TERMS OF REFERENCE
AND TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

I. General information

Assignment name	Framework Agreement for Senior E-Commerce Advisor
Beneficiary	Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration – MoTRI
Country	Ethiopia
Total estimated number of days	250 Working Days (Estimated)

II. Context and justification of the need

The ECOTRADE Project is a four-year initiative (2025–2029) funded by the European Union and implemented by Expertise France. It supports Ethiopia's implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), with a focus on strengthening institutional capacity, promoting private-sector-led regional value chains, and supporting knowledge systems.

The rationale behind the Project and its focus on supporting the implementation of the AfCFTA in Ethiopia with a focus on the private-led value chain development (VCD) approach is based on the following elements:

- Ethiopia, with the fastest-growing youth population, stands to benefit the most if the country implements trade facilitation measures that cuts red tape and simplifies customs procedures for the private sector. Nevertheless, it requires expertise in various areas to guide policymakers and chain actors in the implementation of the AfCFTA.
- In countries such as Ethiopia, which are affected by fragility and conflict, the private sector plays a critical role in providing jobs, income, and stability. Hence, providing technical support to private sector players to build their internal capacity to start trading across borders, or increase their trade volumes, or/and geographical coverage is paramount and must take centre stage.
- The Private Sector will need to be capacitated to increase their readiness across various strategic sectors to take advantage of new opportunities unfolding under the new single market that the AfCFTA creates.
- The promotion of value chains is a complex challenge within the realm of private sector development and beyond; therefore, the potential of such interventions for local economic development and poverty reduction through trade in value added and RVCs is significant.

- Promoting value chain development is increasingly being recognized as a promising approach to address not only economic development, decent job creation, equitable and inclusive growth, but a wider range of social and environmental development issues, thus able to legitimise stronger efforts to support private sector development.
- Increasing openness to AfCFTA will lead to higher competitive pressure on regional but also on Ethiopian domestic markets. This regional integration, where production and trade relationships are nowadays much more coordinated, leaves less space for individual firms and small enterprises to design, produce, and market on their own. Thus, it is important to understand how to integrate in value chains in a way that allows for incorporation of a growing number of the workforce and increasing levels of productivity and incomes for SMEs and women-led businesses.

The Project currently has five (5) Strategic Objectives (SOs).

- Specific Objective 1: The private sector is actively engaged alongside the government to support the AfCFTA's successful implementation

- Specific Objective 2: Regional value chains are integrated, and trade/transport connectivity is facilitated with a focus on increasing women's participation in commercial and logistics processes

- Specific Objective 3: Relevant authorities in the implementation of the AfCFTA are supported

- Specific Objective 4: Academic institutions and research institutions are supported

- Specific Objective 5: Enhance Ethiopia's readiness to implement the AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocol

The Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration (MoTRI), in collaboration with Expertise France's ECOTRADE Project, is strengthening Ethiopia's e-commerce ecosystem, trade competitiveness, and digital trade infrastructure.

The initiative includes interventions related to trade facilitation, logistics modernization, export promotion, digital trade systems, market information systems, customs and border management improvement, private sector participation, and institutional strengthening. It also supports Ethiopia's efforts toward regional and international trade integration, including the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Digital Trade Protocol, regional trade agreements, and digital economy reforms.

Effective implementation requires strong technical leadership in e-commerce regulatory frameworks, human capital development, digital trade execution, and efficient budget utilization.

III. Objectives and desired results

Objectives

The primary objective of this assignment is to recruit a qualified and highly experienced Senior E-commerce Advisor to provide strategic guidance, technical assistance, and policy leadership to MoTRI's E-commerce State minister.

- The Senior E-commerce Advisor will bridge the gap between high-level trade policy and technical implementation, ensuring that national strategies are innovative, compliant with international standards, effectively leverage financial resources, build local institutional capacities, and advance digital transformation and long-term sustainability goals.

IV. Description of the assignment

- Serve as Strategic Advisor on E-Commerce to the Minister of State, focusing on digital trade policy, cross-border commerce, and regulatory standards.
- Conduct comprehensive landscape audits of the Ethiopian e-commerce ecosystem, evaluating infrastructure gaps, digital risk profiles, and operational bottlenecks.
- Drive the design, criteria, and operational frameworks for National E-commerce Sandboxes catering to domestic and cross-border trade.
- Design and execute a comprehensive Sustainability and Human Capacity Building Action Plan across different lifecycle (Design & Planning, Implementation, Transition & Handover) to ensure institutional ownership, knowledge transfer, and operational continuity.
- Guide the harmonization of domestic regulatory frameworks with AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocol.
- Guide institutional data-driven tracking mechanisms within MoTRI to monitor e-commerce readiness and growth using modern business intelligence metrics.
- Facilitate technical validation workshops and high-level alignment meetings with key regulatory bodies, international platforms, and private sector stakeholders.
- Establish and monitor an institutional E-commerce Monitoring and KPI Framework utilizing modern business intelligence metrics to track sector-specific growth.
- Review and draft guidelines concerning consumer protection, data privacy, and trade fraud protection metrics in digital commerce.

- Design and launch strategic awareness, advocacy, and campaign programs specifically tailored for SMEs, Exporters, and Buyers to drive e-commerce adoption and trust.
- Drive cyber awareness campaigns specifically targeted for digital trade participants and MoTRI staff.
- Develop a comprehensive organizational ICT roadmap and institutional ICT policy.
- Design and operationalize the e-commerce sandbox framework.
- Advice on the modernization of trade workflows, digitalizing ministerial services, and restructuring institutional units to support a digital-first trade environment.
- Guide the integration of ethical AI usage, prompt engineering best practices, and facilitate follow-up and technical coordination for the development and deployment of the MoTRI AI agent.
- Support preparation and implementation of annual work plans, digital trade activity execution, human capital development initiatives, and optimal budget utilization strategies.

V. Anticipated Deliverables (not exhaustive)

Deliverables	Description
Inception Report	To be submitted within two weeks of signing the contract, detailing the consultant's understanding of the terms of reference, proposed methodology, stakeholder matrix, and a detailed work plan.
Technical Assistance	Provide high-level advisory and policy recommendations to the Minister of State, covering digital trade policy, cross-border commerce frameworks, and regulatory standards to drive national digital transformation.
Operational Guide and Implementation Framework	A well-articulated operational guideline and implementation framework for national e-commerce sandboxes optimizing cross-border and domestic digital trade
	Developing institutional ICT policy and long-term organizational ICT roadmap aligned with MoTRI's digital transformation agenda
Strategy and Execution Roadmap	A comprehensive strategy and execution roadmap for E-commerce Awareness and Campaign Programs

	targeting SMEs, Exporters, and Buyers, along with promotional and toolkit materials
	A technical harmonization roadmap and gap analysis report aligning domestic regulatory frameworks with the AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocol
Capacity Building	Comprehensive awareness programs, training toolkits, and execution reports focused on building cyber awareness for digital trade participants and MoTRI staff
	Development of specialized training materials and comprehensive outcome reports on conducted technical validation workshops for government officials on digital trade, policy harmonization, and security accountability
Legal and Regulatory Framework	Specific recommendations and draft guidelines for the development or amendment of legal and regulatory frameworks, focusing on consumer protection, data privacy, and trade fraud protection metrics
Tool Kits	Guidelines on ethical AI usage, prompt engineering frameworks, and project follow-up reports facilitating the development and implementation of the MoTRI AI agent
Monitoring Framework	An institutional E-commerce Monitoring and KPI Framework utilizing modern business intelligence metrics to track sector-specific growth and readiness
Sustainability and Human Capacity Building Action Plan	1. Design & Planning • Conduct e-commerce sustainability assessments, identify digital/operational risks with mitigation measures, set clear milestones, map funding sources/mobilizing mechanisms, and establish baseline indicators for digital trade growth 2. Implementation • Execute human capacity development and e-commerce sustainability actions activities; establish capacity-building and mentoring mechanisms for digital trade, cybersecurity, and AI tool adoption; and adapt approaches based on continuous feedback

	3. Transition & Handover • Gradually transfer sandbox management, and digital workflows to permanent MoTRI structures; establish a knowledge transfer guideline documenting lessons learned; secure sustainable government budget allocation for recurrent digital infrastructure costs; and conduct a final sustainability assessment aligned with initial baselines

Note:

1. The above deliverables are indicative.
2. Specific deliverables and reporting schedules will periodically be issued by the ECOTRADE Project (based on the MoTRI's needs) and validated by both the MoTRI and the ECOTRADE Project
3. All deliverables must be submitted in English.

VI. Duration of Assignment

The assignment shall be for one (1) year, renewable based on satisfactory performance, Project needs, and availability of funds.

VII. Required Qualification and Experience

Education

- A Master's Degree in Cybersecurity, Information Technology, Computer Science, or a related technical field from a recognized University

Experience

- Minimum of 10 years of progressively responsible professional experience in technology, cybersecurity, or systems engineering.
- Experience in digital trade or e-commerce development at list 1 year.
- Proven experience working with donor-funded projects and international development agencies
- Demonstrated experience in developing national e-commerce sandboxes, organizational ICT policies, and digital trade units.
- Knowledge of the AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocol.

- Work experience on managing national-level digital infrastructure projects, AI integration initiatives, and implementing security solutions for critical institutions under ISO 9001:2015 or ISO/IEC 27001 standards.
- Expert understanding of risk assessment methodologies, data privacy protocols, and cybersecurity frameworks.

Technical Competencies

- Developed comprehensive technical training programs and content to drive user adoption and team upskilling.
- Experience in stakeholder engagement, human capacity building, sustainability planning, cyber awareness facilitation, and public-private dialogue.
- Designed and evaluated organizational infrastructure architectures, ensuring high availability, scalability, and alignment with business objectives
- Monitored and guided implementation phases through structured follow-ups, mitigating risks and ensuring successful project delivery.
- Expert knowledge on e-commerce dashboard, AI applications, prompt engineering, and cloud infrastructure.
- Familiarity with the AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocol and regional digital integration frameworks.
- Knowledge of risk assessment methodologies, data privacy protocols, digital consumer protection, and online transaction security.
- Good computer skills, including Microsoft Office applications and trade data analysis tools.

Other Requirements

- Excellent written and spoken English and Amharic.
- Strong communication, facilitation, and interpersonal skills.
- Ability to work under pressure and manage multiple assignments.
- High level of integrity and professionalism.

VIII. Reporting Arrangement

The Senior Expert will report to:

- E-commerce Focal Point/ E-commerce State Minister – MoTRI/ECOTRADE Focal Point

The Advisor will work closely with:

- MoTRI E-commerce Sector Head & Technical Staff
- Ministry of Innovation and Technology (MInT)
- Information Network Security Agency (INSA)

- National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE)
- Ministry of Finance (MoF)
- Ethiopian Customs Commission (ECC) &
- Ministry of Revenues (MoR)
- Commercial Bank
- Ethiopia Air line
- Ethio Posta
- Private Sector E-commerce Operators and Fintech Providers

Reporting Requirements

- Monthly and Quarterly implementation reports such as, Stakeholder consultation reports, Training, capacity building, and workshop reports technical, human capital, cyber/AI adoption, sustainability, and progress reports
- Annual performance reports

IX. Management Arrangements

The Senior Expert will work at MoTRI in Addis Ababa. The Senior Expert shall ensure that all assigned activities, specifically sandbox frameworks, ICT policy, cyber awareness, AI agent coordination, human capacity sustainability, and budget utilization, are implemented in accordance with MoTRI guidelines, and national policy objectives.