RFP No. ASLM 06/04/21

RFP for Selection of Consultant

Establishing a Quality Assessment framework for the Genomic Sequencing and Bioinformatics laboratory network for Africa PGI
1. ASLM background

The African Society for Laboratory Medicine (ASLM) is a Pan-African professional body working to advocate for the critical role and needs of laboratory medicine and networks throughout Africa. Africa is rapidly growing but faces major health challenges including epidemics of HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria, and new priorities such as Ebola and other global health security threats. Strengthened laboratory capacity and surveillance in Africa are critical to overcoming the burden of disease and ensuring a healthy future for the continent. ASLM addresses these challenges by working collaboratively with governments, local and international organizations, implementing partners, and the private sector. ASLM collaborates with Africa CDC to implement the establishment of the Pathogen Genomic Institute.

2. Africa CDC background

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) was officially launched in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on January 31, 2017. The Africa CDC is Africa’s first continent-wide public health agency and envisions a safer, healthier, integrated and stronger Africa, where Member States are capable of effectively responding to infectious disease outbreaks and other public health threats. The agency’s mission is to strengthen Africa’s public health institutions’ capabilities to detect and respond quickly and effectively to disease outbreaks and other health burdens through an integrated network of continent-wide preparedness and response, surveillance, laboratory, and research programmes. Strengthening laboratory network systems and integrated disease surveillance are the core mandates of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC). As part of these mandates and owing to the benefits of genomic-based surveillance, Africa CDC launched the Institute of Pathogen Genomics (IPG) in November 2019. IPG was launched with a vision to integrate of pathogen genomics and bioinformatics into public health surveillance, outbreak investigations, and improved disease control and prevention in Africa. In seeking to achieve this vision, the IPG is intending to strengthen its capacity to deliver by, among others, the reinforcement of its organizational structure and expertise.

3. Purpose of the role

The quality assessment (QA) consultant (Genomic Sequencing and Bioinformatics) will develop a quality assessment framework for Africa PGI. This include the development of an external quality assessment (EQA) programme and a strategy for the designation of laboratories based on quality requirements. The consultant will adopt a consultative, holistic approach to develop and
implement the QA framework in selected (8) regional genomic sequencing laboratories in Africa.

4. **Major Duties and Responsibilities**

The consultant shall:

- Develop a quality assessment (QA) framework for Africa PGI articulating a laboratory designation system (such as the system designed by the HIVResNet of WHO) based on the achievements of quality requirements.
- As part of this network, the consultant will inventory available norms and standards guiding nucleic acid sequencing laboratories, and which can be used to structure the QA framework (i.e.: the CLSI nucleic acid standards)
- Develop, update and coordinate the validation of new or existing assessment /improvement tools supporting the designation programme.
- Provide technical assistance in setting an EQA programme for genomic sequencing initially based on commercially available EQA materials. Recommend the appropriate PT schemes for genomic sequencing and bioinformatics analysis (wet and dry lab)
- Connect the EQA PT programme for sequencing with the informatics package: (ePT tools) established by EQuAFRICA as part of ASLMs programmes
- Provide training to experts from regional genomic sequencing laboratories to conduct EQA and to achieve all quality requirements to be designated as a member of the PGI.

5. **Qualification:**

- Master’s degree in molecular epidemiology, genomics, bioinformatics, public health, health sciences or other related science-based discipline from an accredited academic institution with at least 12 years of relevant professional work experience of which 7 years at managerial level. Doctoral degree is an added advantage.

- University degree in molecular epidemiology, genomics, bioinformatics, public health, health sciences or other related science-based discipline from an accredited academic institution with at least 15 years of relevant professional work experience of which 5 years at managerial level

6. **Required professional work experience:**

- Managerial level experience in the development, management, implementation and evaluation of public health laboratory or genomic programs with special emphasis on the use of emerging technologies and approaches to inform public health policy and decision making.
- Experience in developing and reviewing operational guidelines/frameworks, strategic plans and technical proposals for advancing public health genomics programmes and initiatives.
- Experience working in large-scale, multi-country, interdisciplinary programs
- Ability to communicate clearly, logically and persuasively on complex topics in public health pathogen genomics
- A good understanding of public health systems in Africa

7. **Language requirement**

- Successful candidate should have excellent oral and written communication skills in English, along with ample experience with scientific writing. Knowledge of other AU working languages would be an added advantage.

8. **Remuneration**

- Competitive based on qualification and experience.

9. **Duration of the Contract:**

- For 6 Months

10. **Instructions for submitting proposals**

- Send your completed application by email to: rfpsubmission@aslm.org, and copy EShumba@aslm.org by 15th June 2021 (11:59 pm East African Time).

**Point of contact:**
Direct any written questions or request for information about this RFP to:

Edwin Shumba | ASLM  
Africa PGI Project Manager  
Email: EShumba@aslm.org  
Phone Number: +263773052246

11. **Evaluation and Award Process**

A team of ASLM staff and outside experts will evaluate the applications based on pre-set standards relevant to the specific project and its correlation with the RFP objectives. An evaluation matrix with assigned weighted numerical values will be used to rate each applicant as presented in the table below. The following represents some, although not all, of the criteria that will be used to the assessed feasibility of each Respondent.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Does the organization/individual have the right skillset and expertise to accomplish the required assignments</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Does the organization/individual demonstrate adequate and verifiable past experience in similar projects?</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Are the Respondent’s proposed activities (strategy of implementation) current, feasible and cost-effective?</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Are the proposed outcomes measurable and feasible?</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Did the application include references that attest to the Respondents' personal and professional integrity and competency?</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Did the Respondent demonstrate knowledge of ASLM’s project needs and objectives?</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total assigned weight</td>
<td>100%</td>
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ASLM reserves the right, but is under no obligation, to enter into discussions with one or more Respondents in order to obtain clarifications or additional details, to suggest service delivery refinements in the proposal or other aspects of the proposal, or to negotiate the cost of the proposal. Formal notification to award the contract and the actual execution of the contract are subject to receipt of funds from the Fleming Fund.

Each Respondent submitting a proposal will be notified in writing or via e-mail of ASLM’s decision concerning their proposal. Should you be recommended for acceptance, the contract shall be effective on the contract execution date and shall run until 30 June 2022. All work must be scheduled and completed within the contract period timeframe. Any modifications or extensions must be negotiated in advance and submitted to ASLM for review and approval. The selected Respondent's proposal, and any subsequent material submitted in response to requests for additional information, will become the basis of contractual agreements with said Respondent.

12. Contractual Terms and Conditions
Responses must be in accordance with the guidelines as specified in this RFP. This RFP does not commit ASLM to accept any proposals submitted, nor is ASLM responsible for any costs incurred in the preparation of responses to this RFP. All materials submitted in response to this RFP or developed during the life of the contract will become the property ASLM. The detailed itemized budget must be submitted in US dollars and will be evaluated in terms of best value to ASLM.

ASLM reserves the right to delay, amend, reissue or cancel all or part of this RFP at any time without prior notice. ASLM discourages ex parte communication with any Board member, the public and/or staff member after the deadline for the receipt of proposals. ASLM will be under no obligation to reveal, or discuss with any Respondent on how a proposal was assessed, or to provide any other information relative to the selection process. Respondents whose proposals are not selected will be notified in writing and shall have no claim whatsoever for any kind of compensation.
13. **Deliverables**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of deliverable</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Inventory of norms and standards for nucleic acid sequencing laboratories</td>
<td>15 July 21</td>
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<td>2. Quality assessment for Genomic sequencing framework for Africa PGI</td>
<td>1 August 21</td>
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<td>3. Quarterly progress report</td>
<td>15 September 2021</td>
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<td>4. Validated QA assessment internal and external tools</td>
<td>15 September 2021</td>
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<td>5. EQA programme for genomic sequencing</td>
<td>15 December 2021</td>
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<td>6. 18 Trained EQA experts from regional genomic sequencing laboratories</td>
<td>15 December 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Progress report</td>
<td>15 December 2021</td>
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