



GOVERNMENT OF SAINT LUCIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH, WELLNESS AND ELDERLY AFFAIRS

TERMS OF REFERENCE

FOR

DRAFTING OF A DIGITAL HEALTH POLICY AND STRATEGY

February 2024

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1.0 Background

The COVID-19 pandemic left an indelible mark on the world. The adverse impact felt across the globe forced nations to adopt alternative means of continuing developmental progress through digital transformations. In certain territories, the healthcare sector utilized telehealth consultations, digital COVID-19 vaccination passports and remote patient monitoring. Prior to the pandemic the need for an effective system for the management and analysis of data and dissemination of information was flagged as a challenge for Saint Lucia. A gradual policy shift towards health digitization, evident in the 2006-2011 National Health Strategic Plan, proposed the “*development of an effective health information system to support evidence-based planning in the provision and delivery of health care.*” This policy decision led to the development of the Health Information Management System in 2011. Although progress has been made through the implementation of the Saint Lucia Health Information Systems (SLUHIS) at all wellness centres and the establishment of the Hospital Health Information System (Cellma), the full integration of both systems to provide more responsive healthcare services are at the forefront of healthcare improvement for the country. However, the private health information systems should also be included in the integration talk if we truly wish for one patient, one record.

The National Health Strategy which is being developed will integrate digital health strategies as a fundamental component to enhance healthcare delivery efficiency, accessibility and patient outcomes by aligning the national health goals, integrating digital technologies, ensuring a seamless exchange of health information across different healthcare setting and systems and implementing mechanisms for ongoing monitoring, evaluation and assessment of digital health initiatives.

The 2020-23 Medium Term Development Strategy (MTDS) for St. Lucia identified Health as one of the six (6) key results area. The Policy for Government for the sector is to ensure that healthcare is accessible, affordable, equitable and sustainable. As a result, the focus was on improving economic and physical access to health. The MTDS document highlighted the importance of utilizing Information Communication Technologies to revolutionize the healthcare sector as it relates to quality of care, management of patient records, and policy development.

This belief was reinforced by the PAHO Director, in a ‘*Digital Health in the Americas*’ (July 2023) article where he underscored the crucial role of digital transformation in pandemic recovery and improving access to health. It further emphasized the urgency for countries to have data and information to monitor progress towards universal health coverage (UHC). Moreover, the World Health Organization (WHO) ‘*Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020-25*’, has as one of its four strategic objective to advance the implementation of national digital health strategies. The objective of which is to have every country own, adapt, and strengthen its strategy on digital health in a way that best suits its vision, national context, health situation and trends.

In addition, over the past two years the Korea World Bank Partnership Facility (KWPF) provided critical support to countries in the Caribbean in their ambitious journey to expand UHC and improve health system resilience in the wake of disruptions to healthcare delivery caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The grant provided focused diagnostics, technical assistance, policy dialogue and knowledge exchanges in critical areas, such as sustainable UHC financing, strengthening the management of non-communicable diseases, and leveraging technology for more effective, efficient, and equitable health service delivery. Besides launching the Caribbean knowledge sharing platform for UHC, this KWPF grant has contributed to UHC reforms in a tangible way. For example, in Saint Lucia it has been pivotal to support the development of a Health Financing Policy and Strategy (HFPS), a UHC White Paper, and has contributed to the design of a state-of-the-art output-based health financing model (PBF) for primary health care with service standards and care management innovations for select NCDs. A rapid assessment of the HMIS recommended prioritized investments to leverage technology for improved services delivery.

To support reimagining the health sector and the implementation of patient centered UHC reforms, the Government of Saint Lucia has secured a loan from the World Bank. The Health System Strengthening Project (HSSP) invests in strengthening the health system which should serve the populace and tourists. To do this effectively, information and communications technologies must be used to more effectively and efficiently manage illnesses, health risks and to promote wellness and ensure equitable access to health care so no one is left behind.

Recognizing the pivotal role of digital technologies in shaping the health sector and as the country gradually transitions into UHC, developing a comprehensive and adaptive digital health policy and strategy is imperative. Such a document will serve as a roadmap in ensuring alignment with evolving technological trends, safeguarding patient privacy, fostering innovation, and promoting digital inclusivity. This aspect is key in supporting the modernization of the health sector, advancing the UHC agenda, including through the implementation of Performance Based Financing (PBF) scheme, which focuses strengthening the management of Diabetic and Hypertensive patients at the Wellness Centres. The PBF is pivotal in introducing an output-based model to finance primary care and empowering facilities to plan and implement to improve service quality and patient satisfaction. The PBF is the inception of value-based purchasing of health services, which hinges on more and better data.

Though plans to develop a new strategic plan for the period 2024 – 2030 are underway with the assistance from the World Bank-supported Health System Strengthening Project, and a draft Health Financing Policy and Strategy and a draft UHC White Paper have been developed with support from the KWPF and HSSP, the utilization of modern technologies to improve health care is at the forefront of Government – however, until now without a policy framework or strategic plan. Recognizing this gap, the GOSL aims to leverage the HSSP to support the development of a policy framework and an operational strategy to enable digital health.

2.0 Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this consultancy is to develop a comprehensive Digital Health Policy and Strategy for Saint Lucia, to improve the quality of outcomes and care services and to respond to the population's health needs, including the vulnerable, to facilitate evidence-based decisions and equitable use of digital health solutions.

The fulfill the purpose, the consultant is expected to achieve the following objectives:

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the current digital health landscape, ICT infrastructure within the health sector and government initiatives that impact health – such as digiGov, civil service authority etc. – to include primary care, secondary care, private providers (e.g., hospitals, doctors, clinics, diagnostic centres, and insurance companies).
- Design the Saint Lucia Digital Health Policy and Strategy and costed operational plan, based on assessments, discussions and agreements with key stakeholders and international best practices.
- Develop a costed monitoring and evaluation framework to measure the system's outputs, outcomes and impact.
- Review existing policies, technologies, and infrastructure to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats not limited to cybersecurity, data governance and ethical considerations relating to emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.
- Drive the enactment of the necessary legislation such as the having discussions with key stakeholders.

3.0 Scope of Services

The Consultant is expected to provide services to the Ministry of Health, Wellness and Elderly Affairs to develop and facilitate a participatory and inclusive process for the planning and development of the Digital Health Policy and Strategy document and costed operational plan.

The consultancy requires the consultant to fulfill at least the following tasks:

- Collaborate with the key stakeholders to determine clear project outputs and to ensure an accurate assessment of the current digital health landscape.
- Develop stakeholder management plan to effectively engage in focused consultation with key stakeholders.
- Conduct an in-depth assessment on the existing digital health landscape.
- Provide guidelines for equitable use of digital health solutions.
- Create a vision for the 'to-be' health system that is transformed by digital health services and data, presenting clearly how digital health will strengthen:

- Health service delivery, through transformed community and primary care, secondary care, patient centric and digitally enabled care, etc.;
 - Health financing, including resource mobilization, pooling and provider payment methods and financial management systems;
 - Supply chain management, enabling health system managers to know of issues earlier (early warning systems), reducing counterfeit items, and making more real-time (and better) decisions about supply chain needs;
 - Public health and health emergencies, to improve public health statistics, epidemiological and NCD surveillance, behavioural change, quarantine services management, epidemic containment monitoring etc.;
 - Organization and administration of the healthcare system (human resources management; financial management; fixed assets management; information assets management; health facilities & services licensing/accreditation; health devices & technologies registration; drugs registration and management etc.)
- Conduct a gap analysis to identify what is needed to reach the vision.
 - Define the future of the national digital health to include a vision statement, mission and objectives.
 - Define conceptual digital health architecture that will achieve the vision and identify key digital health building blocks to be implemented, such as PHC electronic medical records, central reference registries, shared EHR(s), common central services (e.g. ePrescription, eReferrals), tools and services for data exchange, hospital information system(s), laboratory information systems, radiology information systems (including PACS), emergency healthcare information systems, public health information systems, prevention and vaccination support systems, drugs regulation, pharmacy information systems, administrative and supply chain systems, health statistics and analytics systems, communication services to external systems (e.g. social protection, etc).
 - Identify and address interoperability challenges and outline strategies for seamless integration of digital health technologies; Identify implementation strategies that define various approaches to the short, mid' term and long-term implementation of the agreed architecture and provide guidelines for the development, deployment, integration and maintenance for the digital health solutions identified.
 - Identify types of digital health solutions to be implemented, such as electronic health records, telemedicine, mobile health applications and health information exchanges and provide guidelines for the development, deployment, integration and maintenance for the digital health solutions identified.
 - Identify training needs for healthcare professionals and staff to ensure effective implementation of digital health initiatives.
 - Define the logical design of technical infrastructure in collaboration with the technical team which includes but not limited to database systems, communication protocols, end user computing facilities, LANs and hosting environments.
 - Develop a plan for capacity building and continuous professional development and ensure adaptability to evolving technologies and trends.
 - Define key milestones, timelines and responsible parties for each phase of implementation.
 - Develop a communication plan to disseminate information about the digital health policy and strategy to internal and external stakeholders.

- Identify then necessary resources which includes budgetary requirements, personnel, technology and external expertise for developing and implementing the digital health policy and strategy.
- Conduct a risk assessment related to the implementation of digital health initiatives.
- Identify potential risks and propose mitigation strategies to safeguard against adverse outcomes.
- Create a costed multi-year operational plan that details budget estimates, resources requirements, and timelines
- Outline legal and regulatory considerations related to the use of digital health technologies.
- Align the policy with existing healthcare laws and regulations such as the Health Records Bill and other relevant local, regional, and national healthcare regulations.
- Identify potential funding sources and partnerships for the implementation of the strategy
- Address data protection, privacy, and security considerations to ensure compliance with legal frameworks.
- Delivering a final documents and presentation to stakeholders

4.1 Expected Deliverables

At Inception:

- A stakeholder engagement / management plan
- Work plan and timeline

At main project stages:

- An in-depth assessment report of digital health and IT landscape in St. Lucia
- Proposed vision and gap analysis that includes at least:
 - a. Vision for the ‘to-be’ health system that is transformed by digital health services and data.
 - b. Gap analysis that identifies what is needed to reach the vision.
 - c. Proposed conceptual digital health architecture that will achieve the vision.
- Multi-Year Digital Health Policy and Strategy document, that includes at least
 - a. Overview of the assessment.
 - b. Vision of St. Lucia health system transformed by digital health
 - c. Digital health conceptual architecture.
 - d. Key building blocks (standards and regulations, foundational registries, functional systems, interoperability infrastructure, etc.).
 - e. Technical infrastructure.
 - f. Implementation strategies (transition, gradual introduction, governance, software contracting modalities, quality and functional standards, IT service delivery options, planning horizon, etc.)
 - g. A comprehensive costed multi-year operational plan that details budget estimates, resources requirements, and timelines document.
 - h. A monitoring and evaluation framework to measure strategy implementation progress.

i. Capacity Building Plan in Digital Health

4.0 Expected Deliverables and Reporting Requirements

The Consultant will be required to deliver the following reports for submission to the Project, Implementation Unit, Ministry of Health, Wellness and Elderly Affairs:

REPORT	DELIVERABLES	TIMEFRAME
1	Inception report with work plan and timelines for each activity.	6 weeks
2	In-depth assessment report of digital health and IT landscape in St. Lucia	12 weeks
3	Proposed vision and gap analysis	18 weeks
4	Multi-Year Digital Health Policy and Strategy	26 weeks
5	Final Report	30 weeks

ALL REPORTS SHALL BE SUBMITTED IN ENGLISH.

All deliverables will be reviewed by the government in 2 weeks after submission. The deliverables will be accepted, or revisions will be required until the documents become acceptable. Work on next phase can commence only after previous deliverables are accepted by the government.

All reports and documents relevant to the Consultant's services, survey instruments, reports, etc. shall become the property of the Government of Saint Lucia. The Consultant shall not during and after the term of contract, use or disclose any confidential information relating to the business or operations of the Government of Saint Lucia.

5.0 Required Skills, Qualification and Experience

The Consultant should have at minimum the following expertise:

- Possess at least a Master's degree in Health Informatics, Public Health, Health Policy, Healthcare Management or equivalent in relevant field.
- At least five (5) years of experience with digital health initiatives
- Experience in implementing technologies, managing data systems, or designing healthcare delivery solutions is highly desired.
- Experience in project management is highly desired.
- Proficiency in understanding digital health technologies, interoperability standards, data privacy, and security protocols.

- Experience in crafting policy frameworks, conducting policy analysis, and understanding the impact of policies on healthcare systems and stakeholders (at least one successful reference).
- Ability to conduct feasibility studies, risk assessments, and cost-benefit analyses related to digital health initiatives.
- Proven skills in strategic planning, including setting goals, defining implementation strategies and monitoring progress.
- Ability to align digital health strategies with broader healthcare objectives and national or regional health agendas.
- Understanding of ethical considerations in digital health, such as data privacy, equity, and the ethical use of technology in healthcare.
- Excellent stakeholder management and engagement skills.
- Experience in fostering partnerships and building consensus among stakeholders.
- Excellent communication skills for effectively conveying complex technical information to diverse audiences.
- Fluency in English is essential.
- Exceptional organizational skills and work independently in order to meet deadlines.
- Strong analytical and strategic thinking and a commitment to results.
- Good interpersonal skills.

A firm may propose an individual who will be evaluated on the basis of the individual's qualifications, experience and competencies.

6.0 Timetable and Remuneration:

The consultancy contract will be for a period of seven (7) months to be ended on 31st October 2024. The consultancy contract will include items such as consultant time, travel, lodging, per diem, in/out expenses.

7.0 Working Arrangements:

The Consultant will report to the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) for contractual obligations and the PIU will provide final approvals and payments. The HMIU will have technical oversight on tasks performed by the Consultant and collaborate with the PIU in endorsing deliverables and reports.

Client's Responsibility:

- Contract management by the Project Implementation Unit.
- Technical oversight and coordination by the Health Management Information Unit.
- Make available to the Consultant existing reports/studies/data including the existing information on health services and other relevant documents relevant to the work of the Consultant;
- Review of reports to ascertain congruence with the terms of reference;

- Initiate the consultation and cooperation of other internal and external stakeholders required to provide support to the Consultant for realization of the relevant aspects of the assignment.

Consultant's Responsibility:

- The Consultant shall submit all reports to the PIU.
- The Consultant shall submit from the outset, the expected outputs, as well as ensure timely submission to the HMIU for review.
- The HMIU will collaborate with the PIU to ensure the timely review and acceptance of the reports submitted by the Consultant, not more than two (2) weeks after receipt of reports from the Consultant.
- The Consultant shall be responsible for the supervision of its technical staff including providing all office space, equipment, materials, accommodation, office requirements and transportation.
- Engagement of the appropriate qualified and experienced technical and administrative staff and other resources necessary to undertake the services.
- Execution of services in accordance with the laws, customs and practices endorsed by the Ministry of Health, Wellness and Elderly Affairs.
- Assurance of strict confidentiality of all data.

8.0 Evaluation Criteria:

The Consultant shall be selected based on the individual consultant selection method.