
EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE

TENDER SPECIFICATIONS

PROCUREMENT REFERENCE NUMBER 07-15.2-2025

**Development of a Public Portal for the Forestry Development Authority of
Liberia**

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Introduction

The European Forest Institute (EFI) is a pan-European international organization that provides forest-related knowledge around three interconnected and interdisciplinary themes: (i) bioeconomy, (ii) resilience and (iii) governance. The European Forest Institute Technical Assistance Project (EFITAP), with funding from the United Kingdom's (UK) Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), delivers support to the forest governance reform processes in several countries including Liberia. EFITAP is currently in its second project cycle providing support through FCDO's second Forest Governance, Markets and Climate (FGMC) Programme.

EFI is seeking the services of a qualified contractor (individual or consortium) to design (Phase 1), develop (Phase 2) and operationalize (Phase 3) a forest sector Public Portal that will support the Forest Development Authority in Liberia. The contractor will build upon preparatory work undertaken by FDA and the Liberia Multi-Stakeholder Forest Governance and Accountability Project (MFGAP), fulfilling the scope of work outlined in this Terms of Reference.

2. Background

Liberia possesses one of the most significant forested areas in West Africa, covering over 40% of its land area. These forests play a critical role in safeguarding biodiversity, supporting climate change mitigation, sustaining the timber industry, and providing livelihoods for rural communities. The Government of Liberia is committed to the sustainable management of these resources in line with national development priorities and international commitments.

The Forestry Development Authority (FDA) is mandated to conserve and manage Liberia's forest and related natural resources in a sustainable manner at national level. The FDA also oversees the implementation of the Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS), as required under the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union (EU). The Government of Liberia recognizes that public access to reliable, timely, and accurate forest sector information is essential for transparency, accountability and good forest governance.

In late 2023 the FDA initiated discussions on the creation of a Public Transparency Portal that will serve as a central digital hub for accessing forest data, permit processes, forest use policies, and real-time/ and up-to-date forest sector data made available to the public and serve as a public-facing statistical reporting and accountability platform for the public. Once developed and operational, the portal will display information from reliable and up-to-date sources which include Libertrace, FDA managed sources/databases, other relevant agency sources/databases, as well as additional sources determined/ identified during the design and development of the portal.

3. Objectives of this assignment

The main objective of this assignment is to **Design, Develop, and Operationalize** a Public Transparency Portal, a robust, secure, and user-friendly public portal for the forest sector of

Liberia. The portal should serve as a central hub for information dissemination and interaction with stakeholders. The specific objectives are to:

- **Enhance Transparency:** Provide a platform for the public to access up-to-date and reliable information on the Liberian forest sector, including legal frameworks, forest concessions, and revenue data.
- **Improve Public Engagement:** Create interactive features to facilitate feedback, grievance mechanisms, and participation from local communities and other stakeholders.
- **Streamline Data Dissemination:** Consolidate and present various types of data from different FDA divisions and departments (e.g., Commercial, Community, Conservation, Carbon Sequestration Chain of Custody, Legality Verification, Protected Area Management) in a clear and accessible format.
- **Increase Efficiency:** Reduce the administrative burden on FDA staff by automating information requests and dissemination processes as well as integrating existing data systems into an accessibly user-friendly interface.
- **Promote Accountability:** Display compliance reports, audit findings, and other governance-related information to hold the FDA and forest sector operators accountable.
- **Strengthen Institutional Capacity and ensure long-term sustainability:** Provide a platform that can be managed and maintained by FDA staff with appropriate training and support (including complete technical documentation, training-of-trainers capacity building, and maintenance provisions).

4. Scope of work and tasks

The selected contractor will be responsible for the full lifecycle of portal development, from design to deployment and post-implementation support. The scope of work includes, but is not limited to, the following key tasks:

4.1. General task and activities

- Work in close coordination with the Forest Development Authority and EFITAP throughout the duration of the assignment to ensure alignment and smooth implementation.
- Participate in an inception meeting with the FDA and EFITAP. The inception meeting will be held within five (5) days of the commencement of the contract. During this meeting, the contractor will produce a preliminary work plan for discussion; FDA will provide the contractor with relevant supplementary information.
- Develop a comprehensive methodology and final work plan (following the inception meeting) incorporating feedback/ inputs received from FDA and EFI on the preliminary work plan. The final work plan must clearly include defined stages/phases of work, activities under each stage/phase, time frames and milestones, roles and responsibilities, expected deliverables, and other relevant implementation aspects. Work will only commence after formal approval of the final workplan by FDA and EFITAP.

- Build on existing preparatory work done by FDA and the Liberia Multi-Stakeholder Forest Governance and Accountability (MFGAP), which includes the development of an information matrix (**Annex 1 hereto**). This matrix will serve as a key reference for the design and development of the portal.¹ Note: the information contained and made available through the portal may go beyond the information matrix (and include additional information or data sets) agreed to during the design and development of the portal.
- Undertake the necessary preparatory actions to successfully deliver on the objectives of this assignment including a literature review and desk research, a source data analysis/review, assessment of existing capacities, systems review and tools, discussions and engagement with stakeholders, identification of technical and functional requirements etc.
- Any changes to project scope, timeline, or deliverables must be identified into the monthly progress reports and approved by the Project Oversight Committee through a formal Change Request process.
- Produce an end of assignment/ final report which content/structure will be agreed with EFI before end of the assignment including the description of the challenges and limitations faced during the implementation, the mitigation strategies used, the lessons learned and the recommendations for follow-up actions and institutional learning.

Key deliverable /output:

- **Approved project implementation/ work plan** (deliverable 1) including methodology, timelines, roles, and responsibilities (deliverable 1).
- **Monthly progress reports and end of assignment report** (deliverable 10).

4.2. Design of the portal (Phase 1)

Preparatory discussions envisaged that the portal could contain an interactive dashboard alongside other navigable menus that would display a wide range of data including static data and real-time statistics on topics such as company's operations, production, concession holders, exports, etc. The portal could also include relevant tools and functions such as a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section, an inquiry submission form, and other functionalities to be identified during the design of the portal. During the design phase of this assignment the contractor must:

¹ The information matrix separated the required information into two categories: The first category: *Information that should be routinely published*, subdivided into 6 categories and 52 types of documents and data, and the second category: *Information that is available on request*, subdivided into 5 categories and 21 types of documents and data points. In addition, the matrix also determined which information currently exists (being collected by the relevant authority) and whether the information is available (being published somewhere in some means). Additionally, documents/ data are classified as either "Framework" or "Data Indicators". Framework indicators refer to legal documents, regulations, procedures and work instructions that should be published once. Data Indicators on the other hand relate to reports, plans, maps and other information on forest activities that must be regularly published over time.

- Consult and engage with key stakeholders to define the purpose, requirements, functionalities and related aspects (below) of the portal. Through this process the necessary input will be gathered for the design of the portal and stakeholder expectations for the portal will be also be aligned.
- Define the purpose, the expectations, the requirements, and functionalities of the portal as well as the audience and the primary users of the portal. Aspect to consider can include –
 - Services or data the portal will provide as well as the problems it will solve (e.g. access to documents, submitting applications, tracking permits, etc.)
 - The intended users of the portal (citizens, public institutions/ administrations, businesses, researchers, etc.)
 - Understanding legal or regulatory obligations that may apply or impact on the development of the portal (e.g. protection of personal information, freedom of information, accessibility standards, etc.)
 - The look and feel of the portal, type of sources, the availability of sources, and how up to date information is
 - Complexity versus simplicity of the portal including level of automation (upload at certain intervals, send data request/ certain intervals, API exchanges protocols)
 - Maintainability (updating, serviceability and costs) post development
 - Any other relevant consideration during the design process
- Define the scope and functional requirements for the portal that will be translated into clear deliverables and structures including features of the portal (e.g. searchable databases, application forms, downloadable documents, interactive maps or dashboards, and feedback channels). This will also include languages, accessibility levels required, and identifying what is not included in the design/ development of the portal (to avoid scope creep).
- Define the infrastructure planning that will identify the right architecture, tools, and platforms for the portal. Aspects to consider include hosting (cloud-hosted or government server); choosing the appropriate content management system (CMS) for the portal; the plan for scalability, multilingual content, and mobile access; as well as considering integration with other systems (e.g. permit database, GIS and Remote Sensing platforms).
- Data and content preparation with the aim of preparing accurate and verified information for upload. This will include identifying all content owners (by department/agency), auditing and validating existing documents and data sets (to be included), converting files into web-friendly formats (e.g. HTML, PDFs, CSV), and ensuring metadata, tagging, and version control.
- User Interface (UI) / User Experience (UX) Design to build an intuitive, accessible interface. This would include designing user journeys (what actions should users take?), creating wireframes and page layouts, including multilingual support, clear navigation, and mobile responsiveness, as well as aligning with recognized web accessibility standards/guidelines (WCAG 2.1).
- Further detail the work plan content Revise and detail the work plan to reflect a complete understanding obtained during the design phases, including: (clear stages/phases, activities under each stage/phase, time frames and milestones, roles and responsibilities, expected deliverables, and related aspects).

- **Integration Scope:** The portal must integrate with the following existing systems at a minimum:
 - LiberTrace database.
 - FDA internal databases.
 - Relevant GIS datasets and layers.
- **Additional integrations** identified during the design phase must be documented and approved by the oversight committee.

- **Security Requirements:** The portal design must include a security architecture compliant with **OWASP Top 10** web application security principles and aligned with **ISO/IEC 27001** best practices. Security provisions should include role-based access control, encrypted communications (HTTPS/TLS), and secure authentication mechanisms.

- **Performance and Quality Benchmarks:** The design must meet or exceed the following criteria:
 - Page load time < 3 seconds for main pages on a 4G mobile connection.
 - System uptime of ≥ 99.5% excluding planned maintenance.
 - Accessibility compliance with WCAG 2.1 Level AA.

- **Stakeholder Engagement** : The contractor shall produce a **Stakeholder Engagement Report** summarizing consultations, key requirements gathered, and how they will be addressed in the final design.

- Any other consideration relevant/ necessary for the design of the portal.

Key deliverables /outputs:

- **Stakeholder Engagement Report** (deliverable 2).
- **Agreed design document** reflecting FDA/ user expectations, functional and technical specifications for the portal (deliverable 3).

4.3. Development (Phase 2)

During the development of the portal the contractor must:

- Build, integrate, and test the platform. This will include –
 - Setting up backend systems, frontend interface(s), Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), etc.
 - Developing admin dashboard for content management, etc.
 - Integrating maps, databases, login systems (if needed), existing systems for automated data upload, etc.
 - Enable search, download, and upload functions, etc.
 - Ensure full compliance with applicable requirements (legal, transparency, security, accessibility standards, etc).
 - Any other activity related to/ necessary for this process

- Undertake the required testing and validation to ensure quality and usability prior to launching the portal. This will include validation of data accuracy, interface usability, functional testing, security testing, mobile/browser compatibility, user acceptance testing (UAT) with real users, and the required revision based on feedback.
- Testing and Quality Assurance: Testing must include:
 - o Functional testing.
 - o Usability testing with actual end users.
 - o Cross-browser and mobile compatibility testing.
 - o Security testing including vulnerability scans and penetration testing by an independent tester.
 - o Load and performance testing to verify the system meets agreed benchmarks.
- Source Code & Handover: The contractor must deliver all source code, configuration files, API documentation, build/deployment scripts, and any related intellectual property developed for this project to FDA/EFI with perpetual usage rights.
- Any other consideration relevant/ necessary for the development of the portal.

Key deliverables /outputs:

- **System Security and Performance Compliance Report** documenting compliance with benchmarks and testing results (deliverable 4).
- **Technical architecture and UI/UX design prototypes** (deliverable 5). Approved by FDA and EFITAP
- **Live web portal with dashboard and agreed/specified functionalities**. These functionalities agreed to during design phase will enable an integrated and interactive approach to making information available (included in the matrix and agreed to during the design phase). Not limiting, functionalities can include a public GIS layer(s) (concessions, permitting, deforestation, other), submission and tracking functionalities, download function (e.g. legal/policy documents), API's, and other functionalities agreed to during the design phase (deliverable 6).
- **Complete Technical Documentation and Source Code Package** (deliverable 8).

4.4. Operationalization (Phase 3)

During this phase the contractor must:

- Launch and undertake/participate in the required public engagement with the aim of rolling out the portal and raising awareness on the portal. This includes aspects such as launch and press briefing, stakeholder demonstrations, and media releases. All 'help' materials: user guide, FAQs, tutorials must be developed and delivered and the portal promoted (via radio, social media, SMS campaigns, etc.). The contractor must also ensure onboarding support for key users.
- Training and handover. As part of the operationalization, transfer full control and administration rights of the portal to the Forestry Development Authority. Deliver capacity-building activities for content managers and portal administrators. Develop and provide Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for portal operations, updates, and maintenance. Assign data/content owners within relevant FDA divisions / departments. Necessary steps must be taken to build and ensure sustainability. Content managers and portal

administrators must be trained. As part of the training the contractor shall develop and deliver a Training of Trainers module to enable FDA to independently train new administrators and content managers after staff turnover.

- Post-deployment Monitoring: For a minimum period of six (6) months after launch, the contractor shall monitor portal performance, security, and user feedback, providing monthly reports and recommendations for improvements.

- Maintenance and continuous improvement. To ensure that the portal is updated, secure, and relevant the contractor must ensure that all the necessary mechanisms are in place to enable FDA to regularly update content and data, monitor analytics and user feedback, patch vulnerabilities and fix bugs promptly, and conduct periodic audits and performance reviews. The maintenance plan shall at minimum cover:
 - o Regular security updates and patches.
 - o Database backups and disaster recovery procedures.
 - o Bug fixing and minor enhancements.
 - o Technical support of at least [X] hours per month.

- Any other consideration relevant/ necessary for the operationalisation of the portal.

Key deliverables /outputs:

- **Admin dashboard** for FDA, Training sessions completed, user training guidelines developed, as well as SOPs developed, tested and finalized (deliverable 7)
- **Maintenance plan** covering at least (1–2 years) post-launched agreed and in place (deliverable 9).
- **Monthly progress reports and end of assignment report** (deliverable 10).

5. Timing, oversight/ project management, deliverables, and reporting timeline

5.1. Timing

The indicative start of the contract is November 2025 with a duration up until end of March 2026. For the duration of the contract period, the contractor will work with the FDA's management representatives for this assignment as well as designated FDA staff and the EFITAP focal point for Liberia.

The assignment will require one or more missions to Liberia should the contractor not be based in Liberia. During the contractor's time in Liberia the contractor will work alongside the relevant FDA designated staff for this assignment at the FDA HQ in Monrovia as well as other key stakeholders required for the successful delivery of this assignment. Travel to Liberia and remote work (if applicable) must be included in the work plan and linked to clear phases, activities, deliverables, etc.

5.2. Oversight/ project management

A project oversight committee will be established at the commencement of this assignment consisting of FDA, EFITAP and a representative of the contractor. The committee shall be

composed of two (2) management representatives from the FDA and EFI as well as a representative of the selected contractor. The committee will provide the necessary project oversight and quality assurance throughout all phases of the assignment.

5.3. Deliverables

- **Approved project implementation/ work plan** (deliverable 1) including methodology, timelines, roles, and responsibilities (deliverable 1).
- **Stakeholder Engagement Report** (deliverable 2).
- **Agreed design document** reflecting FDA/ user expectations, functional and technical specifications for the portal (deliverable 3).
- **System Security and Performance Compliance Report** documenting compliance with benchmarks and testing results (deliverable 4).
- **Technical architecture and UI/UX design prototypes** (deliverable 5). Approved by FDA and EFITAP
- **Live web portal with dashboard and agreed/specified functionalities**. These functionalities agreed to during design phase will enable an integrated and interactive approach to making information available (included in the matrix and agreed to during the design phase). Not limiting, functionalities can include a public GIS layer(s) (concessions, permitting, deforestation, other), submission and tracking functionalities, download function (e.g. legal/policy documents), API's, and other functionalities agreed to during the design phase (deliverable 6).
- **Admin dashboard** for FDA, Training sessions completed, user training guidelines developed, as well as SOPs developed, tested and finalized (deliverable 7)
- **Complete Technical Documentation and Source Code Package** (deliverable 8).
- **Maintenance plan** covering at least (1–2 years) post-launched agreed and in place (deliverable 9).
- **Monthly progress reports and end of assignment report** (deliverable 10).

5.4. Reporting timeline

The contractor will provide monthly progress reports, or as agreed in the workplan with the FDA and EFITAP. The contractor will address all comments raised and resubmit the final report to FDA and EFI for approval by 15 March 2026.

6. The Expert(s)

The contractor will make available a team of experts with appropriate qualifications, skills and demonstrated experience to successfully deliver the objectives of this assignment. The teams combined with experienced must include:

- Academic Qualifications:

University degree(s) or post graduate qualifications in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Software Engineering, or any other relevant fields directly relevant to the implementation of this assignment.

- Project Management Skills:
Strong project management skills that would ensure successful completion of this assignment within the given framework, timelines, and quality standards.
- Professional Experience:
 - o At least 10 years of proven experience in developing IT tools/ systems similar in scope and complexity to this current assignment.
 - o Demonstrated experience in developing and implementing public portals or complex web applications for government agencies or similar institutions (including a strong portfolio of successful projects with a focus on transparency and data visualization).
 - o Contractors team must have qualified professionals including a Project Manager, UI/UX Designer, Software Developers, and QA Specialists.
 - o Proven expertise in software development, database management, and cybersecurity.
 - o Demonstrated ability to work with civil society, private sector and public sector stakeholders, experience in Liberia will be an advantage.
 - o Experience in working with the forest sector or natural resource management in VPA partner countries, and particularly in Liberia, will be considered a significant asset.
 - o Experience working in Liberia or other West African countries is desirable.
- Language Proficiency:
Fluency in English (both spoken and written) is required.

7. Costs

The maximum budget for this “global price” contract assignment will **not exceed 130 000 Euro** and be all inclusive (all fees, travels, project costs (design, development and operationalization), hardware/software (if applicable), training and other project-related expenses necessary for all required deliverables.

2. TENDER DOCUMENTATION

2.1. Administrative Documentation

The tender shall include the following documentation, properly filled out and signed:

- Cover letter (Annex 1)
- Identification form (Annex 2) including supporting documentation
- Bank identification form (Annex 2a)
- Declaration on Exclusion Criteria and Absence of Conflict of Interest (Annex 3)
- Nomination of Experts form (Annex 4)
- Minimum criteria declaration (Annex 5)

The consortium agreement (Annex 6) shall be included, properly filled out and signed, if the tender is submitted jointly by a consortium of economic operators. The consortium agreement (Annex 6) shall not be included if the tender is submitted by a single Tenderer proposing subcontracting of tasks.

2.2. Technical Proposal

In order to evaluate the tender against the minimum criteria and the award criteria A.I. – A.II in section 3.1. and 3.2., the Tenderer shall submit a technical proposal consisting only of the following elements:

1) A **nomination** of the following Experts to carry out the tasks in the Terms of Reference:

- **one Team Leader/Project manager (Expert)**
- **one or more additional Experts** having at minimum the following competencies Software Developer(s), UI/UX Designer, and QA/Security Specialist

The Technical Proposal shall include CV's of the nominated Experts.

The Tenderer shall be able to certify the information contained in the CV's for the nominated Experts at EFI's request.

The CV shall have all the information as in the EuroPass CV

<https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/documents/curriculum-vitae>

The Tenderer can use the EuroPass CV template or its own CV template.

2) A **description** of no more than three pages, **making reference to the Terms of Reference and the previous experience of the Expert** showcasing understanding of:

- the aims and objectives of the portal (transparency, accountability, stakeholder engagement) and Liberia's forest governance context, FDA mandate, and VPA/FLEGT requirements.
- technical and institutional challenges (data quality, system integration, accessibility, sustainability) relevant to the assignment

- Evidence of relevant past experience and lessons learned applied to this assignment (e-governance portals, timber traceability, compliance monitoring).

3) A presentation of no more than four pages on the Tenderer’s methodology for the assignment – building upon the Terms of Reference and the experience of the Expert(s) – addressing the following elements under separate headings:

- Coherent, realistic and phased methodology covering design, development, operationalisation, and maintenance, with clear deliverables and timelines.
- Stakeholder engagement and communication approach, ensuring inclusion of FDA, civil society, private sector, and communities.
- Technical design and quality assurance: architecture, CMS choice, integrations, UX/UI, multilingual and accessibility compliance, testing and security.
- Measures for capacity-building, training of trainers, and maintainability as well as the arrangements for handover that ensures long-term sustainability.

2.3. Financial Proposal

The Tenderer shall submit a financial proposal, which shall be completed by using the form in annex 7 and by following the instructions therein.

The full general conditions applicable to the payment of fees and per diem as well as the reimbursement of costs can be found in annex 8 (model contract).

3. EVALUATION OF TENDERS AND AWARD OF THE CONTRACT

3.1. Minimum Criteria

The contractor must meet the following criteria :

N°	Criteria description
M.I.	Experience from the last three (3) years of implementing one or several contracts with similar individual budgets of at least EUR 130.000.
M.II.	Evidence of - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Demonstrated track record of similar projects (public portals, e-government platforms, transparency dashboards), and ii. Sectoral expertise (forest sector, VPA/FLEGT, timber traceability, compliance monitoring).

The Expert(s) nominated collectively must meet the following criteria:

N°	Criteria description
M.III.	All experts should at least have a university degree in ICT, Software Engineering, Information Systems or similar qualification directly relevant field.
M.IV.	At least one expert must have a minimum 10 years' proven experience in developing and implementing complex IT systems or public portals of comparable scale.
M.V.	Demonstrated track record of at least 3 successfully delivered projects in the past 5 years involving public portals, e-government systems, or transparency/data platforms for government agencies or international organisations.
M.VI.	Team must include, at minimum the following competencies: Project Manager/Team Leader, Software Developer(s), UI/UX Designer, and QA/Security Specialist.
M.VII.	All key experts must demonstrate fluency in written and spoken English.

Tenders not fulfilling the minimum criteria will be rejected.

3.2. Award Criteria

Tenders which fulfil the minimum criteria will be evaluated using the following award criteria:

A. Technical component (maximum 75 points)

N°	Award criteria	Max points
A.I.	Understanding of assignment and context:	30
i.	Understanding of the aims and objectives of the portal (transparency, accountability, stakeholder engagement) and Liberia’s forest governance context, FDA mandate, and VPA/FLEGT requirements.	18
ii.	Understanding of technical and institutional challenges (data quality, system integration, accessibility, sustainability) relevant to the assignment.	12
A.II.	Proposed methodology for the implementation of the tasks	45
i.	Coherent, realistic and phased methodology covering design, development, operationalisation, and maintenance, with clear deliverables and timelines.	12
ii.	Stakeholder engagement and communication approach, ensuring inclusion of FDA, civil society, private sector, and communities.	11
iii.	Technical design and quality assurance: architecture, CMS choice, integrations, UX/UI, multilingual and accessibility compliance, testing and security.	12
iv.	Measures for capacity-building, training of trainers, and maintainability as well as the arrangements for handover that ensures long-term sustainability.	10

The Technical component (TC) is calculated according to the following formula:

$TC = A.I. + A.II.$

Tenders must receive a score of more than half of the maximum Technical component to be considered qualitatively acceptable.

Tenders not considered qualitatively acceptable will not be considered further.

B. Financial component (maximum 25 points)

Tenders presenting a total financial proposal (Fo) superior to the maximum contract value of EUR 130.000 will not be considered further.

For tenders being considered, the Financial component (F) is calculated according to the following formula:

$$F = (F_{min} / F_o) \times 25$$

where

F_{min} is total sum in the tender in the evaluation with the lowest total financial proposal; and

F_o is the total sum in the financial proposal being considered.

C. Most economically advantageous tender

A combined score (CS) will be calculated according to the following formula:

$$CS = TC + F$$

The Tenderer with the highest combined score (CS) for Technical component (TC) and Financial component (F) will be awarded the Contract.

Where two or more tenders have an equal combined score the contract will be awarded according to the highest score for the financial component (F).

ANNEXES

Annex 1	Cover letter
Annex 2	Identification form
Annex 2a	Bank identification form
Annex 3	Declaration on exclusion criteria and absence conflict of interest
Annex 4	Nomination of Experts form
Annex 5	Minimum criteria declaration
Annex 6	Consortium agreement
Annex 7	Financial Proposal form
Annex 8	Model contract