

St. Vincent & The Grenadines
OECS Regional Health Project
Terms of Reference
Consultancy for Development of a Strategic Plan for
Laboratory Services Programme Human Resources Management
SVGRHP-C-IC-12

1. BACKGROUND

The Government of Saint Vincent & the Grenadines has received funding from the International Development Association (The World Bank) for the implementation of the OECS Regional Health Project. The objective of the project is to improve the preparedness capacities of health systems for public health emergencies in the OECS region, including St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The project is being implemented by the Public Sector Investment Programme Management Unit (PSIPMU) in the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Information Technology in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment (MOHWE). The project will support investments in enhancing laboratory capacity and capability with the aim of improving the efficiency and quality of the national and regional laboratory network.

The Coronavirus pandemic has, more starkly than ever before, highlighted the critical importance of accurate, reliable and timely laboratory testing services for patient diagnosis, care and management and for protecting national, regional and global health security. A key limitation experienced by the Laboratory Services Programme (LSP), in St Vincent and the Grenadines, is a shortage of adequately trained human resources. The LSP is responsible for the management of laboratory services within the MOHWE.

In recognising the need to strengthen both the medical and public health laboratory sector, the Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment (MOHWE), has spearheaded the development of the medical and public health laboratory services in St Vincent and the Grenadines by creating the National Laboratory Programme, and assigning a dedicated line in the national budget to ensure greater laboratory autonomy and accountability for public sector medical and public health laboratories. The laboratory is primary responsible for the management of laboratory services within the public health care system. The national laboratory programme has drafted a vision that speaks to its wish to become a Centre of Excellence for clinical, public health and referral laboratory services for St Vincent and the Grenadines and the OECS region. The Ministry's ultimate objective is to deliver a national laboratory and health service that is accessible, accountable, relevant and of consistent quality, and one that will deliver care that is patient-centered, equitable and safe. The Ministry has thus committed to focusing on the transformation of their national medical and public health laboratory sector. Key to this has been the recent passage of the Medical Laboratories Act and Regulations, the hosting of a national laboratory consultation to sensitise stakeholders, as well as significant investment in training and systems strengthening more recently. The Ministry has also committed to the establishment of a dedicated National Public Health laboratory (NPHL). Support for this is being provided through an OECS Regional Health Project (OECS RHP), financed by the World Bank. This initiative will allow for the long-awaited separation of Clinical and Public Health laboratory services. Additionally, the Ministry has initiated a strategic decentralisation of public sector laboratory services, in an effort to improve and increase access and equity, and to strengthen resilience of the laboratory sector.

Establishment of these new laboratory capacities will, however, also increase the demand for laboratory professionals with a new and diverse skill set. In addition to the new NPHL and the demand it will have on human resource needs, decentralization will lead to the addition of several smaller community laboratory and Point of Care testing sites that will also increase the demand for competent human resources. Additionally, the development of a new Arnos Vale Acute Care Hospital (AVACH), that will include the addition of a modern clinical laboratory, is being planned and will augment the services currently being provided by the MCMH. This rapid development of the laboratory landscape cannot efficiently or effectively occur in the absence of a comprehensive assessment of the human resource needs to adequately staff the expansions of laboratory services.

Currently, a key limitation being experienced by the Laboratory Services Programme in St Vincent and the Grenadines, is a shortage of adequately trained human resources. Government investment in basic and specialty training for medical technologists over the past decade has been limited, and together with unattractive compensation packages, has resulted in a decline in the numbers of persons entering and remaining in the medical laboratory field, with a consequential reduction in the workforce as trained persons retire or take up more attractive employment packages elsewhere. According to Andrea Bennett et al in a Review Article on “Building a Laboratory Workforce to Meet the Future” published by the American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP) Task Force on the Laboratory Professionals Workforce in 2014, “the development of a sound staffing formula for medical laboratories remains elusive because of the varied and complex nature of the tasks that laboratory professionals perform”. The investigators noted that finding a simple formula for estimating staffing levels is challenging due to the wide variations in efficiency and automation within which medical laboratories operate, as well as the wide scope of client demands and priorities to which laboratory services must respond. Finding the right staffing mix has been a long-standing challenge for Laboratory management and health administrators.

More recently, evolving changes in both clinical and public health laboratory testing and information management, have the potential to influence, not only the numbers and types of laboratory professionals needed, but also the level of knowledge and skill sets required. Increasingly sophisticated diagnostics require higher level technical, analytic and interpretation skills, demands for improved efficiency and value for money require advanced managerial skills, increased demand for quality services and accreditation require managers and supervisors trained in laboratory quality, and technological changes that now recognise laboratories as reliable sources of health information require advanced information management skills. Above all, the increasing complexity of laboratory operations that now demand the need for relevant policies, legislation, regulation and ongoing advocacy, have identified a need for strong and effective laboratory leadership. The current and future roles, responsibilities and functions of modern laboratories will result in a need for new and different scopes of practice and career paths. Staffing needs and qualifications must be linked to the new and evolving workforce-level requirements and will need to be clearly and logically defined, if the laboratory workforce is to effectively manage the complex 21st century medical and public health laboratory advancements.

It is also important to recognise that the need for human resources in the broader organisation, to support the new laboratory responsibilities and functions, extends beyond the laboratory walls, and includes persons who provide critical support to laboratory operations, including for example, maintenance, procurement, human resource management and finance

staff within the wider organisation. It is essential that the critical nature of these functions and competencies to the success of laboratory operations is recognised and considered in the context of the laboratory sector's human resource needs.

An assessment of laboratory services in St. Vincent and the Grenadines conducted by the Caribbean Med Labs Foundation (CMLF) under the Regional Health Security Project funded by the World Bank, and being implemented by the OECS Commission, revealed the need for a Human Resources audit as one of the priorities to identify critical laboratory human resource needs and ways of meeting them. Laboratory staff, stakeholders and health decision-makers at the MOHWE Level in St Vincent and the Grenadines, pinpointed human resource challenges as a significant barrier to quality-assured and effective laboratory operations.

The Laboratory Services Programme is therefore seeking a Consultant to develop a strategic pathway and plan for the development of medical and public health laboratory human resources in the public sector over the coming 5 years, that will identify the human resource needs and gaps through the conduct of a comprehensive human resource audit of public sector laboratories in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

2. Objective

The objective of this consultancy is to assist the LSP of the MOHWE, to develop a strategic pathway and plan to ensure adequate, appropriate and effective human resources in alignment with the LSP strategic goals.

3. Duration

The consultant or consulting company will be hired as a short-term consultant for a duration of approximately seven (7) months.

Scope of Services:

The consultant will conduct in-person and virtual reviews and surveys with support from and in collaboration with management, staff and stakeholders within the Laboratory Services Programme of the MOHWE and all other relevant personnel who impact or are impacted by the Programme. The consultant will be authorized to review relevant documents (for example policies, legislation, expansion plans and strategies) of the Laboratory Services Programme to support audit conclusions.

The Consultant will be required to:

- i. Conduct a human resource management audit to determine the future human resource needs of the LSP, in the context of the national strategic health goals, needs and operational functions. The audit will also include development of process maps that will identify new ways of working, address inefficiencies in existing processes across the LSP, identify the changes needed to increase operational efficiency and productivity and make the most effective use of available manpower. The recommendations arising from this audit will inform the number, mix and placement of staff with the knowledge, skills, qualifications and values needed for effective operation of the LSP. Recommendations will also inform development or finalisation of a new or revised

Organisational Structure that will outline new functions and reporting relationships for the Programme, aligned with the new processes.

- ii. Conduct of a 'Gap Analysis' to identify the major areas impacting the impending changes to the LSP, the gaps in staffing needed to support future manpower needs and highlighting areas of strength on which the LSP could build.
- iii. Develop a Strategic Plan in collaboration with key MOHWE stakeholders that will define a strategic pathway for laboratory human resource development in the context of the gaps and needs identified in the human resource audit.
- iv. Submit monthly progress reports (virtual) on the execution of the consultancy to ensure progress is being monitored by the Client.

4. Deliverables

For completion of the scope of works, the consultant is expected to complete the deliverables listed below.

4.1. Inception Report

The consultant shall submit an inception report to the Director of Economic Planning for approval. The report should contain at a minimum the template, methodology and tools, for completion of the for Human Resources Management Audit, Gap Analysis, and Human Resources Development Strategic Plan and a work-plan for completion of the assignment. The client will respond with feedback on the report within two (2) weeks of receipt.

4.2. A Draft Human Resource Management Audit Report

Following the completion of the human resource management audit, the consultant will provide a draft report with recommendations for more efficient ways of working to include: process maps that will outline existing inefficiencies and the changes needed to increase operational efficiency and productivity, an optimum number and placement of staff within the LSP and a new or revised organisational structure for the Programme. The draft report is to be submitted via an in-person presentation to the client, MOHWE staff and other stakeholders. The client will provide comments and or indicate approval of the draft report within two (2) weeks of receipt.

4.3. The final Human Resource Management Audit Report

The audit is to be submitted in the same format as the approved draft report taking into account the comments received on the draft submission. The client will provide comment and or indicate approval of the report within one (1) weeks of receipt

4.4. Draft Human Resource Gap Analysis Report

The Human Resource Gap Analysis Report should clearly identify the existing gaps within the Laboratory Services Programme that need to be addressed, given the appropriate cadre of staff,

mix of competencies, and organisational structure identified in the audit, as necessary for effectively supporting the expansion and operations of the Laboratory Services Programme. The report is to be submitted electronically and through an in-person presentation. The client will provide comments and or indicate approval of the draft report within two (2) weeks of receipt.

4.5. Final Human Resource Gap Analysis Report

The final report should be submitted in the same format as the approved draft report taking into account the comments received on the submission. The client will communicate approval of the report within one (1) week of receipt.

4.6.A Draft Human Resources Development Strategic Plan

The Human Resources Development Strategic Plan for the Laboratory Services Programme, should define a pathway for the strengthening of the Programme, utilising the gap analysis findings, to ensure effective laboratory support for national health goals over the next 10 years. The plan should be developed in collaboration with key stakeholders. The client will provide comments and or indicate approval of the draft report within two (2) weeks of receipt.

4.7. Final Human Resources Development Strategic Plan

The final Human Resources Strategic plan should be submitted taking into account the comments received on the draft submission. Approval of the final report will be confirmed within one (1) week of receipt.

5. Payment Schedule and Timeline

Items	Deliverables	Duration from effective start of Contract	Payment %
1	Inception Report	Two (2) weeks	10
2	The draft Human Resources Management Audit report,	Six (6) Weeks	25
3	Final Human Resources Management Audit Report	One (1) week	10
4	Draft Human Resources Gap Analysis Report	Six (6) Weeks	20
5	Final Human Resources Gap Analysis Report	One (1) week	10
6.	Draft Human Resources Development Strategic Plan	Five (5) Weeks	15
7.	Final Human Resources Development Strategic Plan	One (1) Weeks	10

Input

The Client will be responsible for providing the following to the consultant:

- Relevant documents relating to the laboratory services to include the following: internal and external laboratory assessment reports over the last five years, quality management systems plans developed over the last five years, budgetary reports, studies, and any other relevant documents needed;
- Assistance to access public and private laboratories and their personnel;
- Coordination of the administrative/logistical arrangements for the presentations;
- Access to other stakeholders, ministries and departments as needed;
- Where necessary, to assist with obtaining visas, work permits and licenses etc.; and,
- Short term working space during in-country visits, for completion of the task listed in these Terms of Reference.

The Consultant will be responsible for the following:

- Providing virtual monthly progress reports; and,
- For all deliverable reports stated within these terms of reference.

4. Document Submission

The consultant shall submit three (3) hard copies and an electronic copy of each approved final deliverable and an electronic copy of the draft reports.

5. Project Management

The Economic Planning Division in the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Information Technology shall be responsible for the execution of the activities under this consultancy. The consultant will report to the Director of Economic Planning through the Project Coordinator, OECS Regional Health project. The Director of Economic Planning will be responsible for approving all reports.

6. Qualifications and Experience

- Master of Human Resource Management or Post-Graduate Diploma in Human Resource Management

- Evidence at least two human resource management audits or needs analysis studies, and two strategic planning exercises.
- Experience in conducting a laboratory human resource management audit will may be an asset;
- Demonstrated experience of engagement with human resource management issues for Public Health Laboratories will also be an asset;
- Evidence of a wide-ranging understanding of a medical laboratory operation including a minimum of 5 years working in or with medical laboratory services at a senior level
- Excellent spoken, written and communication skills;
- Experience conducting similar assignment in Caribbean countries will be an asset