CADMUS

CALL FOR CONSULTANTS

TO:	Potential Consultants
FROM:	Darlene Irby, Project Director The Cadmus Group Digital Forward Contract No. 7200AA23C00131
SUBJECT:	Call for Côte d' Ivoire DECA Research Support Specialist

USAID Digital Forward is seeking experienced and qualified Research Support Specialist for the Côte d' Ivoire Ecosystem Country Assessment (DECA).

The DECA is a flagship initiative under the USAID Digital Policy and is a semi-standardized rigorous tool that identifies development opportunities and challenges in a country's digital ecosystem. It supports USAID Missions and other key stakeholders to better understand, support, and work with a country's digital ecosystem, mainstreaming digital development into Mission strategies and programming.

Cadmus, as the prime implementor of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Digital Forward project intends to award a labor-hour type contract to those consultants chosen for this assignment. The start date of the assignment will be immediately upon being chosen and receipt of client approvals.
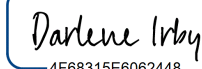
If selected, candidates will be required to provide the Contractor Employee Biographical Data Sheet (attached), and supporting documentation for the education, employment and consultant history listed in the data sheet, as well as a rationale for their proposed hourly or daily rate.

This call for consultants does not obligate Cadmus to select any candidates that choose to respond to this call. If chosen, candidates are subject to vetting and client approval before an agreement can be signed.

See Section 1 for Background on Activity and Description of Requirements.
See Section 2 for Instructions to Candidates.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

Darlene Irby

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Darlene Irby, Project Director
The Cadmus Group
Digital Forward

Section 1: Description of Requirements

Digital Ecosystem Country Assessment (DECA)
Contract No. 7200AA23C00131
SCOPE OF WORK

Activity:	Côte d'Ivoire DECA
Expert/Firm:	Research Support Specialist (Fixer)
Estimated Level of Effort and Period of Performance:	**Estimated Level of Effort:** 15 days, 25 if travel is included. **Period of Performance:** 17 February 2025 - 31 July 2025 with the possibility of a few additional days of work between August 2025 to November 2025

Digital Forward Background

Launched in February 2024, the Digital Forward Mechanism aims to bolster USAID and implementing partner efforts to design, support and implement digital technology programs; accelerate open, inclusive and secure digital ecosystems; and disseminate knowledge within USAID and the development community on the digital technology's best practices, successes, and lessons learned from programs. The Activity will implement work that advance two mutually reinforcing objectives:

- Objective 1: Support USAID with Digital Development-focused technical assistance, research, training, strategic thinking, digital-sector partnerships, and behavior change that will equip USAID programming for the digital age, and
- Objective 2: Support the growth of open, inclusive, and secure digital ecosystems in partner countries through work with USAID.

Digital Forward is managed through the Innovation, Technology, & Research Hub's Technology Division (ITR/T) within the Bureau for Inclusive Growth, Partnerships, and Innovation (IPI).

Activity/Consultancy Background

USAID/IPI/ITR/T has been leading efforts related to the Digital Ecosystem Country Assessment (DECA) which is a flagship initiative under the Digital Policy, specifically identified as a key approach for implementing the Policy's "understand the digital ecosystem" principle. The DECA is a semi-standardized rigorous tool that identifies development opportunities and challenges in a country's digital ecosystem. It supports USAID Missions and other key stakeholders to better understand, support, and work with a

country's digital ecosystem, mainstreaming digital development into Mission strategies and programming.

USAID/Côte d'Ivoire is interested in better understanding the country's digital ecosystem to 1) improve measurable development and humanitarian assistance outcomes through the responsible use of digital technology in its programming; and 2) support the USG whole of government implementation of Digital Transformation with Africa (DTA).

To better understand the opportunities and challenges facing Côte d'Ivoire's digital ecosystem and inform future programming, USAID/Africa Bureau and USAID/Côte d'Ivoire have asked the Digital Forward mechanism (implemented by Cadmus) to conduct a DECA. The DECA is organized around the [Digital Ecosystem Framework](#)'s three pillars:

- Digital Infrastructure and Adoption: the resources that make digital systems possible and how individuals and organizations access and use these resources. Digital infrastructure includes geographic network coverage, network performance, internet bandwidth, and spectrum allocation as well as telecom market dynamics around security, interoperability, and competitiveness. This pillar also examines behavioral, social, and physical barriers and opportunities for equitable access and use — who uses digital technologies, how, and where.

- Digital Society, Rights, and Governance: how the roles of government, media, and civil society are changing in response to digital technology and interacting in the digital realm, and how broad-scope laws impact the digital sector and the use of the internet. This pillar is divided into three sub-pillars: Internet Freedom; Civil Society and Media; and Digital Government. Internet Freedom explores factors that enable or constrain the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms online. This includes individual rights to freedom of speech, privacy, and free assembly, and the abuse of these rights through digital repression. Civil Society and Media identifies key institutions and how they report on, advocate around, and influence online freedoms. Digital Government looks at the government's efforts to manage internal information technology processes and systems, deliver citizen- and business-facing e-services, and engage with the public through digital channels.

- Digital Economy: the use of information and communications technologies to increase economic opportunity and efficiency, trade and competitiveness, and global economic integration. The development impact of the digital economy depends on the enabling environment for digital financial services, e-commerce, digital trade, and technology startups. A healthy digital economy requires smart regulation and a robust digital talent pool.

The following topics are cross-cutting and affect all three pillars in a DECA:
- Inclusion: Equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized. This topic goes beyond digital divides in connectivity access to include things like the unique impacts of digital repression on marginalized populations and barriers to full participation in the digital workforce.
- Cybersecurity: How people, systems, and technology protect information kept in digital formats from being taken, damaged, modified, or exploited. This topic also includes an exploration of cyber harms that exist in a country, who is responsible for

harms, and who is targeted, as well as levels of governmental and social cyber awareness and capacity.
- Artificial Intelligence/Emerging Technologies: The policy and market conditions shaping the deployment of technologies including artificial intelligence and machine learning, Internet of Things, drones, robotics, blockchain, and 3D printing.
- Geopolitical positioning: How the country's digital evolution is being shaped by international relationships, particularly the global spread of technology-enabled authoritarianism.

The DECA will also consider the priority areas of the Digital Transformation with Africa (DTA) framework, whose three pillars are:
      (1) Digital Economy and Infrastructure;
      (2) Human Capital Development; and
      (3) Digital Enabling Environment.
These pillars overlap with the USAID Digital Ecosystem Framework and are not considered duplicative. However, the DECA team should be prepared to go into greater depth on the topics that fall under the DTA pillars, considering the funding for this DECA comes from USAID/Africa Bureau, implementing DTA. This may include deeper dives on the enabling environment for digital infrastructure investment (market access, PPPs, competition law, etc.) and for data governance, data privacy, cybersecurity and other guardrails for open and responsible digital development.

Digital Forward will work closely with USAID/Africa Bureau, USAID/CDI to produce a high-quality digital ecosystem country assessment following the DECA methodology.

The DECA implementation will roll out in three phases:
- Phase 1: Desk Research and Planning
- Phase 2: Interviews
- Phase 3: Analysis and Report Writing

Digital Forward is recruiting a Research Support Specialist (Fixer) to provide logistical and operational support to support a DECA to be conducted in partnership with USAID/ Côte d'Ivoire. The ideal candidate should be based in Côte d'Ivoire and have demonstrated experience supporting interview and local travel logistics for a team of up to six. This includes experience scheduling meetings, organizing domestic travel and lodging, and coordinating local transportation. The individual should have good English and French language skills (reading, speaking, writing). Strong preference will be given to a candidate with digital development experience and experience with USAID, but that experience is not necessary.

(See qualifications at the end of this document for detailed requirements, in particular regarding technical knowledge specifications.)

Activity/Consultancy Objectives

Provide coordination and research support for the Côte d'Ivoire DECA to produce a series of interim research deliverables, presentations, and workshops as well as a final DECA report aligned with USAID/Côte d'Ivoire and DTA priorities.

Activity/Consultancy Scope

The Research Support Specialist will support logistics and planning through each phase the Côte d'Ivoire DECA, particularly for Phase 2: Interviews. This includes participating in regular meetings with the DECA Research Team and the USAID Mission DECA Team, identifying and contacting relevant stakeholders, keeping the interview tracker up to date, arranging travel logistics as required, and supporting research as necessary.

The Research Support Specialist will work closely with the DECA Research Team members during the desk research and planning and the interview phases to plan, coordinate, schedule, and support the stakeholder interviews. The DECA is a highly collaborative process and the Research Team will be staffed with the following roles:
- Cadmus DECA Manager & Technical Advisor
- Technical Researcher: Pillar 1
- Technical Researcher: Pillar 2
- Technical Researcher: Pillar 3
- **Research Support Specialist/Fixer**
- Digital Advisor (TBD)

Note: Some of the Côte d'Ivoire DECA interviews may be conducted in-person and may require travel for research team members based outside of the country. Travel is currently not confirmed.

Activity Tasks

Project Kick-off (2 weeks)
- Review the planning components of the DECA Toolkit, which provides the necessary templates, information, and a step-by-step guide to implementing the DECA.
- Participate in at least one orientation meeting prior to project kick-off. The orientation meeting is intended to provide guidance on the DECA Toolkit and processes.
- Participate in a kick-off meeting with the DECA Research Team and Mission DECA Team to set expectations, identify Mission priorities, and confirm project timeline.
- Adapt DECA interview outreach email template for the context including translation from English to French of the outreach email template.
- Throughout the DECA, provide critical local context knowledge and insights.
- As needed, participate in weekly Research Team meetings, including learning discussions focused on DECA iterations.
- As needed, participate in biweekly meetings throughout the project with the DECA Research Team and the Mission DECA Team to ensure regular feedback and open communication and to cultivate Mission ownership of the DECA.
- As needed, support the DECA Manager to ensure clear and consistent communication with the Mission, all communication with the Mission and with other relevant U.S. Government (USG) personnel throughout the project managed by the DECA Manager.

Deliverables: recognition of responsibilities and deadlines in the project work plan and onboarding documents (detailing process, timeline, tasks, and agreed-upon deadlines),

thorough review of DECA Toolkit and associated documents, adapted interview outreach email template.

Phase 1: Desk Research and Planning (4-5 weeks)
The goal of this phase is to prepare with the knowledge needed to enter the interview phase well-informed about the country's context and what gaps need to be filled. To ensure a smooth interview phase, interview identification and initial scheduling, as well as travel and in-person logistics, will occur during the desk research phase. Key tasks include:

- Identify interviewees for the Cote d'Ivoire DECA, validate any identified stakeholders with the DECA Research Team
- Coordinate with the DECA Research Team to designate interviewees as in-person or virtual
- Start to schedule meetings (in-person and virtual) with the list of target stakeholders identified in collaboration with the DECA Research Team
- Update the DECA Interview Tracker and Scheduling calendar regularly
- Identify and coordinate with a driver and translator, support the procurement processes as needed
- Procure local mobile phones and/or SIM cards for non-local DECA Research Team members as needed
- Develop or collect communications and interview materials as requested by the DECA Research Team
- Support travel logistics as needed (arranging airport pick up/drop off, providing hotel recommendations/quotations)
- Manage logistics for site visits and in-country travel, as needed
- Coordinate with the USAID/Cote d'Ivoire Mission on logistics as needed, with guidance from the DECA Manager
- Provide other logistical support as requested by the DECA Research Team
- Support desk research and provide country context to the Research Team as needed

Interim Deliverables to Cadmus: identification of DECA interviewees; regularly updated interview tracker and schedule; procurement of communication devices/supplies, drivers, and translators as needed; support travel logistics and other administrative support as needed

Phase 2: Interviews (~8 weeks virtual with a possibility of 1-2 weeks in-person)
The Research Support Specialist will provide operations and logistics support for both in-person and virtual interviews and may need to attend meetings, including with government officials and with USAID/Cote d'Ivoire staff. Key tasks include:

- Manage all logistics for in-person interviews and DECA Research Team travel (if necessary) including troubleshooting any unforeseen issues
- Manage remaining logistics for site visits and in-country travel, as needed
- Manage interview schedule including meetings, tracking final schedule, and attendees including contact information
- Provide daily schedule updates during in-person interviews
- Attend interviews and take notes, as needed
- Provide French to English translation during interviews (and vice versa), as needed
- Clean interview notes using interview recordings, as relevant

- Finalize interview documents including notes, recordings (as relevant), schedule, and final list of interviewees with accurate contact information
- Support the Recommendations Workshops, including procurement of office supplies or other necessary tasks as needed

Interim Deliverables to Cadmus: regularly updated interview tracker and schedule; daily schedules for in-person interviews; clean interview notes as needed; translated interview notes as needed; interview recordings as applicable; other interview documents as applicable; final interview tracker with full list of DECA interviewees and accurate contact information; procurement of office supplies or other tasks as needed

Phase 3: Analysis & Report Writing (~15 weeks)
- Provide process-related feedback to inform future DECAs
- Share any final documentation related to resources or contacts in Cote d'Ivoire as relevant
- Coordinate final invoicing from translator, driver, and other procurements
- Translate documents from interviews, as needed

Interim Deliverables to Cadmus: process related feedback; any remaining documentation related to the Cote d'Ivoire DECA (interview materials, contact information, desk research resources); final invoicing from procurements

Activity Deliverables

The table below summarizes all project deliverables and estimated due dates. Due dates are subject to change depending on length of the interview phase, whether in-person interviews will be conducted, and any other unforeseen adjustments. The contract length and LOE account for these potential adjustments.

The deliverables table below includes internal interim deliverables to Cadmus to ensure quality assurance for the deliverables to USAID. Internal interim deliverables are marked as such. Phases may overlap in order to keep the assessment moving.

Research consultants will work as a team to produce cohesive interim and final products for this DECA under the technical direction of a Cadmus DECA Manager.

All deliverables are subject to review and acceptance by Digital Forward.

Deliverable	Description	Estimated Timeline
1	Attendance at regular team and Mission meetings	*Throughout*
2	Project Kick-off: Review and agree on project work plan, timelines, and tasks	Week 1
3	Contributions to desk research template or resource worksheet as requested by Cadmus *[Interim internal to Cadmus]*	Week 3

4	Specified contributions to background desk research brief as needed by Cadmus
	    - Cadmus review
	    - Resubmitted with Cadmus comments
	Submission to USAID
		Week 3
		Week 4
		Week 5

5	Adapted interview outreach email for Cote D'Ivoire context including translation to French *[Interim internal to Cadmus]*	Week 4
6	Contact list (interviewees, and all consulted contacts) *[Interim internal to Cadmus]*	Weeks 3-13
7	Travel and pre-interview logistics tasks completed and verified	Week 5
8	Procurement support provided as needed (for example driver, translation services, SIM cards, communication supplies)	Weeks 3-13
9	Meeting invites sent/tracked, and meeting schedule drafted and updated daily	Weeks 3-13
10	Interview notes and recordings *[Interim internal to Cadmus]*	Weeks 6-13
11	Interview interpretation, as needed	Weeks 6-13
12	Interview debrief notes as requested by Cadmus *[Interim internal to Cadmus]*	Weeks 6-13
13	Translated interview notes, as needed	Weeks 6-14
14	Midway synthesis session summary notes as needed by Cadmus *[Interim internal to Cadmus]*	Week 9
15	Synthesis session notes as needed by Cadmus *[Interim internal to Cadmus]*	Week 14
16	Recommendations Workshop logistics managed, and workshop completed as needed by Cadmus	Week 12-15
17	Final interview tracker and scheduling spreadsheet including all interviewee contact information	Week 14-15
18	Follow up with vendors, final invoices	Week 14-15

Activity Security

The Digital Forward DECA Team will work closely with relevant counterparts within the U.S. Government to identify any security risks. The Digital Forward DECA Team will come up with a plan of action accordingly for sign off from ITR/T, USAID/Côte d'Ivoire, and relevant DTA stakeholders.

Travel

Travel is not confirmed but may be required to regions of Côte d'Ivoire during the interview phase. The timing will be determined during the course of implementation.

Special Material Requirements

N/A

Other Unique Requirements

N/A

Place of Performance

Remote, with the possibility of needing to travel during stakeholder interviews within Abidjan, Yamoussoukro, or other necessary cities.

Activity Period of Performance

The anticipated level of effort for this scope is 15 days (25 days if travel is required) over a period to begin on 17 February 2025 - 31 July 2025 with the possibility of a few additional days of work between August 2025 to November 2025

Reporting

On a day-to-day basis, the experts will report to a designated individual under Digital Forward per deliverables outlined in the Deliverables Table above.

Communications with Client

Candidate(s) selected for this role are expressly prohibited from communicating with Client personnel with respect to management issues, pricing, payments, specific tasking, or Candidate's performance under tasks relating to their Agreement, without the prior consent of Cadmus. This restriction is not intended to interfere with a Candidate's other Agreements with the Client or normal sales outside the scope of this Agreement. The Candidate may be expected to communicate directly with the technical client solely regarding technical progress of commissioned tasks, after receiving approval of Cadmus technical manager to do so. No privity of contract exists between the Candidate and the Client, therefore the Candidate may neither take direction from nor discuss any terms and conditions of this Agreement with Client without the written consent of Cadmus.

Qualifications

Required
- Strong project management and knowledge management skills
- Highly organized and great attention to detail
- Experience supporting logistics and travel coordination
- Based locally in Côte d'Ivoire
- Excellent English written and oral communication skills
- Excellent French oral communication skills
- Available to meet during USAID/Côte d'Ivoire working hours
- Available to meet during Eastern Standard Time (EST) working hours

- Ability to communicate across diverse teams and cultures

Preferred
- Demonstrated experience as French to English interpreter and translator
- Experience interacting with a range of stakeholders including high-level government and private sector actors
- Experience working with USAID or familiarity with USAID programs and policies
- Experience with digital development
- Experience supporting research assessments

Section 2: Instructions to Candidates

Interested candidates should submit the following;

- A cover letter, not to exceed one page, explaining their suitability and interest for the consultancy;
- A detailed resume/CV detailing the following:
  - Education;
  - Relevant experience and qualifications
  - Minimum 3 references from employers of similar work; and
- Complete the Consultant Survey attached with this call.

Note: By submitting your resume/CV, you agree to be a part of Cadmus's consultant roster under the Digital Forward mechanism.

Submission: The Cover Letter, Resume/CV, and Consultant Survey should be submitted to Arthur Muchajer at Arthur.muchajer@cadmusgroup.com and Nazir Sediqi at nazir.sediqi@cadmusgroup.com, and include in the subject line "**Cote d'Ivoire DECA Research Support Specialist".**

Candidates will be considered based on the following:

- Whether their resume/CV demonstrates they meet the qualifications listed in the Qualifications section of the scope of work;
- Strong responses from provided references;
- A positive interview outcome with the DECA team; and
- If further evaluation is required, candidates may be asked to submit a short, 500-word essay on a topic of the DECA Team's choosing.

Upon evaluation, Cadmus may also consider the candidate for one of the other roles listed above if deemed more suitable for the assignment.