

Request for Proposals from Independent Consultants

Project	Comprehensive back-end support, security, and maintenance support for AWS (Amazon Web Services) and Moodle Learning Management Systems (LMS)
Issued by	African Organisation of English-speaking Supreme Audit Institutions (AFROSAI-E) on behalf of the African Professionalisation Initiative (API)
Issued on	1 July 2024
Deadline for submission	19 July 2024
Inquiries	info@professionalisation.africa

Letter of Invitation

Pretoria, South Africa, 1 July 2024

AFROSAI-E Project on behalf of the African Professionalisation Initiative (API):

Comprehensive back-end support, security, and maintenance support for AWS (Amazon Web Services) and Moodle Learning Management System (LMS)

To Whom It May Concern:

AFROSAI-E is a partner of the API. The API's mission is to grow the capacity of accountancy professionals in the African public sector for enhanced service delivery. Further information on the initiative may be found on the website [here](#).

Over the past few years, the API commenced the development of its learning programmes. These learning programmes are designed to support the API's capacity building approach. This approach identifies three main target audiences who each have their own learning needs:

- **Incumbents:** senior officials serving in PFM roles but who don't have a professional accountancy background
- **Accounting and auditing professionals** who have an interest in accepting a role within the public sector but lack exposure to this environment.
- **Students:** aspiring professionals who have an interest in pursuing a career in public sector accountancy

The API also has other specialised learning interventions, in line with specific learning needs- such as CPD events, micro-credentials and sector specific learning programmes.

This project relates to comprehensive back-end/ infrastructural support, security, and maintenance support for our cloud services, AWS (Amazon web services), and Moodle Learning Management System (LMS). Such support is key to ensure that the API continues to provide an accessible learning environment for countries across the African continent.

The nature of this support is included in the section "*Terms of Reference*".

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMISSION

Interested consultants are required to submit their application by 5:00 PM South African Time on **19 July 2024**. Late submissions will not be accepted. Applications must be submitted by email to info@professionalisation.africa using the subject line:

Response to RFP- Support Services for AWS and Moodle LMS

All applications must include both a technical proposal and a financial proposal. The technical proposal must follow the “*Instructions for Completing the Technical Proposal*” beginning on page 14. Submissions must not exceed the specified length. Any submissions that do not comply with the instructions will not be considered.

Definitions, Key Terminology and Acronyms

AFROSAI-E	<p>African Organisation of English-speaking Supreme Audit Institutions</p> <p>The English subgroup of AFROSAI, the African branch of the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions. AFROSAI-E performs an enabling role in the region by sharing information with its members and supporting them towards the better performance of their mandates.</p>
API	<p>African Professionalisation Initiative, being the collaboration between AAAG, AFROSAI-E, CREFIAF and PAFA.</p> <p>An independent non-profit organisation whose primary objective is to strengthen the capacity and knowledge base of accounting and auditing professionals in the African public sector to enhance accounting and auditing service delivery to the citizens of Africa.</p>
AWS	<p>Amazon Web Services. The cloud infrastructure services used by the API.</p>
Consultant(s)	<p>A consulting firm or team of independent experts or service provider(s) interested in this RFP</p>
Contract	<p>A legally binding written agreement between the parties</p>
IFAC	<p>International Federation of Accountants</p> <p>A global organisation for the accountancy profession, comprising 180 member and associate organisations in 135 jurisdictions, representing millions of professional accountants.</p>
LMS	<p>Learner Management System, of which the API uses Moodle</p>

Learning resources	Materials which have been produced under various projects targeting different types of learners, primarily aspiring professional accountants and auditors.
PAO	Professional Accountancy Organisation They are organisations to which professional accountants belong which assist their membership through ongoing training, guidance and tools aimed to maintain their professional competence, as well as overseeing the recruitments of the talent pipeline into the profession.
PEC	Proposal Evaluation Committee, a panel which will be established by AFROSAI-E and its API partners to evaluate the submissions.
Proposal	Constitutes a Technical Proposal and a Financial Proposal for undertaking this project as outlined in the ToR
RFP	Request for Proposals The combined document detailing all components and information necessary for interested service provider to make a submission aligned to the request.
ToR	Terms of Reference for a specific project that outline key deliverables

Terms of Reference

This section sets out the objectives of the project and the contribution of the independent consultants.

Background

1. Public sectors in Africa face a significant shortage of competent accountancy professionals. Public funds are often managed by individuals with no formal accountancy qualification or training in accountancy. Existing accounting qualifications are usually delivered and assessed in a private sector context, and therefore do not adequately address the unique complexities of practicing accountancy in the public sector. Consequently, most accountancy professionals tend to work in the private sector. The shortage of competent accountancy professionals in the public sector is often cited as one of the root causes of corruption and inefficiency in the public sector.
2. The API has been created to respond to this problem. One aspect of the API's work is the development of generic learning resources that target primarily aspiring accountancy professionals.
3. The API primarily uses a, customised, Moodle based online platform to deliver its learning, thus supporting its approach of continent-wide accessibility for various learning programme.
4. The API learning platform may be accessed directly [here](#), or via the [API website](#), which includes a link to the learning/ student portal.

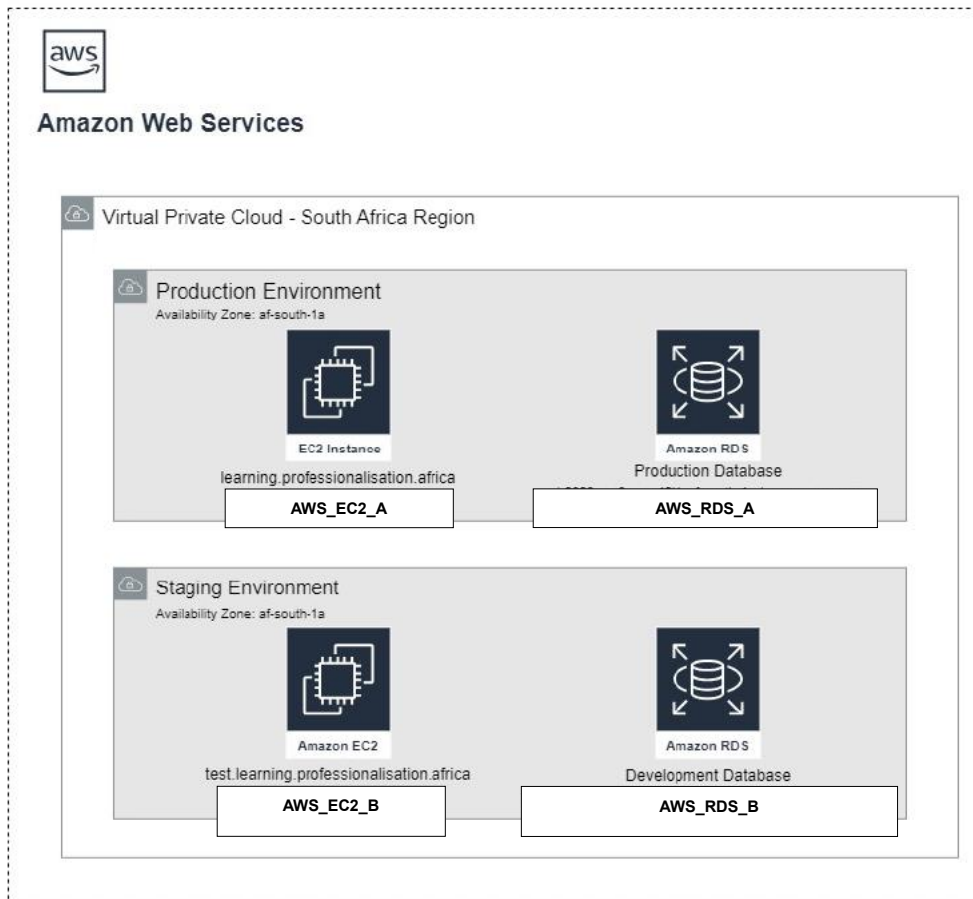
Project objectives

5. The consultant will be tasked with providing qualified, comprehensive back-end support, security, maintenance support for API cloud services, through AWS and Moodle LMS.

Scope of Work and Deliverables

6. The scope includes, but is not limited to the following:

6.1. Cloud Infrastructure Overview



Description and Sizing

a. EC2 Instances:

o Production Environment:

- **EC2 Instance ID:** AWS_EC2_A
- **Domain:** learning.professionalisation.africa
- **Sizing Considerations:** Depending on the workload, the instance type should be chosen for optimal performance. For a production environment, a general-purpose instance like t3.medium or a compute-optimized instance like c5.large could be appropriate.

o Staging Environment:

- **EC2 Instance ID:** AWS_EC2_B
- **Domain:** test.learning.professionalisation.africa

- **Sizing Considerations:** A smaller instance type compared to production may be used to save costs. Instances like t3.small or t3.medium could be sufficient for staging purposes.

b. Amazon RDS:

- **Production Database:**
 - **RDS Instance ID:** AWS_RDS_A
 - **Sizing Considerations:** For a production environment, using an instance type that provides high availability and performance, such as db.m5.large or db.r5.large, would be ideal.
- **Development Database:**
 - **RDS Instance ID:** AWS_RDS_B
 - **Sizing Considerations:** For development or testing, a smaller and less costly instance type like db.t3.medium or db.t3.small might be sufficient.

General Considerations:

- **Auto-Scaling:** Both EC2 instances in production and staging can be configured with auto-scaling to handle varying loads dynamically.
- **Security:** Ensure security groups, network ACLs, and IAM roles are correctly configured to limit access to only necessary resources and users.
- **Backup and Recovery:** Implement regular automated backups and define a recovery strategy for both production and development databases.
- **Monitoring and Logging:** Use AWS CloudWatch for monitoring performance and AWS CloudTrail for logging and auditing activities in the environments.

Estimated hours of ad-hoc support per month

- 2-4 hours of support requests depending on demand.

6.2. Amazon Web Services (AWS)

c. Back-end Support

1. Infrastructure Management

- Setup and configuration of an existing API AWS tenant account.
- Monitoring and managing server performance.
- Implementing auto-scaling to handle varying workloads.
- Managing AWS storage solutions such as S3, EBS, and Glacier.
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2. Database Management

- Setup, configuration, and management of RDS, DynamoDB, and other database services.
- Performance tuning and optimisation of databases.
- Regular backups and restoration procedures.

3. **Network Configuration**

- VPC (Virtual Private Cloud) setup and management.
- Managing VPN (Virtual Private Network) connections.
- Configuring and managing AWS Direct Connect.

d. **Security**

1. **Identity and Access Management (IAM)**

- Setting up and managing IAM roles, policies, and user accounts.
- Implementing Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA).

2. **Data Security**

- Encrypting data at rest and in transit.
- Regular security audits and vulnerability assessments.
- Implementing AWS security services like GuardDuty, Inspector, and Macie.

3. **Compliance and Governance**

- Ensuring compliance with industry standards (e.g., GDPR, HIPAA).
- Implementing AWS Config rules for continuous compliance monitoring.
- Maintaining and updating security policies and procedures.

e. **Maintenance Support**

1. **Regular Maintenance Tasks**

- Patching and updating AWS services and underlying operating systems.
- Monitoring and resolving incidents and service issues.
- Regular performance and security audits.

2. **Disaster Recovery and Backup**

- Designing and implementing disaster recovery plans.
- Regular testing of backup and recovery procedures.
- Ensuring minimal downtime during maintenance activities.

3. **Technical Support**

- 24/7 technical support with defined SLAs.
- Proactive incident management and resolution.
- Regular reporting on system health and performance.

6.3. Moodle LMS Infrastructure Overview

Moodle Production Environment Specifications:

- Version 4.1.3
- The design is based on 1/0.1/0.01 model [5000 users, 500 active, 50 concurrent session] with 350 active user accounts
- 1 Availability Zone in the Africa – Cape Town
- Plugins installed (Payment gateway – Payfast, Edwiser RemUI theme, H5P)

Moodle Staging Environment Specifications:

- Version 4.1.1
- The design is based on 1/0.1/0.01 model [5000 users, 500 active, 50 concurrent session] with 15 active user accounts
- 1 Availability Zone in the Africa – Cape Town
- Plugins installed (Payment gateway – Payfast, Edwiser RemUI theme, H5P)

Estimated hours of ad-hoc support per month

- 1-4 hours of support requests depending on demand.

f. Back-end Support

1. Server Management

- Installation and configuration of Moodle on web servers.
- Performance tuning of the Moodle environment.
- Implementing load balancing and scalability solutions.

2. Database Management

- Setting up and managing Moodle databases.
- Regular backups and optimization of database performance.
- Ensuring data integrity and security.

3. Integration Services

- Integrating Moodle with other systems (e.g., SIS, SSO, ERP, CRM).
- Custom plugin development and management.
- Application Programming Interface management for external integrations.

g. Front-end Support

1. User Interface and Experience

- Customizing the Moodle theme and user interface.
- Ensuring responsive design and mobile compatibility.
- Improving accessibility features in compliance with the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards.

2. Content Management

- Assisting with course creation and content upload.
- Implementing multimedia and interactive content.
- Supporting various e-learning standards like SCORM and xAPI.

3. User Support

- Providing helpdesk support
- Developing and maintaining user guides and documentation.
- Conducting training sessions and webinars for effective LMS usage.

h. Security

1. Access Control

- Implementing role-based access controls (RBAC).
- Ensuring secure authentication mechanisms.
- Monitoring and managing user activity logs.

2. Data Protection

- Encrypting sensitive data and communications.
- Regular security audits and penetration testing.
- Implementing GDPR compliance measures.

3. Incident Response

- Developing and maintaining an incident response plan.
- Regularly testing and updating security protocols.
- Ensuring quick resolution of security incidents.

i. Maintenance Support

1. System Updates and Upgrades

- Regularly updating Moodle to the latest versions.
- Applying patches and security updates.
- Ensuring compatibility with other integrated systems.

2. Backup and Recovery

- Implementing robust backup solutions.
- Regular testing of backup and recovery processes.
- Ensuring data availability and minimal downtime.

3. Performance Monitoring

- Setting up monitoring tools for performance tracking.
- Generating regular performance and usage reports.
- Proactively addressing performance bottlenecks.

Reporting arrangements

7. The consultant will work closely with the API Secretariat, or a designated person by the secretariat, overseen by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
8. The consultant will be expected to produce monthly reports on different aspects of the support they provide.

Quality assurance

9. The consultant is responsible for ensuring the quality of all deliverables and support services.
10. The consultant is expected to include an internal quality review process for all p deliverables and support services.
11. The Secretariat will provide an independent quality assurance function for any deliverables and support services.
12. The consultant will be required to respond to all inputs provided by the Secretariat on any agreed deliverables or support services.

Monitoring and evaluation

13. The any deliverables and support services will be monitored and evaluated according to the governance processes established by AFROSAI-E and the API.

Intellectual property

14. All rights of ownership and use for the intellectual property produced under this project will be held solely by AFROSAI-E for the benefit of the API. It is incumbent on the consultant to ensure that all processes do not infringe on the copyright of any other party.

Support Service Timeline

15. It is expected that the successful consultant would provide services from 1 August 2024- 31 January 2026- A total of 18 months.

Funding and cost

16. The contract will be based on a cost-effective financial proposal submitted by the Consultant,
 - a. consulting fees;
 - b. travel or other expenses; and
 - c. all taxes.

17. No additional amounts above the final contracted budgets will be paid to the consultant(s) with respect to the support services under any circumstances.

Instructions for Completing the Technical Proposal

Criteria

The Consultant should have as part of their team the following experience and expertise:

Technical Proposal Area	Weight
Proven experience and expertise by the consulting firm in providing quality AWS related support, within the parameters (or greater), as described in the "Scope of Work and Deliverables".	30
Proven experience and expertise by the consulting firm in providing quality Moodle related support, with the parameters (or greater), as described in the "Scope of Work and Deliverables".	30
Qualifications, skills and intended roles of key personnel- i.e., signed resumes (curriculum vitae), relevant to the provision of the support services. <i>(In addition to academic qualifications, relevant industry certifications will be considered a distinct advantage)</i>	20
A track record by the consulting firm of high-quality projects/ support services clients, completed within scope, budget and timeline great satisfaction, giving rise to sustainable outcomes <i>(Documented through summary of previous projects and inclusion of adequate corresponding references)</i> .	20
Total	100%

Submission Documentation for Technical Proposals

In order to demonstrate suitability to undertake the project:

1. Consultants should submit a Technical Proposal detailing how they meet **each** of the criteria listed above. Consultants should address each of the criteria individually, ensuring that each section is clearly numbered and labelled with the criteria heading. This should include examples of similar work performed to date. The Technical Proposal **should not exceed 10 pages (appendices are not permitted)** and use a text font with a point size of at least 10.
2. Consultants will only be considered if their proposed team clearly has the skills and experience to provide both the required infrastructural support, as well as maintenance support for the LMS. Details of the envisaged support is included in the Scope of Work and Deliverables (see page 7).
3. Consultants should complete and sign the declaration on page 16.
4. Consultants should include a paragraph explaining how they will offer value for money on this project. This will be an important consideration for the Proposal Evaluation Committee (PEC) because the project is donor funded.
5. Consultant should include a brief overview of their policies related to gender equality and inclusivity, as well as corporate and social responsibility.
6. Consultants should submit a Financial Proposal as described on page 16 taking into consideration the rates for such support, as well as the envisaged length of the support services.

Any proposal submitted that does not adhere to these guidelines will not be considered.

Declaration

To Whom It May Concern:

I, the undersigned, offer to provide consulting services in accordance with your Request for Proposals and our proposal.

I certify that the information in this proposal correctly describes our proposed project team, their qualifications, and experience, and we are available to undertake the assignment if we are selected. I understand that any misstatement or misrepresentation described herein may lead to our disqualification or dismissal.

I certify that I/ my organisation possesses the capacity, as well as the financial and competent personnel capability to deliver within project scope, budget, and time should I/ my organisation be contracted to perform work on the AFROSAI-E/ API project.

I certify that I do not foresee any potential conflict(s) of interest in being contracted to perform work on the AFROSAI-E/ API related project.

I/ my organisation does not have any pending litigation against myself or the organisation that might present a problem in carrying out work related to the AFROSAI-E/ API project.

I commit that I/ my organisation will comply with any policies and procedures related to combating corrupt and fraudulent practices should I/ we be contracted to undertake work related to an AFROSAI-E/ API project.

I undertake to inform AFROSAI-E/ API in writing should any changes occur, that would lead me to no longer be in a position to offer the services for which I am expressing an interest, including conflict(s) of interest.

By submitting this proposal, I authorise AFROSAI-E to contact the references I have supplied.

I confirm that I will perform the service in compliance with the laws and regulations in South Africa.

I confirm that I will not make any attempt to contact members of the Proposal Evaluation Committee or to unduly influence its decision in any way.

Name of Consultant (*Individual*)

Signature

Date

Capacity of individual making the declaration:

(*dd/mm/yyyy*)

Basis of selection and scoring

Technical and Financial Proposal weight

Total score (quality & cost)	100
Technical Proposal weight	80
Financial Proposal weight	20

A qualitative evaluation of the value for money offered by the proposal will also be considered in the final decision of the PEC.

Evaluation process

Each Proposal will first be evaluated for compliance to the requirements of this document and to confirm if the consultant meets the minimum requirements required to deliver the project component(s).

Each Proposal that passes the initial compliance checks will be given a technical score by the PEC, as outlined in *Basis of Selection and Scoring*.

As part of the evaluation process, AFROSAI-E will contact references and may, at its discretion, ask the Consultant for additional information that it deems necessary for the PEC to complete its evaluation. Any such requests from AFROSAI-E, and responses from the Consultant, will be conducted by email.

The PEC will open the Financial Proposals for each of the Consultants whose Technical Proposals were considered responsive to the RFP and ToR. The Financial Proposals of Consultants whose Technical Proposals were considered non-responsive to the RFP and ToR will not be opened.

The scoring of the financial proposals by the PEC will not be solely based on the total value of the proposal but also on the allocation of costs to each line item. The PEC will make a final qualitative assessment of the value for money offered by the proposal.

Shortlisted consultants may be required to present or demonstrate their proposal to the PEC. AFROSAI-E will notify the Consultant if this required during the proposal evaluation stage.

AFROSAI-E will notify the Consultants of the outcome of the selection process via email, provided they met the minimum requirements and guidelines of this document. Consultants whose submissions do not comply with the minimum requirements will not be notified. For the selected Consultant, contract negotiations are expected to begin immediately following completion of the selection process.

AFROSAI-E and the PEC reserve the right to accept or reject any Proposal, and to annul the RFP and reject all submissions at any time, with or without reasons, without thereby incurring any liability to any Consultant or service provider.

Financial proposal

The following templates provide guidance on the format of the Financial Proposal. Please note that the Technical Proposal and Financial Proposal must be submitted in separate files, and each file must be clearly titled as per instructions under *Preparation and Submission of Proposal*.

Financial Proposal Cover Letter

Date:

To: Neo Hlatshwayo
Technical Director: African Professionalisation Initiative
AFROSAI-E (host of the API)
info@professionalisation.africa

Dear Neo

We, the undersigned, are submitting our Financial Proposal in accordance with your Request for Proposal dated _____. Our Technical Proposal is submitted in a separate file.

Our Financial Proposal shall be binding upon us subject to the modifications resulting from contract negotiations, up to expiration of the validity period of the Proposal, i.e., 90 days from the submission deadline for the Proposal.

All amounts are in South African Rands (ZAR).

We understand that AFROSAI-E is not bound to accept any Proposal we submit.

Yours sincerely,

Breakdown of Costs and Expected Timetable

Please include a table which illustrates:

1. An estimate of people hours and hourly rates for the assignment.
2. Other expenses expected to be incurred in providing support, for example, travel cost, hotel cost, other costs, etc.

The form of presentation is flexible but should provide enough information to give a good picture of the financial implication of the support to be provided.

Preparation and submission of proposal

Preparation

Cost

The Consultant will be responsible for all costs associated with the preparation and submission of the Proposal. AFROSAI-E will in no case be responsible or liable for those costs, regardless of the conduct or outcome of the process.

Language

The Proposal and all correspondence and documents exchanged by the Consultant and AFROSAI-E should be written in English. Supporting documents and printed literature may be in another language provided they are accompanied by an accurate translation of the relevant passages in English, in which case, for purposes of interpretation of the Proposal, the English translation will govern.

Currency

Unless otherwise indicated, all monetary amounts in the Proposal should be indicated in South African Rands (ZAR).

Submission

The Proposal (which should include two separate files – a Technical Proposal and a Financial Proposal) should be submitted electronically by the Consultant to Neo Hlatshwayo, Technical Director: African Professionalisation Initiative, AFROSAI-E (info@professionalisation.africa).

The Technical Proposal and accompanying documentation must be submitted as a separate file to the Financial Proposal. The file containing the Financial Proposal should be clearly named *FINANCIAL PROPOSAL – OPEN ONLY FOLLOWING APPROVAL OF TECHNICAL PROPOSAL*.

Deadline

AFROSAI-E may, at its discretion, extend the deadline for the submission of Proposals, in which case all rights and obligations of AFROSAI-E and the Consultants/ service providers subject to the previous deadline will thereafter be subject to the deadline as extended.

Validity

By submitting a Proposal, the Consultant confirms that the Proposal will remain valid for a period of 90 days from the submission deadline.

Clarification

Any request for clarification related to this RFP should be addressed to info@professionalisation.africa. Such requests must be received by AFROSAI-E and the API no later than three (3) days prior to the deadline for submission of Proposals.

Any changes, clarifications, or additional guidance related to the RFP as a result of requests for clarification will also be communicated in writing via email to all RFP recipients. If you did not receive this RFP via a direct email, please monitor the AFROSAI-E and the API websites (www.afrosaie.org.za / www.professionalisation.africa) for any such information.

Confidentiality

Detailed information relating to the Proposals and their evaluation will not be disclosed by anyone involved in the evaluation, even after Contracts are awarded. After the deadline for submission of Proposals, any Consultant that wishes to contact AFROSAI-E on any matter related to the process (other than confidential matters as noted above) may do so only by email.