



Government of Saint Lucia

**Ministry of Education, Sustainable Development,
Innovation, Science, Technology and Vocational Training**

OECS Skills and Innovation Project

**Terms of Reference for the Consultancy to Identify Barriers faced by Young Men in
Accessing Post-Secondary Education**

Project Title:

OECS Skills and Innovation Project (OECS SKIP) – Saint Lucia

Consultancy Title:

Consultancy to identify barriers faced by young men in accessing post-secondary education.

Location:

Saint Lucia

Prepared: 25 March 2025

Revised: 22 May 2025

I. Introduction

The World Bank's Board has approved US\$36 million to Grenada, Saint Lucia and the OECS Commission from the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank Group to finance the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Skills and Innovation Project (OECS SKIP). Each participating country will receive funding in the amount of US\$ 15 million credit while the OECS Commission will receive an IDA grant in the amount of US\$6 million.

The OECS Skills and Innovation Project will provide for investments in post-secondary education to promote transversal and advanced technical skills among youth while strengthening regional cooperation in post-secondary education. Over the next six years, the project will benefit 40,000 youth (18 to 34 years of age) who are currently enrolled or will enroll in post-secondary institutions in the OECS region, and who will benefit from regional interventions to foster collaboration in the post-secondary education space. In addition, youth will benefit from the project's provision of new tools to assess priority skills and support teachers, as well as 120 entrepreneurs and firms that would participate in collaborative innovation projects. The project will also foster collaborative innovation within Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Member states.

II. Country Background

Saint Lucia, like many other Caribbean nations, faces persistent challenges in ensuring equitable access and willful participation in secondary and post-secondary education for young men. Although the country has made progress in expanding post-secondary education opportunities, enrollment and completion rates for young men remain significantly lower than those of young women. Data from post-secondary institutions in Saint Lucia indicate that male enrollment rates are consistently below 40% with dropout rates disproportionately higher among male students.

Several interrelated factors contribute to the underrepresentation of young men in post-secondary education. Lower learning outcomes at the primary and secondary levels often limit their interest and ability to transition into higher education. Additionally, there is a lack of early warning systems and targeted retention programs to address the specific challenges faced by male students. Economic constraints, social norms, and cultural perceptions about traditional male roles in the workforce also shape young men's aspirations, often leading them to prioritize direct entry into low-skilled employment over continued education. Employment statistics reveal that while men dominate key industries such as construction, agriculture, and transportation, many of these jobs are low-wage and offer limited upward mobility, further reinforcing the cycle of lower educational attainment.

In this regard, the Government of Saint Lucia (GoSL), through the Department of Education, Innovation and Vocational Training seeks to engage an Individual Consultant to provide evidence-based insights into barriers young men face in accessing post-secondary education in Saint Lucia and to propose targeted interventions to improve male retention and participation in higher learning, based on good practices from around the world and adapting these to the Caribbean context. The findings will inform strategies to make post-secondary learning environments more responsive to young men's needs, including, for example, the development of national and regional standards for student services with counseling and mentoring components tailored to address academic, economic, and social challenges, provision of relevant and timely information on returns to education and on the skills and qualifications needed for different careers.

Financing will be made available in Component 3 of the OECS SKIP for the research into barriers young men face in accessing post-secondary education in Saint Lucia. The findings will inform the Regional Enhancement Plans for post-secondary school institutions, in order to ensure that any changes to the learning environment will present much opportunity for male student retention, inclusive of those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

III. Objective of Assignment

To identify and analyze the barriers that encumber young men's access to and retention in post-secondary education in Saint Lucia and to recommend relevant strategies to improve male participation and attainment in higher education. Barriers may include, but are not limited to, psychological, socioeconomic and gender-specific factors. Strategies should encompass practical and implementable policy, programmatic and institutional developments that can be undertaken by the Ministry of Education and/or education institutions.

By achieving these objectives, the consultancy will contribute to addressing challenges faced by men in the Saint Lucia workforce, and advise strategies for reducing the gender gap in the demand for higher-learning within the context of the Saint Lucia education system.

IV. Scope of Work

The Consultant will undertake the following specific tasks:

1. Conduct a desk review on male progression through the education system and their participation in post-secondary education in Saint Lucia, with due attention to male learners at the post-secondary level with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Such tasks shall form part of Deliverable A.
2. Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the presenting barriers that limit young men from accessing and completing post-secondary education. Barriers should consider pull and push factors such as economic, academic, socioeconomic, psychological, family-related and disability-related aspects, or any other influences that can affect men's decisions in favor of alternatives to continuing education. Assessments are expected to include the organization of targeted focus groups and interviews with young men with the age range of sixteen (16) to twenty-five (25) years old, including male learners with SEND) who have taken various education decisions that lead to different outcomes. Such decisions should include, withdrawal from secondary/tertiary education before program or degree completion, completion of secondary/tertiary education without successful attainment of certification or titles, successful attainment of certification or titles without the desire for continued learning, and existing enrollment in post-secondary education programs. Other focus groups should include educators, parents/guardians, community leaders, disability advocates, employers, youth organizations, and administrators and student support professionals attached to post-secondary institutions to gain thorough insight into challenges and perceptions. Where possible, a review of educational outcomes with employment outcomes and its relation to average income for men is advised. This may increase the understanding of pull and push factors that influence men accessing post-secondary education. Such tasks shall form part of Deliverable B.
3. Identify best practices from regional and international contexts that successfully address male retention in education. These best practices should also include modules or frameworks for the examination of social norms and expectations that place demands

on young men of a specific age or maturity level and influence male aspirations and educational choices. Such tasks shall form part of Deliverable B.

4. Analyze the role of existing early warning systems in Saint Lucia, targeted student retention interventions, institutional policies, multi-tiered systems of support including mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS), and SWPBIS (School Wide Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports) for male students, including those with special educational needs. Comparative analyses of such early warning systems (including but not limited to drop-out predictors, academic performance monitoring, absenteeism flags and referral pathways) against other countries are also expected. The examination of student retention interventions should consider gender-responsive social and emotional learning aspects that may support the erasure of harmful gender stereotypes and help in making the school experience a more attractive option. Such tasks shall form part of Deliverable B.
5. Develop evidence-based recommendations to support male attainment of secondary education and transition into post-secondary learning, with inclusive education strategies for male students with disabilities. These recommendations should:
 - a) propose interventions to enable the reduction of pull factors leading men learners outside of educational paths;
 - b) propose interventions, including policy recommendations, to create more male-responsive learning environments, including the establishment of standards for male-responsive student services, counseling, and mentorship programs that address the unique needs of male learners (including those services that are targeted to learners with disabilities). Policy recommendations should be geared towards improving male participation and success in secondary and post-secondary education institutions, ensuring that institutions develop inclusive education policies that target students with SEND, foster the delivery of social emotional learning curricular to support male learner attendance and success at school and enable a sense of belonging.
 - c) A monitoring and evaluation metric for the interventions proposed would be beneficial to facilitate impact evaluation of the interventions;
 - d) include a strategic behavior change communication plan for supporting male learners, which supports information sharing on the benefits and returns to education and qualifications needed for different careers;

Such tasks shall form part of Deliverable B.

6. Present findings to stakeholders and facilitate discussions on programmatic responses, emphasizing inclusivity in education. Such tasks shall form part of Deliverable C.

V. Duration of Assignment

Thirty-five (35) business days completed over a two (2) month period.

VI. Deliverables

The Consultant shall, under the supervision of the Project Manager, through the Project Officer, complete the deliverables as stated below. All reports associated with the assignment shall constitute a formal document with the following sections (included but not limited to):

- Table of Contents
- Executive Summary

- Body of Information
- Conclusion
- Recommendations (with relevance to deliverables outlined)
- Appendix – original evidence of meeting attendance registers, meeting notes, photos of stakeholder meetings, sample research instruments, detailed research methodology, agendas and synopsis of discussions, and results including clean data sets, where applicable.

The deliverables and timelines under the consultancy shall constitute the following.

- Inception Report.** Outlining the methodology, data collection plan and work schedule, this report shall be submitted within five (5) business days of contract signing. The report is expected to present evidence of the consultant's desk review.
- Progress Report.** A comprehensive assessment of key findings from desk review and primary research, including stakeholder consultations, should be presented within twenty (20) business days after submission of the Inception Report. This report should also include, if applicable, research challenges and solutions by the Consultant for achieving deliverables. The details of the report must highlight analysis of early warning signs and targeted interventions, as well as social norms and expectations that influence male educational choices. The report must propose interventions, including recommendations for supporting male learners. This report will form the basis of the consultant's key presentation to stakeholders at a validation workshop.
- Validation Workshop.** By five (5) business days, following the technical committee review of the Progress Report, a presentation of findings to key stakeholders, including but not limited to technical officers within the Ministry of Education and the partnering post-secondary institutions, for feedback must be conducted. In a one-day workshop coordinated by the Project Implementation Unit, the Consultant shall present the findings and recommendations for review and comment by key stakeholders.
- Final Report.** The Consultant shall incorporate feedback received from this workshop into the final report presented for acceptance. The Final Report shall be submitted five (5) days after the validation workshop. The Report must incorporate feedback from the validation workshop and recommendations to mitigate, remedy, or eliminate existing strategic barriers faced by young men in accessing post-secondary education, as informed by stakeholder discussions.

Deliverables and Payment Schedule

Item.	Description	Submission Period/Time Frame	Payment Schedule
A	Inception Report	No later than five (5) days after contract signing. The Department of Education (DOE) and other relevant stakeholders will provide feedback on the acceptance of the methodology.	15%
B	Progress Report	No later than twenty (20) business days after submission of the Inception Report	50%

Item.	Description	Submission Period/Time Frame	Payment Schedule
C	Validation Workshop	Workshop to be conducted no later than five (5) business days, following the technical committee review of the Progress Report.	15%
C	Final Report	No later than five (5) days after the validation workshop. The Department of Education (DOE) and other relevant stakeholders will provide feedback on the acceptance of the final report. The DOE reserves the right to request revision(s) to the Final Report on review.	20%

All reports and documents prepared for the assignment will be the property of the Government of Saint Lucia.

VII. Qualifications and Experience

The assignment is to be undertaken by a suitably qualified Individual Consultant¹ possessing the following qualifications:

Principal Consultant - Education Research Expert

- Post Graduate Degree in Higher Education, Education, Social Sciences, Gender Studies, or a related field
- Minimum of seven (7) years of experience in education research and policy
- Minimum of two (2) years of experience in data collection, statistical analysis, and qualitative research methodologies
- Proven experience in conducting gender-disparity studies, social development and research on male participation in education would be an asset
- Strong analytical and report-writing skills.

The desired skills and professional experience for the qualifying consultant is as follows:

- Minimum of five (5) years of experience working with programs that support at-risk male youth
- Experience in developing gender responsive policy recommendations and educational interventions
- Knowledge of gender-responsive educational programming and mentorship programs for males
- Background in inclusive education and supporting learners with disabilities.

VIII. Reporting and Supervision

The Consultant will report to the Project Manager of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) for the OECS Skills and Innovation Project, through the Project Officer, and in close collaboration with the National Skills Development Centre (NSDC) and the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC), beneficiary institutions of the OECS SKIP. Formal meetings

¹ A firm may propose an individual who will be evaluated on the basis of the individual's qualifications, experience and competencies.

and presentations will be scheduled for the Consultant to discuss the progress of key assignments as necessary. Deliverables of the consultancy will be approved by the Permanent Secretary to the DOE, or whoever he/she so delegates.

Prior to any execution of activities related to this Terms of Reference, the Department of Education, through the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) of the OECS SKIP, shall convene an inception meeting between the Consultant and the relevant focal points and key stakeholders with respect to this consultancy.

a. Client's Responsibility

On behalf of the DOE, the PIU of the OECS SKIP shall evaluate the quality of work delivered by the Consultant based on this TOR to ensure the quality and relevance of work being conducted, and based on this, shall issue a written project acceptance/approval, retention, or discontinuance. The following comprise the general expectations of the Client:

- Contract management by the PIU.
- Technical oversight and coordination by the PIU, in collaboration with the DOE, NSDC and SALCC to ensure acceptable quality of deliverables and adherence to agreed timelines.
- Access to all existing documents and repositories of relevance to the successful execution of this consultancy.
- 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. This includes the organization of the validation workshop.
- The PIU will collaborate with relevant stakeholders within the DOE and beneficiary institutions, to ensure the timely review and acceptance of the required reports submitted by the Consultant.
- The PIU will facilitate internal transportation, where necessary.
- Make payments based on approved deliverables.

b. Consultant's Responsibility

The Consultant shall provide information that indicates experience, educational/training qualifications and capacity to undertake the work outlined herein. The following are the general expectations from the Consultant:

- The Consultant shall submit all reports to the PIU within agreed timelines.
- The Consultant shall submit a clear work plan or the expected outputs, as well as ensure timely submission to the PIU for review.
- The Consultant shall be responsible for office space, equipment, materials, accommodation and office requirements.
- Execution of services in accordance with the laws, customs and practices endorsed by the DOE and the GOSL by extension.
- Commitment to treat with utmost confidentiality, all information and materials gathered and used relating to this engagement or the Client's business or operations.
- Maintain regular communication with the PIU to ensure the timely completion and quality of the aforementioned deliverables.

IX. Evaluation Criteria

The Consultant shall be selected based on the Individual Consultant Selection (ICS) method.