Digital ICLA Platform (KOBLI) Business Model for Scaling - Consultancy

Terms of Reference

1   Background information

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is an independent humanitarian organization helping people forced to flee. NRC works to protect the rights of displaced and vulnerable persons during a crisis. Through its programmes, NRC provides assistance to meet immediate humanitarian needs, prevent further displacement and contribute to durable solutions.

Information, Counselling, and Legal Assistance (ICLA) is the legal aid program of NRC. NRC's ICLA programmes aim to enable people affected by displacement to claim and exercise their rights and find lasting solutions. ICLA activities support people to claim and exercise their rights through information, counselling, legal assistance, collaborative dispute resolution, capacity building, and advocacy.

The traditional approaches to delivering legal aid services are mainly based on in-person interaction. Hence, they are limited by time, human resources, access constraints, and geography, while the target groups' legal needs vastly outstrip the services' supply. That's why in 2018, NRC decided to re-imagine ICLA digitally. In February 2018, NRC-ICLA began to engage in a digital transformation initiative called Dream Design Deliver (DDD). This initiative, which was facilitated by NetHope in partnership with Microsoft and Accenture, sought to assist the humanitarian community in exploring the use of digital tools to better deliver services to affected populations.

The DDD project kicked off with a Dream session in Oslo in June 2018, following which the NRC senior management approved proceeding to the project's design stage. During this phase, ICLA global team worked with the field teams in Kenya, Iraq, and Ukraine to engage in a user-centric design process with the end goal of having a core platform blueprint and a product development roadmap. In 2020, some of these design concepts were validated at the field level through a pilot in Colombia using available off-shelf solutions. The design stage started in Fall 2018 and continued until December 2020, when the tender process for procuring a software development company's services was concluded. In 2021, the software development of the digital platform continued in close collaboration with the field teams in the second pilot country, Lebanon. After consultation with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds, we decided to name the platform Kobli -which refers back to the

Norwegian verb å koble (to connect) and is very neutral while easy to pronounce in every other NRC working language. Kobli consists of two major components: FourC, a Content and Case Management System for ICLA staff members, and the DA Platform: a beneficiary interface where displaced persons can freely access legal information and follow up on their NRC case management.

In November 2021, the vendor delivered the first version of the Kobli platform. NRC then began the quality assurance process, including penetration tests, code audits, and functional testing. After several iterations of quality improvements, the KOBLI platform was launched in May 2022 with a limited rollout to the ICLA Program in Lebanon. ICLA plans to publicly deploy the Lebanon instance of Kobli before the end of 2022 and extend the project to several other countries of operation in 2022 and 2023, including Ukraine, Romania, Venezuela, Kenya, and Colombia. In 2021, NRC chose Digital Transformation as one of its Strategic Enablers for the 2022 – 2025 strategic period. Such commitment to the evolution of service modalities from the headquarter will translate into capacity building in tech, investment in technology, attention to safe digital programming, etc., which facilitates a greater adaptation of Kobli in this period.

2   Purpose of the Consultancy

2.1 Overarching purpose

Digital transformation of programs has been among the strategic priorities of NRC in the past several years. Development and adaptation of digital tools have been central to this exercise. Kobli is the digital platform developed at the global level (Head Office) in order to assist the ICLA programs at the field level with the transformation of their legal aid programs.

After a long journey of needs assessment, design, and development; Kobli is finally available as a digital product. Kobli pilots in Lebanon and Ukraine will make great progress by the end of 2022. The digital ICLA team hopes to launch the scale-up phase of Kobli in 2023. The goal is to get at least 5 additional countries onboard and even more by the end of the current strategic period in 2025.

The goal of this consultancy is to assist with shaping a sustainable business model for Kobli in order to achieve its scaling potential.

2.2 Guiding Research Questions

During the course of the development and piloting of Kobli, the project was faced with multiple opportunities and challenges, which must be taken into consideration in order to shape its scaling plan. The consultant is expected to give a special focus on these issues and address them. The guiding issues include:

Programmatic Observations – ICLA's core competency is well established and organized in the way they conduct its operations for many years. Kobli aims to assist with the digital transformation of these programs. However, this transition is often complex:

- **Legal Aid Processes:** Digitalization requires standardization of processes. The day-to-day operations must be defined, consistent, and structured. Otherwise, integrating digital solutions into the teams' operations becomes extremely difficult. Based on the KOBLI's early experience, a lot of effort must be directed at restructuring the governance, defining processes, roles & responsibilities, and accountability to prepare for this transformation.

- **Training Staff:** The tech literacy of aid workers varies considerably. Some are very ambitious, while others prefer hardcopies over anything digital. But no matter where ICLA teams fall in this spectrum, Kobli is a large platform that requires training to be utilized. Training often needs to be followed up with additional support in order to get the teams up to speed. Additionally, the field teams may need to recruit staff with tech backgrounds in order to help them with the promotion and maintenance of tech solutions.
- **Safe Programming:** While digital solutions provide programs with many opportunities, they also introduce new risks that ICLA teams may be oblivious to. Such risks can range from Data Protection concerns to the digital divide. These risks must be raised, and mitigation measures discussed within the context of deployment.

Technology – A clear advantage of Kobli for ICLA programs at the country level is that technical support, for example, in software development and data protection, can be provided globally without a need for procurement of consultants. However, as Kobli expands to additional countries, further resources are required to provide the field with needed support. A team with clear responsibility and check-and-balances within the organization. Some of the tasks requiring technical expertise are as follows:

- **Maintenance of the software:** Software at the scale of Kobli requires regular maintenance and support. Even if such a task is delegated to third party business, the required coordination still lies in-house.
- **Enhancements/Modifications:** As Kobli expands its user base by entering new country programs, new gaps are identified that need to be addressed. Country programs also often have specific needs that can be added as a new feature to Kobli.
- **Cloud Infrastructure & Hosting Services:** another technical need of Kobli is a suitable hosting service. One must take into consideration the sensitivity of data collected by Kobli and management/ownership of such data.

Partnership – There is great potential for Kobli to expand through NRC's local partners. Making Kobli available to local NGOs is aligned with the mandate of the organization. However, Kobli must be a sustainable, autonomous, and safe solution for NRC partners. As such, in addressing the challenges mentioned above, one must consider the specific requirements of a healthy partnership. For example, issues such as hosting solutions, maintenance, and financial sustainability are as great relevance.

Financial sustainability – Kobli has had multiple streams of funds so far: external donors, HO contributions, and contributions from participating country offices. However, the long-term financial sustainability of this project, including internal financial streams- must be built into its business model.

3 Scope and Expected Outcome

Taking into consideration the challenges and opportunities discussed in the previous section, the consultant is expected to draft a business model for scaling Kobli that covers at least the following outline:

- **Value Proposition** – At the start of the project in 2018, a vision for the project was defined. However, after so many years, it is time to revisit what value we bring to our "customers". How should Kobli market its solution? What problem do we solve, and should we focus on?

- **Customer Segments –** Kobli was intended to be developed by head office and made available to ICLA teams at the country level. The demand for Kobli is actually not a problem. On the contrary, we must decide which country programs to prioritize (selection criteria). Furthermore, opportunities beyond ICLA teams at the Country level must be assessed. For example, interest from other core competencies or local partners.

- **Cost Structure** – what are the costs associated with Kobli activities? We will need to define a cost schedule for Country Offices (i.e. customers) based on the level of their engagement with Kobli and the services they receive

- **Key Resources –** Kobli started as part of the digital transformation initiative. As such, the software is only one of the assets of this program. Through the pilot experience, we have learned a lot about how we can be more efficient in providing legal aid at the field level, how we can deploy digital solutions safely, etc. Such intellectual properties are essential in the successful deployment of Kobli.

- **Governance & Management** – NRC structure is quite complex. On the one hand, we have a pyramid structure of Head Office, Regions, Country, and Area Offices. On the other hand, even within HO, there are different departments such as ICT, Program, and Innovation teams. Kobli must define its governance as well as roles & responsibilities when it comes to program support and the technology side of its operation.

- **Revenue streams –** As mentioned, Kobli is funded by donations. There are different streams of donation that have come to Kobli, from internal funding, country office contribution, or donors directly. We will need to assess how a digital asset at NRC must be funded to ensure sustainability.

- **Key Activities –** We see all different types of requests by country offices for support. We need to be able to articulate what activities we precisely engage in and how that supports our goal and value proposition.

- **Key Partnerships –** We have been working with many partners in the past 4 years. The partners range from the corporation and private sector to other innovation projects within NRC. Kobli needs to identify which partnerships are critical for our vision and must be invested in.

4 Methodology

We rely on the consultant (s) to propose a detailed methodology based on their experience and understanding of the scope of this collaboration. Different models (budgeting/governance/business) must be presented and assessed. For example, it is important to engage with the management at CO and HO levels to understand the current cost structure vs. the ideal one. It will be helpful to have landscaping of business cases\costing models developed by other NGOs. Finally, gather feedback and recommendations from external actors working on the topic (DIAL, Nesta, etc.).

Through the course of this consultancy, the following steps are suggested:

- **Inception Phase:** The consultancy must start with gathering existing information. The Digital ICLA teams at HO will provide the consultant (s) documentation, including projects and reports, for background. The purpose of the inception phase is to get a solid understanding of the context and agree on the scope and a way forward. This phase will conclude with an inception report that is agreed upon between the consultant and the steering committee.

- **Research & development** During this phase, the consultant will work based on the agreed-upon work plan in the previous phase. Development should include key informant interviews,

workshops with focus groups based on the foundation by inception report, and culminate in a set of scenarios and a validation session

- **Handover & report** Final module would aim to make sure NRC is provided with an actionable model based on the preferred option, supported by a final report. This will lead to a submission to management (possibly outside of the consultancy period)

Dates (TBC)	Activity
1st October	ToR finalized and approved
10Th October	Public Webinar on TOR (https://forms.office.com/r/hsKhHinvgJ)
16th October	Call for proposal and tender process closes
17th – 24th October	Bid Evaluations and Interviews
24th October	Contract signed & Consultancy Starts
24th October - 7th November	Inception phase
7th November - 15th December	Research & Development phase
15th- 23rd December	Handover & Report
31st December	Contract ends

5   Management & Budget of the review

This consultancy is being launched by the Global ICLA team at Head Office. The available budget for this work is USD 20,000, and the work is expected to end before the end of the year. The person responsible for ensuring that this consultancy takes place is Amir Shiva- Global Manager of Digital ICLA. A Steering Committee (SC) has been established by NRC, with the following members:

- Amir Shiva – Digital ICLA Global
- Giulio Coppi- Global Digital Specialist
- Fernando de Medina-Rosales – Global Lead ICLA

The Steering Committee will oversee the administration and overall coordination, including monitoring progress. The main functions of the Steering Committee will be:

- o Establish the Terms of Reference for the review
- o Select consultant (s)
- o Review and approve the inception report
- o Review and comment on the final report
- o Participate in workshops and presentations as required
- o Establish a dissemination and utilization strategy.

6   Deliverables

The expected deliverables for this consultancy include:

- Inception report to be approved before additional work commences
- Tools and resources developed for assessments and research
- Draft final report for a business model for scaling of Kobli
- Final report for a business model for scaling of Kobli
- Presentation of the final report

7   Review consultant team

NRC seeks expressions of interest from people with the following skills/qualifications:

- External organization or consultant
- English proficiency
- Experience with innovative projects with a software focus is especially valuable.
- Experience conducting organizational reviews or consultancies in the humanitarian sector.

8   Application process and requirements

Application Deadline: 16th October 2022

Webinar Session to discuss TOR: 10th October 2022 at 11am (Oslo Time)

(sign-up here and you will receive the zoom link: https://forms.office.com/r/hsKhHinvgJ)

Interview dates: 17th – 24th October

- Bids must include the following:
- Proposed approach to the consultancy
- Proposed team (if any) and CVs
- Reflections/ feedback on the tasks
- Project implementation methodology
- Work plan and detailed budget (considering the max. budget available)

Submit completed bids to nrc.digitalicla@nrc.no