



**Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova – Republic of Kosovo
Qeveria – Vlada – Government**

Ministria e Arsimit dhe Shkencës/Ministarstvo Obrazovanja i Nauke/Ministry of Education and Science

PROJECT ID: (P179656)

PROJECT: Early Childhood Education and Care for Kosovo's Human Capital Project (Sub-component 3.3. Support for the participation of vulnerable children in the Voucher Program)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Recruitment of the Independent Verification Agent (IVA) to verify the achievement of Performance Based Conditions (PCBs) under the Voucher Program

BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) is currently implementing the Voucher Program, a sub-component of Early Childhood Education and Care for Kosovo's Human Capital Project. The Voucher Program aims to increase access to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services for selected community groups. The Program covers early childhood education and transportation costs, allowing families to enroll their children in kindergarten and enabling parents to engage in full-time work.

The Program is funded by a performance-based grant from the World Bank's Early Learning Partnership Multi Donor Trust Fund, with funding contingent upon MES meeting agreed performance targets. The Program is implemented by MES through its Division on Private Pre University Education (DPPE).

The implementation period spans from December 2024 until June 2027 and will finance early childhood education and transportation expenses for up to 400 children per year. The Voucher Program does not cover public preschool institutions or alternative forms that are fully financed by public funds. Therefore, eligible institutions include private preschool institutions, preschool

institutions in public-private partnerships, and other alternative forms of organization in accordance with the legislation in force. As of now, the program is operational in 47 licensed preschool institutions across 15 participating municipalities (Prishtinë, Pejë, Ferizaj, Mitrovicë, Gjakovë, Prizren, Lipjan, Drenas, Suharekë, Klinë, Fushë Kosovë, Viti, Vushtrri, Gjiilan, and Shtime).

OBJECTIVE OF ASSIGNMENT

MES is seeking the services of an experienced entity to serve as the Independent Verification Agent (IVA) for the Voucher Program. The main objective of the IVA is to verify the achievement of the Performance Based Conditions (PCBs) under the Program where disbursement of funds depends on increasing enrolment among targeted community groups. Each percentage point increase from the baseline (2.33%) yields an allocation of USD 78,750, with an annual target increase of 8%, capped at USD 630,000. To meet this target, approximately 400 children must complete six months of preschool attendance yearly. The assignment will include all municipalities covered by the Program (currently 15), subject to expansion following MES's annual participation call. The assignment will cover the period from April 2025 until June 2027.

Responsibilities:

The IVA will verify the achievements of the PBC targets and confirm voucher distribution (including transportation) and child attendance against criteria already established in the *Project Appraisal Document (PAD)* and the *Guidelines on the functioning of the Voucher Program*. To this end, the independent agent will use all available means to form its opinion.

Specifically, the IVA will be responsible to:

- Review the project documents as well as the relevant guidelines and frameworks to fully understand the scope of the services including financing agreement, project appraisal document, project operations manual, verification protocol (appendix 1), relevant legal and regulatory frameworks for early childhood education and care and any other applicable guidelines suggested by MES.
- Develop a detailed work plan including key activities and milestones, responsible entities, staffing arrangements and verification schedule;
- Develop a detailed methodology to evaluate the PBC targets, based on the Verification Protocol provided in Appendix 1, in order to produce credible evidence that allows for disbursement calculation. The verification methodology should include sampling methodology, verification procedures, evidence requirements, triangulation of evidence and means of verification, documentation standards, risk assessment and quality assurance arrangements, as well as guidelines for respective implementation;
- Develop, test and update all data collection instruments, interview guides, templates and other tools required for the verification process in line with the relevant guidelines and frameworks;

- Establish internal quality assurance procedures, including documentation checks, supervisory and peer review of findings and verification of calculations before report submission;
- Assess the level of achievement of the PBC targets in line with the Verification Protocol;
- Calculate the disbursement amount associated with the level of achievement of the PBC targets as set by the Verification Protocol; In the event of non-achievement of objectives, identify the main obstacles and constraints hindering progress towards achieving the PCBs targets; and formulate plausible recommendations and solutions to overcome the identified obstacles;
- Collaborate with MES and the World Bank as necessary to review and collect data including updates and local spot-check findings;
- Prepare the annual verification report presenting: (a) an overview of the verification activities undertaken to verify the accuracy of the results (data) reported by MES and participating ECEIs responsible for providing the results; (b) the verified results for the PCBs and the recommended disbursement level for them; (c) highlights of any major discrepancies between the reported and verified targets. (if any) and explanations for these discrepancies; (d) all data required under the Verification Protocol; e) a critical analysis of why the results obtained for the PCBs may be higher or lower than the targets; and (d) recommendations for achieving the PCB targets;
- Participate in the conclusions of the verification and present them to the MES and the World Bank;
- Participate, facilitate and/or support program development activities such as workshops, meetings and other consultation activities;
- Conduct other tasks that serve to improved implementation of the vouchers program.

The indicators to be verified targets are presented in the table in Appendix 1 “Verification Protocol” specifying the PCBs, the timeframe of verification, the amounts allocated, the formula, indicators, the data sources, and the verification procedures.

Given the beneficiary group, IVA must apply internationally recognized ethical standards when collecting and handling data involving children and vulnerable households. These shall include informed consent procedures, confidentiality, secure storage of personal data, child safeguarding principles, referral procedures where protection concerns are identified, and compliance with applicable national legislation on personal data protection.

Expected Results:

- The verification system is established, including an approved verification methodology and procedure, data collection instruments, sampling strategy, and quality assurance arrangement.
- The achievement of each PBC target is independently verified and communicated through dedicated reports through an evidence based verification process, providing reliable

information to support decision making with regards to disbursement amounts, risk mitigation measures and improved practices for the voucher program.

- Lessons learned are capitalized on and adjustments may be proposed for verification activities in subsequent years.
- Administrative data quality is assessed and documented, including recommendations for strengthening data collection and reporting systems.
- Risks, implementation bottlenecks, lessons learned, and recommendations for improving future implementation of the Voucher Program are documented.

1. Deliverables

Initially, the Independent Verification Agent (IVA) shall submit an Inception Report including a summary of the documentation review, detailed verification methodology, work plan, and implementation timeline for the planned tasks.

The second deliverable shall include tools, templates and guidelines, as described in the TORs. Such instruments shall be reviewed and adjusted periodically based on the lessons learnt.

Following the commencement of the assignment, the IVA shall submit Annual Verification Reports to the World Bank and MES, in accordance with the Verification Protocol set out in **Appendix 1** and the TOR outlined above. These reports shall present the results achieved by the IVA in carrying out the tasks outlined under the **Expected Results** section.

Each report shall: (i) present the verification results; (ii) describe the methodology applied; (iii) identify the institutions visited, individuals consulted, and documents reviewed; (iv) summarize any discrepancies identified and the corresponding clarifications; and (v) provide conclusions and recommendations. The reports shall serve as the basis for the World Bank team to determine the achievement of the Performance-Based Conditions (PBCs) and the corresponding disbursement or reimbursement as well as improve implementation mechanisms of the voucher program.

List of concrete deliverables described below:

No.	Deliverable	Description	Indicative Timeline
1	Inception Report	A comprehensive report presenting the IVA's understanding of the assignment, summary of the documentation review, detailed verification methodology, work plan, implementation timeline, and any initial observations or assumptions relevant to the verification process.	Within 4 weeks of contract signature

2	Verification Tools, Templates and Guidelines	Development and submission of all verification instruments required for implementation, including data collection tools, templates, checklists, reporting formats, and verification guidelines. These shall be updated and refined throughout the assignment, as necessary, based on implementation experience and lessons learned.	Within 8 weeks following approval of the Inception Report; updated as required
3	Annual Verification Report – Year 1	Verification report prepared in accordance with the agreed Verification Protocol. The report shall present the verification results, methodology applied, institutions visited, stakeholders consulted, documents reviewed, discrepancies identified and their resolution, conclusions, and recommendations.	Annually: 2026
4	Annual Verification Report – Year 2	Verification report prepared in accordance with the agreed Verification Protocol. The report shall present the verification results, methodology applied, institutions visited, stakeholders consulted, documents reviewed, discrepancies identified and their resolution, conclusions, and recommendations.	Annually: 2027
5	Final Assignment Report	A consolidated report summarising the implementation of the assignment, key findings across all verification cycles, recurring issues, lessons learned, recommendations for strengthening implementation mechanisms, and any proposed improvements to the verification process.	Upon completion of the assignment

GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS

- The application entity should demonstrate at least 5 years of institutional experience in conducting third-party verification, program evaluation, or compliance monitoring of public funds, donor-funded, or results-based programs.
- Demonstrate prior experience working on projects in the education sector, early childhood education and care (ECEC), social protection, voucher-based or conditional financing schemes.
- Have the operational capacity to conduct field verification, including site visits, spot checks, beneficiary verification, and random sampling across multiple municipalities.
- Experience in programs addressing children's rights, child protection, or advocacy for equitable access to education and early childhood services shall be considered an asset.

Minimum requirements for the proposed team:

The proposed team of the IVA should possess expertise and skills in the field of evaluation, verification and reporting, with relevant experience in delivering the IVA tasks.

Team Leader

- Advanced degree (Master's or higher) in social sciences, education, public policy, statistics, or a related field.
- At least 5 years of professional experience in program implementation, monitoring and evaluation, or compliance assessment.
- Proven experience in working with public institutions on donor funded projects and delivering services for public entities.
- Proven experience leading verification assignments for multi-stakeholder programs preferably results-based or performance-linked programs.
- Previous experience with the World Bank or other donor-funded programs, is considered an asset.
- Previous experience as an Independent Verification Agencies (IVA) is an asset.
- Experience in children's rights, child protection, or child-focused advocacy, particularly in early childhood education or programs targeting vulnerable children is considered an asset.

Data Analyst

- Bachelor's degree in social sciences, economics, statistics, data science or related field.
- At least 2 years of experience in data collection, validation, analysis, and sampling methodologies, including verification of programmatic or administrative data. Certifications on monitoring, evaluation and learning will be considered as an asset.
- Demonstrated proficiency in data analysis tools, such as SPSS, Stata, R, or other relevant statistical software.
- Previous experience with the World Bank or other donor-funded programs is considered an asset.

- Experience in children’s rights, child protection, or child-focused advocacy, particularly in early childhood education or programs targeting vulnerable children is considered an asset.

Field Specialist

- Bachelor’s degree in social sciences, education, or related field.
- At least 2 years of experience in education programs, preferably early childhood education, youth education, working with social assistance beneficiaries and/or vulnerable groups.
- Experience conducting site visits, verification, beneficiary interviews, and compliance assessments.
- Previous experience with the World Bank or other donor-funded programs is considered an asset.
- Experience in children’s rights, child protection, or child-focused advocacy, particularly in early childhood education or programs targeting vulnerable children is considered an asset.

ENGAGEMENT PERIOD

The Independent Verification Agent (IVA) will be engaged for up to 75 working days over the period September 2026 - September 2027. The contract includes the possibility of extension, subject to satisfactory performance.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Experienced and qualified firms will be selected according to the World Bank’s Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers’ (the Regulations), based on the selection method for **Consultant’s Qualification based Selection (CQS)**.

- The applications will be evaluated based on the firm’s relevant experience and qualifications of the proposed key experts.
- The maximum score is 100 points.
- The firm obtaining the highest technical qualification score will be invited to submit the combined Technical and Financial Proposal

Criteria	Maximum points	Evaluation method
Specific experience of the institution relevant to the assignment	30	The evaluation will consider the applicant’s demonstrated experience in assignments relevant to the IVA scope of work. Higher scores will be awarded to institutions demonstrating a greater number of relevant assignments.
Team Leader qualifications and competence for the	30	The evaluation will be based on academic qualifications, years of relevant professional experience, and experience in similar

Assignment		assignments. Points will be awarded as follows: • More than 10 years of relevant professional experience and significant experience leading verification/M&E assignments – 30 points • 8–10 years of relevant professional experience and experience leading similar assignments – 25 points • 5–8 years of relevant professional experience and experience in similar assignments – 20 points • Meets the minimum requirement of 5 years of relevant experience – 15 points • Does not meet the minimum requirement – 0 points
Data Analyst qualifications and competence for the Assignment	20	The evaluation will be based on academic qualifications and years of relevant experience. Points will be awarded as follows: • More than 5 years of relevant experience in data analysis and verification of programmatic/administrative data – 20 points • 3–5 years of relevant experience – 15 points • 2–3 years of relevant experience – 10 points Does not meet the minimum requirement – 0 points
Field Specialist qualifications and competence for the Assignment	20	The evaluation will be based on academic qualifications and years of relevant experience. Points will be awarded as follows: • More than 5 years of relevant experience and extensive field verification experience – 20 points • 3–5 years of relevant experience – 15 points • 2–3 years of relevant experience – 10

		points Does not meet the minimum requirement – 0 points
Total	100	

The evaluation will be based on the information provided in the Expression of Interest, including the applicant's relevant institutional experience and the qualifications and experience of the proposed key experts. Higher scores will be awarded to applicants demonstrating experience exceeding the minimum requirements and having more relevant experience directly related to the Assignment.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Interested parties should submit their applications to the address no later than the date **24th of August 2026, 16:00 hours local time** in a sealed envelope.

Ministry of Education and Science,
Address: St. Agim Ramadani ,10000 Prishtina
Office: Archive Office No. 4, Ground Floor

The application package must include:

- 1) Registration Certificate;
- 2) Fiscal Number Certificate;
- 3) Financial and audit reports for the last fiscal year (applicable only for NGOs);
- 4) At least three (3) reference letters from previous donors, stakeholders, or clients. In case the reference letters cannot be obtained three final reports/deliverables and agreement proofs for similar services, detailing geographical coverage, outcomes and impact shall be attached.
- 5) Certificate of No Debt to Tax Administration of Kosovo (not older than 1 month);
- 6) Updated CVs of the proposed key experts, clearly indicating their role in the Assignment, relevant professional experience, academic qualifications, and relevant certificates

Proposals shall remain valid for 90 days after the deadline for submission.

Appendix. 1

Performance Based Conditions (PBCs)

Period	Period Definition
Period 1	The first year of Project Implementation
Period 2	The second year of Project Implementation
Period 3	The third year of Project Implementation
Period 4	The fourth year of Project Implementation

Baseline	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4
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Increase in enrolment and attendance by vulnerable children of childcare services through voucher mechanism (Percentage)

Children of 3-5 years old enrolled in childcare representing families on record in SAS [104]/ All children of 3-5 years representing families on record in SAS [4469]. Currently 2.33% Guidelines for Voucher Program identifying the targeting criteria, transfer mechanism, and monitoring procedure developed and enacted. Childcare Service Providers participating in the Voucher Program have received training. % point increase over initial baseline Social Assistance Scheme (SAS) enrolment ensured by vouchers and at least 6 months attendance per a given year of 3-5 year old vulnerable children in childcare. Each % point will bring USD 78,750 PBC Target: 8%. % point increase over initial baseline Social Assistance Scheme (SAS) enrolment ensured by vouchers and at least 6 months attendance per a given year of 3-5 year old vulnerable children in childcare. Each % point will bring USD 78,750 PBC Target: 8%. % point increase over initial baseline Social Assistance Scheme (SAS) enrolment ensured by vouchers and at least 6 months attendance per a given year of 3-5 year old vulnerable children in childcare. Each % point will bring USD 78,750 PBC Target: 8%.

0.00	110,000.00	630,000.00	630,000.00	630,000.00
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PBC allocation	2,000,000.00	As a % of Total Financing Amount	100.0%
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Verification Performance Conditions	Protocol: Based
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Increase in enrolment and attendance of vulnerable children in childcare services through voucher mechanism (Percentage)

Period 1

Formula Enactment of the voucher scheme guidelines will be rewarded with US\$110,000

Description Guidelines for voucher program identifying the targeting criteria, transfer mechanism, and monitoring procedure developed and enacted in Kosovo.

Data source/ Agency MES reporting on the completion

Verification Entity Not applicable

Procedure For period 1 the Bank team will verify the outcome. The MES and/or Ministry of Labour will approve and publish the administrative instructions [or regulation] on the implementation of the voucher scheme, announcing the program launch date. These guidelines shall be in form and substance satisfactory to the World Bank. MES submits to the Bank the PBC achievement notification and approved guidelines, regulations and administrative instructions.

Period 2-4

Formula Each percentage point increase will receive US\$78,750.00 allocation per year with a yearly target of 8% and yearly upper limit of US\$630,000

Description Percentage point increase over baseline enrollment of 3-5 year-old children that are on SAS ensured by vouchers and at least 6 months attendance per a given year

Data source/ Agency Monthly and annual statistics on enrollment, attendance and transportation of 3-5 year old children on SAS (for at least 6 months) is provided by ECEC centers participating in the voucher program. This information will be aggregated by MES. In addition, MES will report on the annual number of enrolled children from the social assistance scheme per each age group from 3 to 5. The Ministry of Labour will report the data on overall children from families receiving social assistance. Moreover, the Guidelines on the functioning of the Voucher Program provide further information on the procedures of allocation, transport and overall the work of the Program.

Verification Entity Independent Verification Agency selected and appointed by MES

Procedure The project will establish an independent verification mechanism to validate the achievement of the annual PBC targets and confirm the voucher distribution and child attendance in compliance with the agreed Guidelines on the functioning of the Voucher Program.

- The verification procedures will include review and analysis of reports and evidence, verification of a random representative sample of beneficiary families, site visits and spot checks, confirming voucher distribution and child attendance. (At least 20 percent of the benefiting families).
- The third-party verification agency will verify the eligibility of service providers, enrollment and attendance of all target children for the whole duration of the Program, and their eligibility per the social assistance scheme. Although the verification process encompasses all participants, the PBC is calculated based strictly on children who have fulfilled the six-month attendance requirement.
- The IVA will conduct site visits and spot checks across different municipalities where participating ECEIs are located to conduct the verification of PBCs
- MES will report based on ECEC centers reporting (with monthly progress of child development and spot checks by the local communities) and shares the report with the VA and the Bank.

The VA will verify the suitability of transport arrangements provided by ECEIs and families as per the Guidelines on the functioning of the Voucher Program (from all data sources).

- VA prepares the final verification report at the end of the academic year and shares it for MES and WB review.
- MES submits the PBC achievement notification to the Bank accompanied by the final verification report.
- The WB has the right to request additional information or verification conducted by the MES.

Indicators that must be verified The indicators requiring verification are as following: 1) percentage (%) of increase of beneficiaries compared to the initial number of the baseline; 2) percentage (%) of children registered through the Voucher Program and who have continued education for 6 months; 3) percentage (%) of children registered through the Voucher Program and who have continued education for longer than 6 months; 4) percentage (%) of children who have dropped out of the Program; 5) percentage (%) of parents indicating that they are satisfied with the Voucher Program, 6) percentage (%) of ECEI participating in the Voucher Program, and 7) percentage (%) of children with disabilities who are beneficiaries, 8) percentage of children living in rural areas 9) other indicators as relevant.

