Terms of Reference (ToR)

Development of Web Platform "LENS" for Budget Monitoring by Civil Society Organizations

1. Background

The Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN), in partnership with the Center for Research and Studies – GEA and Association Futura for Quality of Life Improvement, and with the support of the Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina, is implementing the LENS project. The project aims to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to monitor public budgets and promote transparency and accountability in public spending.

To support this goal, a new **web platform – LENS** will be developed as a comprehensive online tool enabling CSOs and citizens to access, analyze, and understand public budget data across Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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2. Objective of the Assignment

The overall objective is to **design, develop, and deploy a modern, interactive, and scalable web platform (LENS)** that:

- Serves as a central repository for budget-related documents, reports, and analyses.
- Provides **interactive data visualizations**, **AI-assisted analysis and Q&A**, and **public access to open data via API**.
- Enables both **public users** and **registered partners** (CSOs) to access and use the platform's functionalities efficiently.

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3. Scope of Work

The selected contractor will be responsible for the complete development of the LENS platform, including design, programming, testing, deployment, documentation, and user training.

3.1. Core Components

1. **Content Management System (CMS):**
   - Implementation of a user-friendly CMS and SQL database.
   - Ability to create, edit, and manage content without programming knowledge.
   - Multi-language support (BHS and English).
   - Integration of PDF, audio, video, and social media sharing.
   - WYSIWYG editor, time-based publication, and content categorization by year, sector, and document type.

2. **AI Layer – "Ask the Budget"**
   - AI chatbot/assistant enabling users to ask natural-language questions (e.g., "How much did Sarajevo spend on education in 2024?").
   - Responses must include cited sources (document, year, page).
   - Use of **Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)** architecture ensuring factual answers from indexed documents.
3. **Data Visualization and Analytics**
   - Interactive dashboards for:
     - Yearly trends.
     - Spending by function (education, health, infrastructure, etc.).
     - Comparison across municipalities.
     - Filtering by year, function, and income source.
   - Clear and intuitive user interface accessible to non-technical users.
4. **Open Data and Public API**
   - Public API providing structured budget data (CSV/JSON) for researchers, journalists, and CSOs.
   - Filtering by year, function, and administrative level.
   - Open and documented API access.
5. **Automation and Document Ingestion**
   - Automated uploading and indexing of new documents.
   - Integration with AI and search modules for immediate availability.
6. **Secure Partner Section**
   - Access restricted to registered users (CSO partners).
   - Uploading, sharing, and managing internal documents.
   - Role-based access control and data security measures.
7. **Maintenance and Support**
   - Technical support and regular updates.
   - Database optimization, backup, and security maintenance.
   - User training and provision of a technical manual.
   - Documentation of AI and API functionalities.

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4. Deliverables

1. Fully functional LENS web platform meeting all specifications.
2. CMS and database installed and configured on the provided web server.
3. Working AI module and API integrated and documented.
4. Training for CIN, Futura, and GEA staff.
5. Technical documentation, user manual, and maintenance plan.
6. Design files and complete source code delivered to CIN.

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5. Duration and Timeline

The estimated duration of the assignment is **3 (three) months** from contract signature.
The bidder should provide a **detailed timeline** including milestones for:

- Platform architecture and design.

- CMS and database development.
- AI and visualization modules.
- Testing and user training.
- Final delivery.

6. Required Expertise

The contractor must demonstrate:

- At least 5 years of experience in web development and design.
- Proven experience in developing large, interactive CMS-based platforms.
- Expertise in:
  - REST and GraphQL API development.
  - JavaScript (React, Vue, or Angular).
  - Database systems (MySQL, SQL Server).
  - Web security and data protection standards.
  - Documentation and user training.

At least five (5) examples of previous relevant web projects (with client contacts) must be provided.

7. Ownership and Intellectual Property Rights

Upon completion, **CIN, Futura, and GEA** will obtain full ownership of:

- The source code, databases, and scripts.
- All design and documentation materials.
- Exclusive right to modify, reproduce, or extend the system.

8. Evaluation of Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following weighted criteria:

Evaluation Criteria	Weight
Technical Offer (70%)	
– Company experience and expertise	25%
– Methodology, approach, and AI solution quality	25%
– Expertise of key team members	20%
Financial Offer (30%)	

The contract will be awarded to the most economically advantageous tender based on these criteria.

9. Submission of Proposals

Proposals must be submitted in **two separate envelopes** (Technical and Financial Offer) in one sealed envelope marked:
"Request for Proposals – Web Platform Development (LENS)"

Deadline for submission: **20th November 2025**
Delivery address:
Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN)
G. M. Lokatelli 11, 71000 Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bidders are encouraged to register their intent to submit a proposal by emailing:
✉ **info@cin.ba** by **07th of November 2025**.

10. Contact and Clarifications

All requests for clarification must be submitted by email to **info@cin.ba**.
Answers to all questions will be shared with all registered bidders to ensure equal access to information.

11. Payment and Financial Conditions

- Offers must be valid for **90 days**.
- Prices should be expressed in **KM or EUR**, exclusive of VAT.
- Payment schedule will be defined upon contract signing.
- VAT exemption documentation will be provided to the selected contractor.