

## **Terms of Reference for a consultant to undertake the development of National Health Laboratory & Diagnostic Services’ (NHLDS) Strategic Plan 2026-2030**

### **1. Overview**

Need	To develop a <b>National Health Laboratory &amp; Diagnostic Services’ Strategic Plan IV</b> that will provide a framework to guide investments in the national health laboratory services and implementation of National Health Laboratory Services Policy (NHLSP II) of 2017 for financial years <b>2025/2026 to 2029/2030</b> .
Work Description	Desk review and synthesize the current NHLDS strategic plan 2021-2025 and the Uganda National Health Laboratory Services policy II of 2017 and other related documents such as the EQA guidelines, National Health Laboratory Infrastructure Guidelines August 2021, Hub guidelines and other Quality management systems documentation and other related Strategic plans including MoH, stakeholder’s engagement and consultative meetings to discuss country context, strategic plan development and/or documentation, presentation/sharing developed plan to the NHLDS select committees and finalization based on review. The developed drafts shall be presented to NHLDS top management and selected LTC for their review and input as required. Consultations shall be made with all the relevant stakeholders and reports submitted.
Contracting Organization	Joint Clinical Research Centre
Project Title	Strengthening Public Health Laboratory Systems in Uganda
Duration	90 days
Expected Start	15 <sup>th</sup> December, 2025

## 2. Introduction

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The Joint Clinical Research Centre (JCRC) is an autonomous organization that was established in 1991 as a limited liability not-for-profit joint venture between the Uganda Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Defense and Makerere University Medical School (now Makerere College of Health Sciences). The Centre conducts medical research and training, provide equitable and Sustainable HIV/AIDS care and other health care services in Uganda and internationally.

Strengthening Public Health Systems in Uganda (SPHLS), a project under the directorate of programs directly feeds into the goal “To lead development, coordinate and support delivery of diversified health programs to match the changing local and global health priorities”.

SPHLS is a five-year project awarded to JCRC by PEPFAR-CDC. This grant is intended to support government of Uganda through the department of National Health Laboratory Diagnostic services (NHLDS) to strengthen laboratory systems and establish Sustainable diagnostic optimized networks and partnerships for integrated HIV related testing, disease surveillance and outbreak investigations in Uganda.

The project is implemented through a cooperative agreement with Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in collaboration with Ministry of Health- Uganda. The project implements activities under its four strategic objectives:

- I. Strengthen the Quality of laboratory Services by supporting NHLDS implementation of quality management system using SLMTA and SLIPTA tools and processes to ensure accreditation of laboratories to ISO 15189: 2022 & ISO 17025.
- II. Capacity building for equipment maintenance and biosafety cabinets at the regional and national levels to ensure uninterrupted service delivery due to equipment breakdown.

- III. Support NHLDS in implementation of the National laboratory waste management policy and implementation plan; including conducting Biorisk assessment
- IV. HIVDR testing and support towards the National Tuberculosis Reference Laboratory (NTRL) in implementation of the National EQA scheme for TB and maintenance of the negative pressure.

There are a number of activities designed to achieve the above strategic objectives and the development of the National Health Laboratory & Diagnostic Services (NHLDS) Strategic plan is a key activity under strategy 1.

NHLDS as a department of Ministry of Health provides stewardship and overall supervision of all Health Laboratory Services in Uganda. It is the arm of Ministry of Health that provides supervision in a number of parameters including the testing laboratories such as Microbiology, EQA laboratories and the National Equipment Calibration Laboratory (NECL). Others including providing policy, strategic implementation and human capital capacity development for Health laboratories.

## **2.1. Background**

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The National Health Laboratory Diagnostic Services (NHLDS) a department of Ministry of Health implements a strategic plan that guides and provides a framework to monitor all health diagnostic laboratories. This department has a number of key activities that are managed including providing stewardship and leadership to the country's most vibrant sub sector.

In this period, a number of achievements/ gains have been registered that need consolidation through the strategic plan especially the post COVID 19 achievement that include sustenance of the National sample transport network, provision of EQA services, sustenance of accreditation of laboratories.

It should also be noted that during this same period, the NECL has supported over 150 laboratories by conducting calibration saving the country over \$1.5M annually.

During this period, the strategic plan that provides the overall framework and implementation of the National Laboratory Services policy is set to expire and these gains require such documentation to ensure continuity of providing quality laboratory services across the country.

## **2.2. Problem statement**

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The National Health Laboratory & Diagnostic Services has been implementing a strategic plan for the period of 2021 to 2025. It should be noted that the current Strategic plan is set to expire by the close of 2025 therefore; this will create a vacuum in the strategic implementation of activities at the department. It should be noted that this plan (NHLSSP II) will guide the implementation of the strategic plan for the period 2026-2030. The implementation of the previous strategic plan has been suboptimal (50%) and this necessitates a review of the set objectives and strategic areas to ensure continuous quality improvement is conducted for the sustenance of laboratory services.

## **2.3. Justification**

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The previous National Health Laboratory Services Strategic Plan (NHLSSP 2020-2025), was built on two previous strategic plans and was to strengthen the achievements registered so far in providing equitable access to quality laboratory services. The ministry of health recognizes the importance of laboratory services in its efforts to accelerate movement towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Laboratory services can only efficiently contribute to the realization of this goal if they are well managed, coordinated, resourced and responsive to knowledge and technological advancements. The management and coordination of laboratory services, though still suboptimal has improved over the past 5 years, however the funding of laboratory services has remained inadequate with reductions in donor aid.

This compromises the functionality of laboratory services leading to increased health care costs and poor quality of life resulting from poor/delayed diagnosis, irrational use of medicines as well as poor case and outbreak management. Vertical funding for particular diseases/programs such as HIV, TB Malaria and others has led to fragmented implementation resulting in inefficient use of resources availed for laboratory services.

The MOH, together with development and implementing partners appreciate the benefits of an integrated health laboratory services and advocate for centralized as opposed to vertical funding for laboratory service. This strategic plan is meant provide a framework to guide investments in the national health laboratory services and implementation of National Health Laboratory Services Policy (NHLSP II) 2017 for financial years 2025/2026 to 2029/2030.

The Ministry of Health will utilize this strategic plan to ensure all the areas of focus and key objectives of NHLDS are implemented with clear timelines in regards to the sustainability of Laboratory services in the face of reduction in donor aid.

With the above justification, JCRC seeks to recruit a consultant with experience and expertise in development of strategic plans for National and International organizations, knowledge of operations of Ministry of Health Departments and other related health matters. The consultant shall be responsible for accomplishment of the tasks outlined in section (4) of this TOR.

### **3. Scope of Work**

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#### **3.1. Time scope**

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The project must be implemented within thirty (60) days/ two months

#### **3.2. Scope of services**

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The scope of services will include but not limited to the following:

- I. Undertake desk review/ study of Ministry of Health policies, strategic plans and guidelines related to quality Assurance, quality improvement and sustainability plans for laboratory services in the country.
- II. Development of this strategic plan should be informed by a wide range of stakeholders including MOH leadership, clinicians, academicians, private sector, AHPC, Laboratory professionals as well as formal desk reviews and empirical evaluations of the performance against the NHLSSP II.

- III. Working with JCRC- SPHLS project manager and NHLDS management to conduct stakeholder's engagement and consultative meetings to discuss country context, strategic plan development and/or documentation. Following stakeholder consultations review available strategic areas of intervention and draft strategic implementation to ensure objectives of NHLDS are effectively achieved.
  
- IV. Presentation/sharing developed draft strategic plan to the NHLDS technical working committee, senior management, top policy management, LTC and other stakeholders and finalise the strategic plan based on reviews or comments from the different forums.

#### **4. Objectives**

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The primary objective is to develop and finalize NHLDS strategic plan IV that shall provide direction for the operations of the entity.

#### **Specific Objectives**

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Provide technical guidance to design the following NHLDS strategic areas (But not limited to; )

- a) Strengthen the leadership and governance structures for effective and sustainable laboratory service delivery at all levels.
- b) Provide quality and equitable laboratory services at all levels to support clinical care, public health services and research
- c) Strengthen laboratory information management and utilization for performance monitoring and decision making
- d) Create enabling environment to promote research and innovations for improved lab service delivery.

The Areas of Focus for this strategic plan shall be;

1. Leadership and Governance
2. Equitable Access to Quality Laboratory Services
3. Information Management and Utilization
4. Promotion of Research and implementation science

## 5. Methodology

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The consultant will develop a suitable strategic plan for NHLDS; through conducting document review and analysis of content in existing MoH strategic plans, national health laboratory plans, policies, guidelines, and country statements, hold consultative meetings with stakeholders and organizing writing workshops with NHLDS technical working groups and other key experts in Health systems.

## 6. Duration and Timeframe

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This consultancy assignment will take sixty working days from the commencement date of the consultancy.

## 7. Inputs

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- **Stationery and Communications:** The Consultant will be required to manage their own local communications and/or internet. These costs should be included in the lump sum fee in their financial proposal.
- **Accommodation:** All accommodation costs and other living expenses will be covered within the consultancy fee
- **Office space and facilities:** The consultant is expected to work at the NHLDS and JCRC project offices or remotely using her/his own computer and other means of communications and will have access to printer to print only documents related to the assignment.
- **Facilitation for Key meetings:** The consultant is expected to plan for these key meetings with the relevant stakeholder and ensure their facilitation during engagements.

## 8. Deliverables

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- Inception Report
- Final Strategic implementation plan submitted to NHLDS and JCRC/SPHLS
- Final Assignment report and strategic plan submitted to NHLDS and JCRC-SPHLS.

## 9. Reporting

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The consultant will report directly to the Programme Manager- JCRC-SPHLS project. The consultant shall provide weekly progress reporting of activity to the program Manager. The program manager will in turn update the Principle investigator of the project, funder and other stakeholders at Ministry of Health (NHLDS),

## 10. Reequipments for Experience and Qualification

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1. Demonstrate knowledge and experience in conducting needs assessments development of Institution strategic plans, National policies, implementation guidelines and Institution business plans.
2. Must have knowledge and expertise in health services implementation, training related to formulation of institutional policy documents.
3. Demonstrate knowledge in relevant stakeholder management & engagements.
4. Excellent writing, editing skills.
5. Excellent oral communication skills
6. Fluency in writing and speaking English.
7. At least 5-7 years of prior work experience in the field of strategies and policy development, training, provision or mentoring health services delivery and quality improvement and/or monitoring services.
8. Demonstrated experience and skills in managing stakeholder/working group consultations.
9. Good knowledge in national and international health regulations.

## **11. Required documents.**

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When submitting the technical Proposal, the applicant shall, in particular ensure to attach the following: Profile of the consultant (max 2 pages) explaining why they are the most suitable for the work, relevant experience (max 3 pages) detailed methodology, conceptual framework with expected deliverables and timelines, man days required (3-5 pages) and recent CV.

## **12. Financial Proposal**

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The financial proposal shall specify a total lump sum amount (including a breakdown of costs for fee, meetings, travel, and number of working days). Payments will be made in instalments based upon key outputs, i.e. upon delivery of the services specified in the TORs.

- i 40% on signing the contract and submission of an initiation report including work-plan and methodology for the assignment (in English).
- ii 15% on completion review and update of stakeholder inputs following a series of stakeholder consultative meetings.
- iii 45% on submission of final document (soft and printable copy) plus reference documents.

## **13. Evaluation**

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The weighted average basis will be applied to evaluate the applicant, the award of the contract will be made to the consultant whose offer has been evaluated and determined as:

- Responsive/compliant/acceptable



- Having received the highest score out of a pre-determined set of weighted technical and financial criteria specific to the solicitation.

Technical Qualification (100 points) weight; [70%], Financial Proposal (100 points) weight; [30%]

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#### **14. How to send Bid or proposals**

Interested eligible bidders may submit their proposal through email (only technical and financial proposal) detailing the individual costs for carrying out the assignment as well as the consolidated cost along with documents to support qualification and experience on [wntege@jcrc.org.ug](mailto:wntege@jcrc.org.ug) and [dnakabiri@jcrc.org.ug](mailto:dnakabiri@jcrc.org.ug)

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#### **15. Language of bid**

The bid plus all correspondence and documents relating to the bid shall be written in English language.

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#### **16. Currencies of bid**

All financial information should be provided in Uganda shillings.

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#### **17. Period of validity of bid**

Bids shall remain valid for the period of 30 days after the date of bid submission. A bid valid for a shorter period shall be rejected by the Purchaser as non-responsive.

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#### **18. Bid Format and Signing**

The Bidder shall prepare one original and one copy of the bid, clearly marking each one as "ORIGINAL BID" and "COPY OF BID," as appropriate. In the event of any discrepancy between them, the original shall govern.



## **19. Bid sealing.**

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The bids, both original and the copy is expected to submit electronically to JCRC/SPHLS procurement unit (contact: [wntege@jcrc.org.ug](mailto:wntege@jcrc.org.ug) and copy to [dnakabiri@jcrc.org.ug](mailto:dnakabiri@jcrc.org.ug)).

## **20. Deadline for Submission of Bids**

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Bids must be received by JCRC/SPHLS procurement department at the email address specified above not later than – 5<sup>th</sup> December 2025