KOBLI Legal Aid Platform Business Model for Scaling - Consultancy

Terms of Reference

1   Background information

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is an international humanitarian organization helping people forced to flee. Through its programmes, NRC addresses immediate humanitarian needs, prevents further displacement, and supports durable solutions. One of NRC's key programmes is Information, Counselling, and Legal Assistance (ICLA), which enables people affected by displacement to claim and exercise their rights through information provision, legal counselling, individual case assistance, collaborative dispute resolution, capacity building, and advocacy.

Traditional legal aid services in the humanitarian context have largely depended on in-person delivery. These models are resource-intensive and often limited by geographic, security, or time constraints, while the legal needs of displaced populations continue to grow. In response to these challenges, NRC launched a digital transformation initiative in 2018 to explore how technology could expand the reach and efficiency of ICLA services.

This initiative began under the Dream Design Deliver (DDD) framework, facilitated by NetHope in partnership with Microsoft and Accenture. The DDD process started with a strategic visioning session in Oslo in June 2018, followed by a user-centered design process involving ICLA teams in Kenya, Iraq, and Ukraine. In 2020, key design concepts were tested in a pilot project in Colombia using off-the-shelf digital tools.

After completing the design phase in late 2020, NRC procured a software development partner to build a bespoke digital platform. Development began in 2021, with Lebanon selected as the lead country for field collaboration.

The resulting platform, named KOBLI (derived from the Norwegian verb *å koble*, meaning "to connect"), includes three core digital components:

1. **Content Management System (CMS)** – A backend system used by ICLA teams to publish and manage legal content. It enables country programmes to launch standalone legal information

websites, set up chatbots, and integrate content with social media platforms. This allows for timely and localized dissemination of legal information to displaced populations.

2. **Legal Case Management System (LCM)** – A workflow tool used by NRC caseworkers to manage individual legal cases. It supports the full case lifecycle, from initial intake and registration through follow-up and closure, and allows for structured documentation, secure data handling, and programmatic reporting.

3. **User Portal** – A secure digital interface for project participants that allows individuals to access the status of their legal cases, communicate directly with NRC caseworkers, and use self-help tools to obtain relevant legal information and documents.

Together, these components enable NRC to extend the reach and effectiveness of ICLA programming, especially in contexts where access to in-person services is limited.

The first version of KOBLI was delivered by the end of 2021 and underwent several rounds of quality assurance, including penetration testing, code audits, and user feedback. The platform was officially launched in May 2022, starting with a limited rollout in Lebanon. Since then, deployment has expanded to several additional countries.

As of mid-2025:

- The Legal Information Platform (CMS + Digital Access (DA) Platform) is live in Ukraine, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Moldova. Non-ICLA programs have also been using the CMS module, for example, Ukraine Cash Team, Sudan Cash Team, and Education team in MENA.

- The Legal Case Management (LCM) system is used by ICLA teams in Jordan and Uganda in 2025, and it is intended to expand to Ukraine later this year.

- The User Portal is currently being piloted in Syria, where it will allow users to store sensitive legal documents securely in the cloud.

2 Purpose of the Consultancy

The KOBLI digital legal aid platform has grown significantly since its launch, with several NRC country offices now actively using its core modules to deliver legal information and manage legal aid cases. As the platform matures, NRC is prioritising the development of a long-term business model that can support the sustainability and scalable use of KOBLI, both within NRC and potentially beyond. This includes exploring the possibility of making the platform available beyond its current scope, to external partners and potentially to thematic areas beyond legal aid. A sustainable model would allow the platform to function reliably in the long term, with clear governance, predictable resourcing, and operational independence where needed.

The current operating model of KOBLI is designed exclusively for internal NRC use. The platform is fully owned by NRC, hosted on NRC-managed infrastructure, and maintained by a vendor contracted by NRC. Access by partners is only possible through a formal relationship with an NRC country office. This arrangement limits scalability and does not provide a sustainable or independent path for partners to adopt or invest in the platform. For example, if NRC closes a country office that had an existing partnership with a local organization using KOBLI, that partner would no longer be able to continue using the platform, even if they had fully integrated it into their operations. This creates uncertainty and makes long-term planning and service continuity difficult for external actors. The problem is even more complicated in country offices where NRC is not present.

This consultancy will support NRC in designing a business model that secures the long-term sustainability of the KOBLI platform. This includes assessing viable models for governance, cost recovery, software management, and partnerships, both within NRC and in collaboration with external actors. The aim is to enable KOBLI to continue evolving as a flexible, secure, and mission-driven platform that can thrive beyond short-term project cycles.

3   Scope and Expected Outcome

3.1 Scenario Creation

The consultant should outline at least three business model scenarios that could allow KOBLI to scale sustainably and inclusively. These should reflect varying levels of decentralization, ownership, and openness. The following scenarios are examples that can be used by the consultant:

1. **Status Quo with Expanded Partner Access**: KOBLI remains under full NRC ownership and operational control, but access is expanded and formalized through structured licensing or partnership frameworks with external actors.

1. **Consortium or Shared Governance Model**: KOBLI is jointly governed by multiple NGOs or stakeholders through a formalized structure, distributing responsibilities and decision-making.

2. **Spin-Off into an Independent Entity:** KOBLI is transitioned into a legally separate nonprofit/for-profit company, organization or social enterprise. NRC may still hold a level of ownership.

2. **Open Source or Digital Public Good Model**: The KOBLI platform (or selected components) is released under an open license or registered as a digital public good, enabling broad-based use and collaborative maintenance.

3. **Acquisition or Integration by Another Entity:** Ownership of KOBLI is transferred to another NGO, donor-led initiative, or global thematic platform capable of scaling its use while maintaining alignment with humanitarian values.

The consultant is also encouraged to suggest additional or hybrid scenarios based on sector experience and emerging trends.

3.2 Dimensions of Analysis

Under each scenario, the consultant must assess the following dimensions:

1. **Organizational Structure:** What legal and operational setup would be required for this model to function (e.g., department within an NGO, independent entity, consortium secretariat)?

2. **Governance:** How would decisions be made, and by whom? What structures would ensure accountability, transparency, and protection of humanitarian principles?

3. **Software and Technical Management:** What are the implications for software development, maintenance, infrastructure, hosting, support, and cybersecurity under this model?

4. **Financial Model and Sustainability:** What funding mechanisms (e.g. core funding, subscriptions, grants, service fees) are available under this model? What would long-term financial viability require? Implications of partnership increase/decrease on financial sustainability.

5. **Partner Engagement and Access:** How would partners, whether NGOs, government actors, or community-based organizations, gain access to the platform? What policies and support systems would be needed?

4 Evaluation Framework

To ensure a rigorous, contextually grounded, and practically useful analysis, the consultant is expected to follow a structured, five-step approach for each proposed business model scenario. This ensures that all recommendations are rooted in NRC's operational realities and KOBLI's long-term ambitions.

4.1 Understand NRC and KOBLI's Context

The consultant must gain a solid understanding of NRC's organizational structure, values, digital strategy, and the specific operational and technical context of KOBLI. This understanding must be developed through:

- Interviews with key stakeholders at head office, country offices, and relevant technical teams.

- Review of strategic documents, platform architecture, and governance materials.

- Mapping constraints and opportunities relevant to KOBLI's scale-up, including internal processes, decision-making dynamics, and compliance requirements.

This step ensures that all later analysis is grounded in what is institutionally, ethically, and technically feasible within NRC. The consultant may plan some of the keyholder interviews before and the remaining after the inception report.

4.2 Select Scenarios and Real-World Examples

As part of the inception phase, the consultant is expected to assess at least three business model scenarios, which may include options listed in Section 3.1 or additional models proposed by the consultant.

For each selected scenario, the consultant must:

- Clearly define the scenario and its core features.
- Identify a relevant real-world example (ideally from a humanitarian, nonprofit, or social tech sectors) that has implemented a similar model with preferably a digital/innovative project. Finding a real-world example for each scenario is highly recommended but not mandatory when a comparable example does not exist.
- Submit the selected scenario and example for NRC's review and approval in the inception report, with a short rationale for each.

This pairing of scenario and case study example will provide the reference point for deeper analysis.

4.3   Explain the Five Dimensions Using the Example

For each selected scenario and its associated real-world example, the consultant should explain how the following five dimensions were implemented in that context:

- Organizational Structure
- Governance
- Software and Technical Management
- Financial Model and Sustainability
- Partner Engagement and Access

This step should surface practical insights, challenges, and success factors relevant to each model.

4.4   Apply the Dimensions to KOBLI

Building on Step 3 and the contextual understanding developed in Step 1, the consultant will analyze how KOBLI would look and operate under each selected scenario. This includes:

- Providing a descriptive vision of how KOBLI would function if this business model were adopted.
- Assessing all five dimensions in the KOBLI context under the selected scenario.
- Highlighting required adaptations, structural changes, or operational shifts needed for implementation.

This step is not only an analytical exercise but a conceptual one, helping NRC visualize each path forward in concrete terms.

4.5   Conduct a Cost-Benefit and Risk Analysis

Finally, the consultant will assess the implications of each scenario through a comprehensive analysis that includes:

- Benefits: Strategic alignment, efficiency gains, scalability, innovation potential.

- Costs: Financial investment, implementation effort, capacity requirements.

- Risks: Governance challenges, operational disruption, data protection concerns, legal compliance and liability, partnership challenges, and long-term sustainability threats.

- Strategic Fit: A concluding reflection on whether the scenario is compatible with NRC's values, goals, and vision for KOBLI.

5 Methodology

The consultant will follow a structured, four-phase methodology to ensure a rigorous and contextually informed evaluation of potential scaling scenarios for KOBLI.

- **Inception phase:**

  1. Discovery phase: Before scenario selection and formal inception reporting, the consultant will conduct preliminary research to develop a foundational understanding of NRC's organizational values, governance structures, digital strategy and vision, and the current design and use of the KOBLI platform. Activities in this phase may include:

     - Review of key documents, including NRC program priority and partnership strategy, platform architecture, legal and data governance frameworks.
     - Initial stakeholder interviews to surface early insights and clarify strategic priorities and constraints.
     - High-level mapping of enablers, risks, and operational realities affecting future business model options.

     The findings from this discovery phase will enable the consultant to identify and justify the selection of appropriate business model scenarios and real-world examples for NRC's review.

     2. Inception report: The consultant will identify and propose relevant business model scenarios and corresponding real-world examples for NRC's review and approval. Each proposed scenario and example should be accompanied by a brief rationale explaining its relevance and potential applicability to KOBLI's context. This phase will set the foundation and scope for the detailed analysis. NRC steering committee may request the consultant to change the selected scenarios at this stage.

- **Stakeholder Interviews:** Following approval of the scenarios and examples, the consultant will continue conducting additional interviews with key Potential Partners and NRC stakeholders, including management and country office representatives. These interviews aim to deepen the consultant's understanding of KOBLI's operational environment, strategic priorities, and potential concerns. Insights from these conversations will inform the subsequent analytical phases, particularly the assessment of each scenario's strengths, weaknesses, and fit for KOBLI.

- **Market Assessment Phase:** Before conducting full research and analysis, the consultant will carry out a targeted market assessment to better understand the broader landscape in which KOBLI could operate. This should include:
     - Identifying comparable or competing digital legal aid or case management platforms in the market.
     - Analyzing potential user segments and customers — for example, other NGOs, local civil society organizations, law firms, or government entities — and estimating the potential size and diversity of this market (e.g., geographic spread, language needs, scale).
     - Mapping key market trends, barriers to entry, and opportunities for differentiation.

  Insights from this market assessment must be integrated into the scenario research and analysis, as well as the contextual reflections from the stakeholder interviews.

- **Research and Analysis Phase:** In this phase, the consultant will perform a comprehensive assessment of each approved scenario against the five dimensions of analysis: organizational

structure, governance, software and technical management, financial sustainability, and partner engagement. This assessment will be conducted in two parallel streams:

- o Examining how the selected real-world examples implemented each scenario and dimension, highlighting challenges and best practices.

- o Applying the same dimensions and findings to KOBLI, incorporating insights gained from stakeholder interviews and market analysis to ensure practical relevance.

- **Reporting and Handover:** The consultancy will culminate in a detailed report synthesizing findings from the research and analysis phase. The report will provide clear recommendations for each scenario's feasibility and strategic implications for KOBLI's future development. The consultant will also present the findings to NRC and hand over all supporting documentation, including interview notes, data analysis, and references, to facilitate NRC's decision-making and future planning.

Dates (TBC)	Activity
3rd July	ToR finalized and approved
24Th July	Public Webinar on TOR (https://kobli.no/en/page/business-model-webinar)
30Th July	Call for proposal and tender process closes
1st – 15th August	Bid Evaluations and Interviews
15th August	Contract signed & Consultancy Starts
TBD	Inception phase
TBD	Research & Development phase
15th- 23rd December	Handover & Report
31st December	Contract ends

6   Optional Phase Two – Implementation Support

In addition to the scope of work described above, the consultant is requested to include in their proposal a separate financial offer for a potential follow-up engagement (Phase Two). Phase two would involve supporting the deployment or initiation of the selected business model scenario based on the recommendations developed during Phase One. This may include (but is not limited to) activities such as detailed planning, legal support, capacity building, and operational support to roll out the new business model. While a decision on Phase Two will be made after the completion of Phase One and

internal review, we request that the consultant include quotation for daily rates of their team members with different expertise that will be potentially required for phase two of this project.

7   Management & Budget of the review

This consultancy is being launched by the Global ICLA team at NRC Head Office. The maximum budget for this work is USD 30,000, and the work is expected to end before the end of the year. As an independent humanitarian organisation, NRC will always strive to minimise the administration costs in our work protecting the most vulnerable. NRC highly values an offer based on a humanitarian discount. The contract will be awarded to the most economically advantageous tender based on price-quality ratio. Please refer to section 9.4 for financial proposal requirements.

8   Deliverables

The expected deliverables for this consultancy include:

• Inception report with approved scenarios and case studies

• Interview summary/notes

• Final report with recommendations and supporting documents and cost estimate for the implementation of the suggested business module scenario

• Presentation to NRC stakeholders

9   Application requirements

Interested consultants or firms must submit a complete proposal that includes the following:

1. Technical Proposal: A document outlining the consultant's understanding of the assignment and proposed approach, including:
- Methodology: Description of how the consultant will implement the five-phase methodology outlined in the ToR.
- Preliminary reflections: Early thoughts on potential business models, governance approaches, and lessons from similar platforms or sectors.
- Work plan and timeline: A high-level Gantt or activity schedule for key phases and deliverables.
- Team structure: Roles, responsibilities, and level of effort for each team member.

2. Relevant Experience and Similar Work: The proposal must demonstrate that the consultant or firm has conducted similar assignments. Such work may include: Project scale-up or business model design and Organizational governance or structural reviews
- For each project: a brief summary, timeframe, client name, and the consultant's role.
- Links to final reports or deliverables (if public or shareable) are encouraged.

3. CV(s) of Consultant(s)
- CVs of all proposed team members, highlighting their specific experience with digital platforms, nonprofit governance, legal frameworks, or organizational design.

4. Financial Proposal
- Detailed budget, indicating daily rates, expected number of days, and any other associated costs.
- A separate quote for potential follow-up work under Phase Two (implementation support).

5. References
- At least two client references from recent, comparable work. Include name, organization, email address, and a brief description of the work provided.

6. Legal and Administrative Information
- Company registration number or consultant tax ID.

10   Application process and deadlines

Application Deadline: 1st August 2025

Written Questions: Request for clarification on the scope of the project can be sent to nrc.digitalicla@nrc.no. Answers to the questions will be posted on the following page for everyone's access: https://kobli.no/en/page/procurement

Webinar Session to discuss TOR (Optional): 24th July 2025 at 2:30pm (Oslo Time)

   (sign-up here and you will receive the zoom link: https://kobli.no/en/page/business-model-webinar)

Interview dates: 1st – 15th August

Submit completed applications to nrc.digitalicla@nrc.no