

Mid-term Evaluation

“From Innovation to Creation” Programme

Request for Proposal

Terms of Reference

Programme Information

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| Title | Innovation that scale the start-up ecosystem in Mediterranean countries |
| Region | Middle East and North Africa |
| Countries | Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia |
| Theme(s) | Capacity building, start-up, scale-up, advocacy |
| Target group(s) | Innovation support organizations, innovative start-ups |
| Duration | 01-02-2022 – 31-01-2026 |
| Donor(s) | European Commission |
| Date of opening the tender | 21 March 2024 |
| Last date for tender submission | 17 April 2024 |
| Last date for issuing clarification | 15 April 2024 |
| Lead implementer | SPARK |
| Website | https://spark.ngo/programme/from-innovation-to-creation/ |
| Application method | Email to tender_lebanon@spark-online.org |

1. Contracting authority – SPARK

SPARK supports higher education and entrepreneurship to empower young, ambitious people to lead their fragile and conflict-affected societies into prosperity. SPARK is a dynamic and growing, international not-for-profit development organisation with 100+ staff members, in more than 14 offices around the world.

SPARK creates pathways that give youth the tools they need to succeed in regions affected by conflict, climate crisis, and displacement. New ways to empower students and entrepreneurs to study, work and grow their own businesses.

2. Programme background

Through a four-year programme funded by the European Union, SPARK is strengthening innovation and startup ecosystems, together with two of its strategic partners, IACE (based in Tunisia) and Ruwwad (based in Jordan), and its local partners in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Tunisia. The programme aims to accelerate the current development trend towards

scaling and equipping ecosystems with the means to replicate their best practices. Furthermore, it focuses on enhancing the startup environment in the four countries through advocacy and regional exchange.

The overall objective of this programme is to strengthen the local start-up ecosystems and its actors in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Tunisia in order to support innovation, employment and economic growth.

The specific objectives are:

- To provide existing and emerging innovation support organisations (tech hubs, accelerators, incubators, university hubs, etc.) with capacities and opportunities to improve their services and exploit regional and EU dimensions of innovation;
- To support and promote the competitiveness of innovative initiatives and provide them with resources to mature, scale and internationalize;
- Start-up ecosystem actors active in changing policy and legislative framework based on best regional and EU practices.

3. Objective of the mid-term programme evaluation

The objective of this mid-term programme evaluation is to contribute to SPARK's learning and accountability processes, related to the programme's performance. The evaluation will cover the period from the programme's inception until the mid-term point, examining activities and outcomes related to innovation, employment and economic growth.

Evaluation elements and questions

The table below provides the specific elements and questions to be answered through this evaluation. Furthermore, the answers to all of these questions will also need to incorporate findings from an explicit analysis of the gender sensitivity and conflict sensitivity (do-no-harm principle) of the programme.

| Element | Scope | Questions |
|---------------|--|--|
| Relevance | The extent to which the programme objectives and design respond to its target groups and other stakeholder's needs, as well as its country's policies and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change. | How relevant is the programme to the needs of the target group(s) and startup ecosystem in the programme countries? |
| Coherence | The programme's compatibility with other interventions in the respective countries and sector(s). | How compatible are the programme's objectives and implementation with local policy frameworks and implemented programmes? |
| Effectiveness | The extent to which the programme is performing on its targets, including any differential results across different target groups. | To what extent is the programme on its way to achieving its intended results (outputs and outcomes), as per the targets set in its logframe? |
| Efficiency | The extent to which the programme is delivering results in an economical and timely way. | To what extent is the programme adapting to the shifting circumstances and needs within its local context? |

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| | | How efficiently is the programme budget being spent (value for money)? |
| Impact | The extent to which the programme is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level socioeconomic effects in the context in which it is implemented. | To what extent is the programme fostering, so far, a greater commitment to innovation within the countries and regions it operates? To what extent is the programme contributing so far to the maturity of the start-up ecosystem and its actors? |

4. Methodology

- a. **Desk research:** Examine project documents, reports, logframe and relevant data to understand the project's design, implementation, and achievements.
- b. **Key Stakeholder Interviews:** Conduct interviews with project staff and implementing partners to gather their perspectives on the programme's support and impact.
- c. **Focus Group Discussions:** Organize focus group interviews with Innovation Support Organizations (ISOs) and startups to facilitate interactive conversations and in-depth exploration of their experiences.

Travel for field data collection will be required to Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia. Data collection from Palestine can be conducted online, depending on the evolving situation in the country. On-site and online data collection can be combined in discussion with SPARK.

| Data collection method | Targeted group | Representative sample size ¹ |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Desk research | Relevant project documentation and logframe | N/A |
| Key Stakeholder Interviews | Partner representatives & trainers | 12 |
| | SPARK staff (Programme Officers) | 2 |
| Sub-total | | 14 |
| Focus Group Discussions | FGD Innovation Support Organisations | 6 |
| | FGDs startups | 6 |
| Sub-total | | 12 |

5. Deliverables:

1. Evaluation plan, having the following format
 - Introduction and background
 - Methodology, including foreseen methodological/context limitations
 - Design
 - Detailed planning for field data collection (survey, KIs and FGDs)

¹ Across the four countries, with each country having its own minimum target

- Risks and mitigation measures
- Detailed work plan

2. Final mid-term evaluation report²

- Abbreviations
- Background
- Executive Summary
- Scope of Evaluation
- Methodology
- Findings of the evaluation, which correspond directly to each evaluation element/question mentioned above
- Recommendations
- Conclusions

All submitted reports and their annexes should be provided in English, with original languages applicable only for filled data collection forms. These forms have to be accompanied by an English translation.

6. Timeframe of the programme evaluation

The evaluation is planned to take place between Q2 2024 and Q3 2024.

The following table provides all tasks that have to be conducted for this evaluation, the responsibilities for conducting these tasks and the deadlines for these. It has to be highlighted that these deadlines are indicative, and they will be confirmed in SPARK's approval of the evaluation plan mentioned below.

| Task | Responsibility | Deadline |
|---|----------------|--|
| Kick off meeting with consultant(s) | SPARK | 1 st week of May |
| Sharing of existing programme documentation | SPARK | 1 st week of May |
| Development of evaluation plan (Inception Report) and submission to SPARK | Consultant(s) | 2 nd week of May |
| Review of draft evaluation plan (Inception Report). | SPARK | 3 rd week of May |
| Finalisation of evaluation plan and submission to SPARK | Consultant(s) | 4 th week of May |
| Approval of evaluation plan | SPARK | 1 st week of June |
| Stakeholders' logistical arrangements for field data collection | SPARK | 2 nd week of June |
| Field data collection | Consultant(s) | 3 rd week of June until the 2 nd |

² SPARK will provide the template for the report

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| | | week of July |
| Analysis of collected data and existing programme documentation | Consultant(s) | 3 rd week of July |
| Presentation of preliminary findings to SPARK, before leaving the field | Consultant(s) | 4 th week of July |
| Development of draft evaluation report and submission to SPARK | Consultant(s) | 1 st and 2 nd week of August |
| Review of draft version(s) of the evaluation report | SPARK | 3 rd week of August |
| Finalisation of evaluation report and submission to SPARK | Consultant(s) | 4 th week of August |
| Approval of final evaluation report | SPARK | 1 st week of September |
| Presentation of key findings to SPARK, local partners focal points and donor focal points | Consultant(s) | 1 st week of September |
| Publication of final evaluation report in SPARK's website | SPARK | 2 nd week of September |

7. Payment Scheme for the mid-term programme evaluation

The payments for this evaluation will be processed through the receipt of invoices and upon submission of deliverables, according to the following scheme:

| Deliverable | Payment |
|---|------------------------------|
| Evaluation Plan approved by SPARK | 30% of total contracting sum |
| Draft Evaluation Report submitted to SPARK | 30% of total contracting sum |
| Presentation of key findings to SPARK, local partners focal points and donor focal points | 30% of total contracting sum |
| Upon finalization of all activities | 10% of total contracting sum |

8. Expertise required for the mid-term programme evaluation

The consultant(s) who will conduct this assignment should be an (a team of) experienced and independent consultant(s), freelance or from a consultancy organisation, with at least the following expertise:

- Advanced university degree in International Development, Social Sciences, Business Administration or any other related field;
- A minimum of 7 years of professional experience in leading and conducting programme evaluations;
- Experience within the international development or humanitarian aid sector;
- Experience with the startup ecosystem, capacity building and advocacy will be considered an advantage;
- Experience with programmatic/organisational learning will be considered an advantage;

- Demonstrated experience in the Middle East and North Africa region(s);
- Advanced research, analytical and reporting skills;
- Advanced (intercultural) communication skills;
- Fluent in English (both reading and writing);
- Fluency in Arabic and French will be considered an advantage.

9. Schedule & Deadline for Submission

The deadline for submission of the offer is **5:00 p.m. (local time) on 17 April, 2024**. Late offers will not be accepted.

| Activity | Date |
|--|----------------|
| Request for Proposal | 21 March, 2024 |
| Deadline for request for any clarifications from SPARK | 8 April, 2024 |
| Last date on which clarifications are issued by SPARK | 15 April, 2024 |
| Deadline for submission of Proposal (receiving date, not sending date) | 17 April 2024 |
| Notification of award to the successful bidder | 24 April, 2024 |
| Award Contract | TBC |

10. Selection Criteria:

SPARK is committed to conducting a fair and transparent proposal process and ensuring that all bidders are treated and evaluated equally throughout the proposal process. Bidder responses will be weighted into four categories: Essential Criteria, Capability Criteria, and Commercial Criteria.

1. Essential Criteria
 - Possess legitimate business premises.
 - Registered for trading and tax.
 - Not a banned party or on any government blacklists.
2. Capability Criteria (60%) (Any technical proposal scoring less than 3 out of 5 points will be automatically disqualified from the competition.)
 - Technical Proposal (30%)
 - Knowledge of the startup ecosystem (5%)
 - Previous experience in programme evaluations (15%)
 - Service time-lead (10%)
3. Commercial Criteria (40%)
 - Financial proposal (40%)

11. Application for the mid-term Programme Evaluation

The deadline for submission of applications is 17 April 2024.

All applications should include the following:

- Cover letter (maximum 1 page), confirming the candidate(s) availability during the duration of this evaluation, as mentioned above;
- CVs of all evaluation team members, including three references with contact details;
- Three letters of recommendation from past clients in similar projects;
- Technical proposal, which should clarify explicitly the following:
 - Candidate(s) understanding of the evaluation's ToR
 - Preliminary methodology/work plan
 - Financial Proposal in EUR, which should include consultancy fees that **include VAT** and any other applicable fees and taxes and international and in-country travel and accommodation costs, with a breakdown of days*fees per deliverable;
 - The company registration certificate or business license;
 - Tax clearance letter.

Interested consultants or firms should submit their applications to: tender_lebanon@spark-online.org

Further information may be requested, and questions may also be discussed with SPARK by sending an email to tender_lebanon@spark-online.org

Please note that incomplete applications will not be considered. Due to the large volume of applications we receive, we cannot respond to every applicant individually. There may be a delay between the application deadline and the moment we contact selected applicants. If you have not received a reply, we regret to inform you that we have continued with other applicants.