

TERMS OF REFERENCE

National Consultant for the Development and Piloting of a Micro-Credentialing Framework in Iraq (KRI and Federal)

CONTRACT MODALITY	Individual Consultancy
DUTY STATION	Baghdad, Iraq & Office Based
DURATION OF CONTRACT	10,4 months

Purpose of Assignment

To provide technical advice and support to ensure that learning materials developed under the European Child Background and Context

Iraq is currently undergoing significant reforms in education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and employment systems to better align workforce competencies with labour market needs. The Iraqi National Education Strategy (2022–2031) and the Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework (TVQF) provide the strategic foundation for strengthening skills recognition and improving pathways toward decent employment.

Despite these efforts, the existing TVQF structure is largely built around comprehensive qualifications that are often lengthy, inflexible, and slow to adapt to emerging labour market demands. This creates challenges for employers, learners, and training institutions alike, particularly in sectors such as construction where employers require workers with specific and verifiable task-level competencies.

Youth, forcibly displaced populations, women, and vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected by these gaps. Many acquire practical skills through informal apprenticeships, work-based learning, short courses, or employment-intensive programmes but remain unable to formally validate or demonstrate these competencies within the national system.

To address this challenge, UNICEF, in partnership with the ILO, UNHCR, relevant ministries, and private sector actors, will support the development and piloting of an inclusive and quality-assured micro-credentialing framework for entry-level construction skills in Iraq. The initiative will introduce competency-based micro-credentials as modular “building blocks” of competence aligned with labour market demands and linked to the national TVQF. Micro-credentials refer to short, competency-based, and quality-assured certifications recognizing specific occupational skills and learning outcomes that may be accumulated or stacked toward broader qualifications.

The project is implemented under the PROSPECTS partnership and aims to strengthen pathways from learning to earning by improving skills recognition, employability, and economic inclusion for youth and vulnerable populations. The consultancy will support the technical development, piloting, and operationalization of the micro-credentialing model in coordination with key national stakeholders and sector actors. The initiative will be implemented in close coordination with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education,

the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports under the broader national TVQF reform agenda.

Purpose of the Consultancy

The purpose of this consultancy is to support the design, development, piloting, and operationalization of a national micro-credentialing approach for selected professions sector competencies in Iraq. The consultant will contribute to developing the methodology, competency standards, assessment tools, training materials, and implementation modalities for the micro-credentialing framework while ensuring alignment with national systems, labour market requirements, and UNICEF inclusion and safeguarding standards.

Objectives of the Consultancy

The consultancy aims to:

1. Develop a practical, competency-based and inclusive micro-credentialing framework and implementation methodology aligned with Iraq's TVQF and labour market needs.
2. Facilitate coordination and consultation with relevant ministries, employers, private sector actors, chambers of commerce, academic institutions, training institutions, youth led organization, and the United Nations PROSPECTS partners.
3. Support the development of competency standards, assessment tools, certification modalities, and quality assurance mechanisms for selected construction-sector micro-credentials.
4. Develop training and operational materials for assessors and implementing partners.
5. Support piloting, documentation of lessons learned, and follow-up implementation of the micro-credentialing model with relevant entities and stakeholders.
6. Ensure integration of gender-responsive, disability-inclusive, safeguarding, green skills, digital skills, safeguarding, and meaningful youth engagement principles throughout the process.

Scope of Work

The consultancy will support the design, development, validation, piloting, and documentation of a national micro-credentialing framework for selected construction-sector occupations. The scope of work includes technical consultations with government institutions, employers, TVET providers, academic institutions, development partners, and other key stakeholders to ensure alignment with Iraq's TVQF, labour market requirements, and international good practice. The consultant will also support the development of competency standards, assessment and quality assurance systems, capacity-building materials, pilot implementation, and recommendations for institutionalization and scale-up.

Scope of Work and Key Tasks

The consultant will undertake the following tasks:

A. Inception and Stakeholder Coordination

- Conduct a desk review of relevant national policies, TVQF frameworks, occupational standards, and existing skills recognition initiatives.
- Map relevant stakeholders from government, private sector, TVET institutions, chambers of commerce, trade unions, youth organizations, organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), and development partners.
- Support coordination and technical consultations with the National Technical Working Group (TWG), and relevant sectoral stakeholders.
- Prepare an inception report including methodology, implementation approach, timeline, and stakeholder engagement plan, risk analysis, and proposed pilot implementation modalities.

B. Development of the Micro-Credentialing Framework and Methodology

- Develop a practical micro-credentialing framework and implementation approach aligned with national TVQF structures and labour market needs.
- Identify and prioritize high-demand sector occupations and competencies suitable for piloting competency-based micro-credentials.
- Facilitate consultations with employers, sector experts and training providers to validate competency requirements for selected micro-credentials.
- Facilitate consultation and validation workshops with key stakeholders and government counterparts (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and Ministry of Youth and Sports) on the draft micro-credential framework and competency standards prior to finalization.
- inclusive and accessible micro-credentialing system by integrating gender equality, disability, inclusion, life skills, green skills, digital skills (including Learning Passport where applicable), meaningful youth engagement, and flexible learning pathways, including non-formal education and TVET.
- Support UNICEF and national partners in developing outreach and awareness approaches to promote recognition and uptake of micro-credentials among learners, employers, and training providers.
- Develop competency standards, learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and certification requirements for selected micro-credentials.
- Ensure integration of:
 1. Occupational Safety and Health (OSH);
 2. Green and climate-sensitive skills;
 3. Transferable and digital skills;
 4. Gender and disability inclusion principles;
 5. Child safeguarding and protection standards.
 6. Ethical and equitable assessment practices.

C. Development of Assessment and Quality Assurance Tools

- Develop competency-based assessment methodologies and practical assessment tools.
- Develop verification, documentation, and quality assurance procedures for the micro-credentialing process.
- Develop accessible, transparent, and user-friendly candidate feedback and appeals mechanisms.
- Support development of templates, forms, operational guidance materials, and data collection tools for monitoring implementation progress.
- Support defining minimum quality assurance standards and monitoring mechanisms for pilot implementation entities.

D. Capacity Building and Training

- Develop training modules and facilitation materials for assessors from TVET institutions, technical universities, and relevant ministries, as well as for implementing institutions, including TVET centers, youth centers, and universities.
- Facilitate training sessions for selected assessors and stakeholders.
- Support coaching, mentoring, and follow-up technical assistance during implementation.

- Ensure assessors are trained on safeguarding, inclusion, equitable assessment, and ethical standards, and prevention of discrimination and bias during assessment processes.
- Support documentation of lessons learned, implementation challenges, and recommendations emerging from the pilot phase.

Work Assignments Overview	Deliverables/Outputs	Delivery deadline to complete the deliverable
Inception Phase	Inception report including detailed methodology, workplan, stakeholder mapping, consultation approach, pilot implementation methodology, and timeline submitted and approved by UNICEF and partners.	31 Oct 2026
Micro-Credentialing Framework Development	Draft competency-based micro-credentialing framework developed, including implementation methodology, identified pilot occupations, competency standards, learning outcomes, and certification approach for selected construction-sector micro-credentials.	15 Dec 2026
Assessment and Quality Assurance Package	Competency-based assessment tools, assessor guidance materials, quality assurance framework, operational templates, documentation procedures, and appeals mechanisms developed and validated through stakeholder consultations.	28 Feb 2027
Capacity Building and Training Package	Training package developed and delivered, including facilitator guide, presentations, assessor training materials, participant handouts, and training completion report summarizing participants trained and key	31 May 2027

	recommendations.	
Pilot Implementation Support and Documentation	Technical support provided during pilot implementation, including monitoring support, documentation of lessons learned, implementation challenges, stakeholder feedback, and recommendations for improvement.	30 June 2027
Final Consultancy Report	Final consolidated report submitted, including finalized framework and tools, summary of consultations and pilot results, lessons learned, sustainability considerations, and recommendations for institutionalization and scale-up.	31 Aug 2027

Payment Schedule:

Payment will be made on submission and acceptance of deliverables. UNICEF reserves the right to withhold payment in case the deliverables submitted are not up to the required standard or in case of delays in submitting the deliverables on the part of the consultant.

Important Notes

- Individuals engaged under a consultancy or individual contract will not be considered “staff members” under the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and UNICEF’s policies and procedures and will not be entitled to benefits provided therein (such as leave entitlements and medical insurance coverage). Their conditions of service will be governed by their contract and the General Conditions of Contracts for the Services of Consultants and Individual Contractors. Consultants and individual contractors are responsible for determining their tax liabilities and for the payment of any taxes and/or duties, in accordance with local or other applicable laws.
- Contracts are conditional upon the selected candidate's willingness to comply with any current or future vaccination requirements that may be established by UNICEF, where applicable. Failure to comply with applicable vaccination requirements, where required and without an approved medical exemption by UNICEF, may result in the withdrawal of the consultancy offer or termination of the contract in accordance with the General Terms and Conditions of Contract.
- UNICEF offers reasonable accommodation for consultants with disabilities. This may include, for example, accessible software, travel assistance for missions or personal attendants. We encourage you to disclose your disability during your application in case you need reasonable accommodation during the selection process and afterwards in your assignment.

**QUALIFICATIONS / SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE / EXPERIENCE/ COMPETENCIES
(CORE/TECHNICAL/FUNCTIONAL) / LANGUAGE SKILLS REQUIRED FOR THE ASSIGNMENT**

Minimum requirements:

- **Education:**
 - Master's degree in TVET, Education, Human Resource Development, Economics, Public Policy, Workforce Development, Education Management, or another relevant discipline.
- **Work Experience:**
 - Minimum 7 years of relevant professional experience in TVET, skills development, competency-based training, workforce development, or qualifications systems.
 - Demonstrated experience in developing training methodologies, occupational standards, competency frameworks, or assessment systems.
 - Experience working with government institutions, private sector, and development partners.
 - Experience in facilitation, stakeholder coordination, and capacity building.
 - Previous experience with United Nations agencies, international organizations, or donor-funded programmes is an asset.
 - Experience working in Iraq and familiarity with the Iraqi TVET ecosystem is highly desirable.
- **Language Requirements:**
 - Fluency in English required.
 - Fluent in Arabic and Kurdish is highly desirable.
- **Knowledge/Expertise/Skills:**
 - Strong understanding of competency-based education and training systems.
 - Knowledge of labour market systems and private sector engagement.
 - Familiarity with inclusion, safeguarding, youth engagement, and gender-responsive programming.
 - Strong analytical, drafting, facilitation, and reporting skills.
- **Desirables:**
 - Prior work experience with UNICEF or other UN organization is an asset

disability confidentially.

Qualified candidates are invited to submit the following documents via the online recruitment portal, TMS (Talent Management System):

- An up-to-date TMS profile and curriculum vitae (CV)
- Cover letter
- A separate financial proposal (only acceptable in the format of the linked template) (attach the financial template to be completed)

- A detailed technical proposal:
 - ***Technical proposal:*** Applicants are requested to submit one writing sample (maximum 10 pages), (co-)authored by the applicant, demonstrating relevant technical and analytical experience related to the assignment, such as TVET/curriculum development, competency-based training, occupational standards, assessment or certification systems, micro-credentials, or related policy/technical guidance. The sample will be assessed for technical relevance, quality of analysis, clarity and structure, and applicability to the assignment
 - ***The sample should meet the following criteria :*** be (co)-authored by the applicant, be relevant to the assignment such as TVET curriculum development, align with the deliverables such as technical guidance, analysis or policy-oriented document. Additionally, demonstrating solid experience in curriculum rolling out with master trainer with private and public sector entities in terms of training and orientation of in-house trainers.
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