Project Title

World Smart Cities Outlook

2. The Context

The need to define international norms and principles on the role of digitalization for human-centric, inclusive and sustainable cities is ever more apparent. As both urbanization and digitization accelerate at pace, it is urgent to maximize the benefits while mitigating the risks associated with applying digital technology for urban sustainability. As national and local governments and other actors rapidly engage with digital approaches to plan, manage, govern and finance urbanization, it is critical to ensure that people are placed at the centre of such efforts.

Towards this goal, during the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly (5-9 June 2023), a resolution on international guidelines on people-centred smart cities was tabled by France, Botswana, Germany, South Korea and Pakistan and subsequently adopted by the Assembly ([HSP/HA.2/Res.1](#)) in its second session.

The Resolution requests UN-Habitat to carry out a series of endeavours towards the development of international guidelines on people-centred smart cities, including the following:

- Initiate the development of international guidelines on people-centred smart cities as a non-binding framework for developing national and local smart city regulations, plans and strategies, which would ensure that digital urban infrastructure and data contribute to making cities and human settlements sustainable, inclusive and prosperous and respectful of human rights, and to present them for consideration and possible approval by the United Nations Habitat Assembly at its resumed second session in 2025;
- Ensure an inclusive consultative process, including through the existing regional and country offices of UN-Habitat, with Member States and members of United Nations specialized agencies, national and international associations and organizations of local authorities recognized by the United Nations, relevant United Nations organizations, international finance institutions, development agencies, non-governmental organizations, academia, civil-society organizations, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders, taking into account traditional knowledge, in order to inform the drafting process with best practices, guidelines and lessons learned from different contexts and at different scales;

The resolution calls for utilizing existing knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned from diverse contexts to inform the drafting process. In response, UN-Habitat is conducting a comprehensive global assessment on smart cities, serving as a factual bedrock for the upcoming guidelines. The study is expected to comprehensively analyze the current landscape of smart cities and digitalization worldwide, shedding light on prevailing trends, existing challenges, cross-regional disparities, and opportunities.

While enriching the guidelines by providing crucial data on smart city trends, challenges, and opportunities, including regional variations, the study is essential to ensure the guidelines are grounded in solid evidence and global knowledge.

The purpose of the Call for Proposal is to solicit proposals from interested (non-profit) universities, research centres and any other interested entity to provide technical support and undertake the global assessment titled "World Smart Cities Outlook". Data and information resulting from the study will inform the subsequent drafting of a comprehensive report as a reference for the formulation of the international guidelines on people-centered smart cities.

Preliminary findings of the assessment will be presented in February 2024, while the study is expected to be concluded in July 2024.

This Call for Proposal is addressing organizations that are specialized to carry out research studies, global surveys and data analysis, innovation management, and that can take the lead in the global assessment, including in the following activities:

- Collecting primary and secondary data on smart cities globally;

- Building on global knowledge, including UN-Habitat programmes and field work on smart cities and urban innovation, along with other products resulting from partnerships with other agencies or institutions;
- Undertaking research to generate evidence about digital divide and geographical disparities in the smart cities' development sphere;
- Drafting a global assessment study which encompasses results obtained from data and desk research assessment.

As the smart city concept continues to evolve and gain significance globally, this assessment plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of smart city development. By providing a data-driven understanding of the complex landscape of smart cities and digitalization, this study will generate knowledge for governments, organizations, and stakeholders to make better informed decisions and develop improved policies that prioritize inclusivity, sustainability, and human rights in the smart cities of tomorrow.

3. Who we are

About UN-Habitat

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities. UN-Habitat is the focal point for all urbanization and human settlement matters within the UN system. UN-Habitat works with partners to build inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and communities. UN-Habitat promotes urbanization as a positive transformative force for people and communities, reducing inequality, discrimination and poverty. UN-Habitat works in over 90 countries to promote transformative change in cities and human settlements through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance and collaborative action.

www.unhabitat.org

The Innovation Unit

Cities need an integrated, dynamic and nuanced understanding of innovation in order to inspire organizations and communities to develop imaginative, effective solutions to the biggest challenges. When applied in the right context, innovation can act as a catalyst for change, deliver impacts at scale, put people at the center and build a better future for all. For UN-Habitat, innovation means embracing new ideas, up-to-date means and fresh approaches to our work. It incorporates both digital and non-digital technologies as both work in tandem together. It can take shape as an approach, a process, a practical tool or an application. It is based on horizontal and collaborative working practices that consider a diverse range of views and the context in which the innovation is taking place.

UN-Habitat has a long history of innovation. To consolidate on its work, an Innovation Unit was created as part of the 2019-2020 restructuring to strengthen innovative thinking, practice and solutions both within the organization and externally for the benefit of our partners and the beneficiaries we serve. The Innovation Unit promotes an innovation culture for improved sustainable urbanization outcomes, acts as an enabler and broker for new ideas and partnerships for inclusive and at scale impacts, develops knowledge and tools to

strengthen innovation, and promotes innovation in project and programme design and implementation by providing advice on tools, methodologies, technologies and partnerships.

UN-Habitat's People-Centred Smart Cities flagship programme, launched in 2020, ensures that deployment of technology and innovation is used to ensure sustainability, inclusivity, prosperity and human rights in cities. It supports national and local governments with their digital transition, applying a multi-level governance strategy to help build skills and capabilities to develop, procure and effectively use digital technologies in an ethical and inclusive way to make sure that no one is left behind. Our programme includes the first United Nations Innovation Technology Accelerator for Cities in Hamburg (UNITAC-Hamburg), a digital rights governance framework for local and regional governments, the challenge-driven methodology and a broad range of initiatives in digital transformation and governance centred on people.

4. Scope of the service

With the World Smart Cities Outlook, UN-Habitat aims to develop a holistic global assessment that encompasses all relevant dimensions of digital transformation and smart cities, exploring their multifaceted impact on people, systems and the planet. The dimensions expected to be investigated by the study are:

- **Digital transformation and smart cities**: examining the integration of digital technologies into urban development and governance, with a focus on their role in enhancing the quality of life for urban residents as well as potential risks resulting from their uncontrolled application.
- **Digital governance, standards, and interoperability**: assessing the regulatory frameworks, standards, and interoperability mechanisms governing digital infrastructure and services in smart cities and highlighting the consequences in their absence on urban development, digital rights and prosperity, among others.
- **Community engagement and participation through digital means**: analyzing the ways in which digital platforms, apps and technologies can facilitate or limit citizen engagement, participation, and decision-making in urban contexts.
- **Economic development and shared prosperity:** investigating economic benefits and opportunities and economic loss from the presence or absence of smart city initiatives and investments, including job creation and economic growth.
- **Digital capacities and readiness**: Evaluating efforts and need to build the capacity of governments, organizations, and individuals to effectively navigate the digital transformation of cities. Identifying main bottlenecks to capacity enhancement at institutional and societal levels and their impacts on urban development at large.
- **Sustainable digital transformation and environmental sustainability**: scrutinizing the environmental implications and sustainability aspects of digitalization in urban areas.

The assessment must provide robust data on smart city trends, challenges, and opportunities, including regional variations, grounding the study on solid evidence and global knowledge. Through a blend of primary and secondary sources' analysis, incorporating raw data collection, interviews, good practices, studies, the assessment must ensure holistic

coverage and in-depth analysis of context specific variations at regional, national and sub-national scales.

Building on global knowledge, the assessment is expected to draw upon UN-Habitat's existing work and partnerships including the Flagship Programme on People Centered Smart Cities and the United Nations Innovation Technology Accelerator for Cities, and field research conducted with support from UN-Habitat's country and regional offices, among others.

Therefore, the bidder's proposed methodological approach should reflect the above needs and include, but not be limited to, a thorough literature review of existing studies, reports and relevant documents, primary data collection through raw data gathering, data validation through interviews/focus groups, and more.

5. What we are looking for

UN-Habitat is looking for a trusted partner to work directly with the Innovation Unit and any other relevant partners for the execution of a comprehensive assessment and report. The candidate organization should possess proven capabilities in the following domains:

1. Experience in undertaking similar research and analytical projects;
2. A proven track record in compiling reports related to the subject matter at stake;
3. Established technical expertise in the fields of innovative technologies, smart urban planning and smart cities, e-governance, transformative processes, urban development, climate sustainability and other relevant fields;
4. Extensive geographical coverage and a nuanced understanding of international, regional, and local market dynamics.

6. Expected Activities and Outputs

The successful candidate is expected to undertake the following major activities in a manner consistent with UN-Habitat quality standards:

#	Activity	Due date	Outputs
1	Workplan and methodological approach	November 2023	1. Revised workplan with details on activities, timeline and outputs 2. Revised methodological approach following the kick-off meeting and UN-Habitat comments on the proposed methodology
2	Desk research and literature review	November 2023	1. Literature review of global existing practices and UN-Habitat and partners' products 2. Compilation of case studies focusing on key themes and regional examples
3	Primary and secondary data collection	December 2023-	1. Raw data gathering through data collection software (survey or others) at city level

		January 2023	2. Secondary data collection and revision 3. Data gap identification and approach to fill the gaps
4	Experts and cities Interviews	February 2024	1. List of interviewees and interviews plan 2. At least 20 interviews to fill data gaps and collect additional information on case studies/global practices etc.
5	Preliminary finding (draft results)	March 2024	1. Preliminary findings and figures presented at the first Global Expert Group Meeting (EGM) 2. Dissemination of preliminary findings to partners for feedback and comments 3. World Smart Cities Outlook Zero Draft
6	World Smart Cities Outlook Final Result	July 2024	1. Results of the World Smart Cities Outlook presented at the second Global EGM
7	World Smart Cities Outlook Report	August 2024	1. Publication of the study 2. Database of data collected, interviews, case studies handed over to UN-Habitat

7. Eligibility Criteria

Criteria for eligibility	Submission Details/ Documents Required
Legal status	• Certificate of registration/incorporation • Proof of registration
Organization profile and details	• Clear organization profile and structure of the organization indicating: • Organization's vision, mission and objectives • Management structure • Members of the Governing Board and their Designations • Proof of membership to professional associations if any
Financial capacity	• Audited company financial statements (balance sheet and income statement) and auditors report for the last two years
Exclusive bank account	• Is the organization willing and able to have a separate bank account for the funds provided by UN-Habitat?
Integrity and governance	• The organization should complete and submit a signed Partner Declaration Form • Provide the profiles of the Chairperson of the Board of Directors, Head of the Organization and Chief of Finance

8. Selection and evaluation criteria

There shall be an evaluation panel that will evaluate all proposals and recommend the most suitably qualified organization for endorsement/approval based on the below technical evaluation criteria.

.

Criteria for technical evaluation	Evidence / document submission	
A. Eligibility and qualifications 30%		
1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE (300)		
1.1 Organisation, mandate and purpose	Outline in the proposal the organization mandate and purpose to assess fitness with the project	
1.2 Alignment of the organization with UN-Habitat objectives and approach on smart cities	Outline in the proposal how this project is related to the organization's core business	
1.3 Understanding of the specific and long-term objectives related to the project	Outline in the proposal your understanding of the project scope and mission and how it is positioned in the international discourse	

2. EXPERIENCE RELATED TO SERVICES		
2.1 Experience in the provision of similar services proving effective skill or expertise*	High-quality portfolio of similar projects executive in the past 5 years related to research and data collection with a list of tailored expertise. Project list must include at least 3 references	
2.2 Experience in conducting projects in the same environment*	Any supporting document proving experience in conducting projects in the past 5 years related to smart cities and digitalisation with a list of projects. Project list must include at least 3 references	
2.3 Experience of relevant projects for UN-Habitat or similar international organisations*	Reference to projects conducted for UN-Habitat or other IOs, preferably in the remit of smart cities and digitalisation	
B. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND TEAM COMPOSITION (30%)		
3. TECHNICAL CAPABILITY/EXPERTISE		
3.1 Qualifications in terms of Education, Profession, Specialisation & other relevant requirements	Provide a list of proposed staff with related education, professional background and specialisation (refer to Annex B). Prove staff technical skills for the project scope and how this is reflected in the proposed role in the project	
3.2 Global outreach and capacity*	Demonstrate in the proposal your global outreach capacity for the project. This could include list of office facilities, vehicles and office equipment locally available and/or processes, methods and platforms to be used	
3.3 Project Management Skills and/or Administration Skills*	Ensure the composition of the team includes sound project management capabilities and administration skills to ensure project execution and that the organization has formal procedures to monitor project execution	
C. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY, APPROACH AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (40%)		
4. METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY		
4.1 Methodology and Approach understanding and clarity	Methodology clearly outlined in the proposal, ensuring quality in line with UN-Habitat standards and mitigation of potential risks	
4.2 Relevance, detail, presentation and originality of proposal	Include in the proposal original ideas to best execute the project	
4.3 Schedule, allocation and planning of resources	Proposal including a clear and optimal resources allocation and planning (workplan, Gantt Chart) with respect to tasks, activities and deadlines	

4.4 Clear deliverables and milestones. Quality of project management	A workplan that defines the deliverables and activities required to achieve expected outputs	
4.5 Quality control, performance measurement and procedural competence	Proposal defining the organization approach to quality along with procedures for quality control and client satisfaction assurance (quality plan, assurance and monitoring procedures)	
4.6 Data privacy policy	Proposal including data privacy compliance approach	
TOTAL		

* mandatory experience which must be demonstrated by providing any relevant supporting documents verifying the organization experience and capacity

9. Instruction to Applicants

1. Proposals received after the deadline will not be considered.
2. Applicants shall submit their proposal by email until the specified deadline above to ig-pcsc@un.org to the attention of Roberta Maio roberta.maio@un.org
3. Please use the templates provided in the Annex.
4. Proposals and accompanying documents submitted to a different email address will not be considered.
5. Any clarification queries and correspondences should be sent by email to ig-pcsc@un.org
6. Proposals failing to provide the requested information will be disregarded.
7. All costs must be in USD Dollar.
8. The proposal language is English.
9. The technical proposal will be evaluated based on whether it responds adequately to the specifications and requirements of the call for proposals.
10. All proposals will be assessed on a comparative basis against the criteria specified in the call for proposals document. Interested organizations must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (brochure, description of similar assignments, experience in similar conditions, availability of appropriate skills among staff, etc). Along with this technical proposal, please submit a visual and or narrative portfolio of similar projects that the applicant implemented in the area of activities of the project. We have specified mandatory experience which must be demonstrated marked with an (*) under "Selection & Evaluation Criteria". Please submit relevant supporting documents verifying your organization's experience in the required areas.
11. A two-stage procedure will be utilized in evaluating the proposals, with evaluation of the Technical Proposal (comprising of technical capacity, financial and administrative management capacity, and the technical proposal) being completed prior to any Financial Proposal being opened and compared. Applicant's submission of technical proposal and accompanying documents submitted in template Annex B and financial proposal in Annex C will be evaluated using the criteria specified in the call for proposals.

12. All shortlisted applicants will be notified, and their respective project managers asked to participate in in a technical session organized by UN-Habitat to help evaluate the technical performance of the applicant organization.
13. Only successful applicant organizations will be notified.
14. Organizations will be selected in accordance with the procedure set out in the UN-Habitat IP Management Policy and Standard Operating Procedures.
15. This Call for Proposals does not entail any commitment on the part of UN-Habitat, either financial or otherwise. UN-Habitat reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals without incurring any obligation to inform the affected applicant(s) of the grounds.

10.   Annexes

The following key documents below need to be attached and sent with the technical proposal*:

Annex A_Partner declaration form.docx

Annex B - Technical Proposal Template.docx

Annex C_IP Budget Proposal.xls

Financial Statements (balance sheet and income statement) of past 2 years

Certificate of registration/incorporation

For more information, please contact ig-pcsc@un.org