Request for information (RFI)

Reference: RFI/2026/65374

Project Title: Development of Comprehensive Strategic Business Plan, Commercialization Strategy, Operational Costing Model, and Digital Management Systems for the Armauer Hansen Research Institute (AHRI)

Beneficiary: Armauer Hansen Research Institute (AHRI), Ministry of Health, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Facilitating Agency: United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Horn of Africa Multi-Country Office (HAMCO)

Issue Date: 2026-11-04

Closing Date: 2026-11-13

1. PURPOSE OF THIS REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

This Request for Information (RFI) is issued exclusively to identify qualified international consulting firms, specialized health-sector advisory companies, and international corporate strategy consortia with demonstrated global experience in health research and development (R&D), laboratory facility management, and commercializing public health research institutes and contract research organizations (CROs). Interested international entities must possess a proven track record in formulating Comprehensive Commercial Business Plans, Service/Activity-Based Operational Costing Models, Regional Market Linkage and Marketing Strategies (preferably across Africa and low- and middle-income country contexts), and Digital Laboratory and Enterprise Management Frameworks for high-containment biomedical and research institutions.

This RFI does not constitute a formal solicitation or a commitment to award a contract.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

2.1 About AHRI

The Armauer Hansen Research Institute (AHRI) was established in 1970 in Addis Ababa through the collaborative initiative of Norwegian and Swedish Save the Children organizations, seconded by the Ministry of Health of Ethiopia. For over five decades, AHRI has stood as a pioneer in biomedical, clinical, epidemiological, and translational health research across the Horn of Africa, contributing to the global fight against tuberculosis, leprosy, malaria, and emerging infectious pathogens.

2.2 Facility Transformation & UNOPS Collaboration

Under a multi-million-dollar health sector investment supported by the Government of Ethiopia, the World Bank, and UNOPS, AHRI's campus and laboratories have undergone a comprehensive physical, technological, and environmental transformation. UNOPS has managed the strategic procurement and installation of cutting-edge research machinery, live laboratory research animal colonies, an advanced biomedical wastewater treatment plant, workforce development, and digital learning infrastructure.

AHRI's newly expanded capital asset through the procurement of specialized equipment which includes, but is not limited to:

1. Bioequivalence (BE) Center: Including a dedicated 40-bed Phase I Clinical Trial Unit and Ethiopia's first specialized Bioanalytical Laboratory.
2. Clinical Trial Unit (Phases I–III): GCP-compliant infrastructure supporting full clinical trial execution.
3. Pre-Clinical & Animal Research Facility: Engineered to international standards housing controlled breeding colonies.

4. Contract Research Organization (CRO) Services: Contract research, technology transfer, and diagnostic incubation.
5. Biorepository & Biobank: Automated ultra-low temperature liquid nitrogen preservation infrastructure.
6. Tier-III Data Center & Bioinformatics Hub: Digital analytics, High-Performance Computing (HPC), and secure health data management.
7. Learning & Incubation Complex: Modern training suites, smart auditoriums, and laboratory bench attachment facilities.
8. Molecular Biology, Genomics, and Immunology
9. Microbiology and Vector Biology
10. Traditional and Modern Medicine R&D
11. Diagnostics and Vaccine Development:
12. Pharmaceutical Research and Development
13. Establishment of an advanced biomedical workshop
14. Advanced microscopy and imaging centre

The current facility has the capacity to serve not only the researchers working in the institute but also the country. It has also the capacity to serve as a regional hub in some of its facilities like bioequivalence, animal research facility and imaging center.

2.3 The Strategic Need

While AHRI possesses cutting-edge physical assets and scientific expertise, preliminary estimates identify an unmonetized annual gross revenue potential conservative estimate indicates that an approximately USD 3.12 million across core directorates can be generated. To unlock this value, AHRI requires a robust, Business and Operational Plan to transform its operations from a government funding/grant-dependent model into a self-sustaining, commercially viable scientific institution.

3. OBJECTIVES & DETAILED SCOPE OF WORK (SOW)

The primary objective of this assignment is to develop an actionable, comprehensive 10 Year Strategic Business and Operational Plan that will transform Armauer Hansen Research Institute (AHRI) into Africa's leading health research, development, and innovation hub, with global recognition, financial sustainability, and measurable impact. The selected firm will design a strategic roadmap that optimizes the utilization of AHRI's specialized scientific infrastructure, establishes rigorous cost recovery and fee-for-service frameworks, expands regional market linkages across IGAD, Africa CDC, global networks, and modernizes administrative and laboratory operations via digital management systems.

Area 1: Comprehensive Baseline Assessment, Asset Inventory & Service Cataloging
The consulting firm will conduct an exhaustive baseline review and institutional asset audit. This includes auditing all newly established and specialized facilities specifically the 40-bed Bioequivalence (BE) Center, the pre-clinical animal breeding facility, the 20 m^3/day Membrane Bioreactor (MBR) liquid waste treatment plant, the biorepository and biobank, 40 biomedical and pharmaceutical laboratories, well furnished and equipped training center, and the modular Tier III data center. Based on this asset/infrastructure assessment, the consultant will compile a complete, standardized catalog of AHRI's commercializable services across all technical directorates, detailing capabilities in Phase I–III clinical trials, bioanalytical chemistry, physicochemical testing, contract research (CRO), method validation, laboratory bench attachments, diagnostic incubation, and scientific consultancy.

Area 2: Organizational Architecture, Staffing & Human Capital Strategy
The consultant will review AHRI's existing organizational structure and design an optimized operational staffing framework required to manage commercial services delivery alongside public research mandates. This involves defining staffing requirements, job profiles, and key performance indicators (KPIs) for specialized technical personnel, regulatory quality assurance officers, commercial business development managers, and laboratory technicians. In addition, the firm will design a sustainable, performance-based incentive scheme and talent retention framework to recruit and retain top scientific talent and prevent attrition in high-demand disciplines.

Area 3: Market Demand Analysis
The consultant will perform an in-depth market landscape assessment to identify, segment, and quantify addressable customer groups. The market demand analysis should reaffirm/refine the feasibility of AHRI's self-financing aspiration. At a minimum, the customer and market analysis should encompass local, regional, and global laboratories, R&D institutions, biotechnology firms, academic institutions, multilateral global health funders, and regulatory bodies.

Area 4: Unit Costing, Tariff Structuring & Financial Sustainability Modeling
Building upon AHRI's preliminary gross revenue estimate of $3.12M annually, the consultant will validate the estimateusing service-level demand, capacity, utilization, pricing, operating costs, and realistic market assumptions . This analysis must account for all direct and indirect cost drivers, including but not limited to: specialized reagents, single-use consumables, electricity and utility overheads, technical labor, waste decontamination, depreciation, and recurring equipment maintenance. The consultant will establish competitive, market-benchmarked pricing schedules and fee-for-service tariffs tailored to differentiated client tiers, such as private commercial clients, public sector programs, and donor-funded academic research. Finally, the firm will model multi-year revenue, operating cashflow, and reinvestment projections under conservative, moderate, and aggressive growth scenarios over

a 10-year operational horizon. This should strictly consider a resource limited setup which can be challenged by supplier shortage, limited trained human power…

Area 5: Digitalization, Laboratory Information Systems & Management Modernization
The consultant will develop a comprehensive digital transformation roadmap to transition AHRI from legacy manual workflows to modern, automated research and administrative operations. The roadmap will define functional and technical architectural specifications for an enterprise-level Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS), an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) platform covering procurement, asset inventory, and billing, and an integrated Management Information System (MIS) with executive performance dashboards. The proposed digital architecture shall ensure end-to-end data integrity, regulatory traceability, automated invoicing, real-time consumable stock tracking, and international compliance with Good Laboratory Practice (GLP) and Good Clinical Practice (GCP) standards. The consultant needs to consider integration (coordination) of available digital systems, including government digital systems.

Area 6: Implementation Roadmap, Legal Structuring & Risk Management
The consultant shall develop a phased, implementation plan that clearly outlines strategic milestones, resource allocations, and operational deliverables across the 10 years horizon. The consultant shall also review existing regulatory, statutory, and institutional frameworks governing public research institutes in Ethiopia to recommend compliant operating modalities for commercial revenue generation, foreign exchange management, and internal revenue retention. In addition, the consultant shall assess alignment of Ethiopia's regulatory framework vis-a-vis recognized international standards and requirements. Lastly, the consultant will produce a comprehensive risk management matrix with concrete mitigation strategies addressing critical operational vulnerabilities, including foreign currency volatility, supply chain disruptions for imported laboratory reagents, vendor accreditation hurdles, regulatory approval delays with authorities such as the EFDA, and local utility fluctuations.

Area 7: Marketing, Networking, Communications and Resource Mobilization Strategy
The consultant will develop a comprehensive growth and sustainability strategy to position AHRI as a premier continental center of excellence and transition it toward long-term financial self-reliance through diversified blended financing. The firm will establish an international brand architecture, design modern digital and scientific dissemination channels, and develop high-impact investment collateral tailored to biotech enterprises, global health financiers, and philanthropic partners. In addition, the consultant will formulate an outreach and business development strategy to establish institutional partnerships with continental bodies such as Africa CDC and IGAD.

4. DESIRED COMPANY PROFILE & QUALIFICATIONS

Responding consulting entities or joint ventures must demonstrate:

1. Proven Track Record: Minimum 10 years of demonstrable international or regional experience in corporate strategic planning, commercialization of research infrastructure, health-sector business modeling, or CRO operational establishment.
2. Biomedical & Laboratory Acumen: Direct experience working with clinical research centers, bioequivalence laboratories, pharmaceutical manufacturing industries, or academic health institutes.
3. Regional Knowledge: Deep familiarity with African health market dynamics, EFDA/WHO/ICH regulatory compliance environments, Africa CDC priorities, and the Horn of Africa business context.
4. Multidisciplinary Team: Roster of experts in health economics, commercial costing/tariffs, laboratory operations, clinical research regulations (GCP/GLP), digital healthcare ERP/LIMS architecture, human resources, and marketing/business development.

5. INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESPONSE SUBMISSION

Interested firms are invited to submit an Expression of Information containing the following:

Section A: Corporate Profile & Relevant Experience

- Brief company overview, legal registration status, and physical location(s).
- Descriptions of at least 3 similar assignments executed in the past 6 years (especially those involving health institutions, laboratory commercialization, or public-private models in Africa or emerging markets).

Section B: Technical Approach & Methodology Commentary

- High-level commentary on how the firm would structure the work across the 7 areas detailed above.
- Proposed approach to unit costing for complex clinical trials and bioequivalence procedures.
- Proposed strategy for market penetration across the IGAD region and Africa CDC ecosystems.

Section C: Key Expert Capabilities

- CV summaries or capability profiles of key experts (Lead Health Economist, Clinical Research Strategist, Laboratory Systems Expert, Business Transformation Consultant).

Section D: Market Feedback & Budgetary Expectations

- Non-binding indicative duration (estimated calendar months required to execute the full assignment).
- Non-binding rough order of magnitude (ROM) budgetary range for delivering such an assignment, preferably for each of the 7 areas of work.

- Technical recommendations or identified risks regarding the proposed scope.

6. SUBMISSION DETAILS & INQUIRIES Electronic PDF document, maximum 25 pages (excluding annexes and corporate brochures).

➔ For companies not registered with the UN Global Marketplace (UNGM) it is mandatory to do so in order to be able to do business with UNOPS. The UN Global marketplace is a database of active and potential suppliers available to all UN and World Bank procurement personnel, and is the main supplier database of more than 20 UN organizations. To register go to www.ungm.org, click on "REGISTER NOW" or on Registration drop down and select "Register as Supplier".

➔ Prospective vendors should provide the documentation listed below. Kindly fill out all requested forms and upload them directly to their corresponding Document Checklist section within the UNOPS eSourcing portal prior to the submission deadline.

- Budgetary Expectation/ Price
- Company Profile
- Key Personnel CVs or Key Expert Capabilities
- Previous Experience Form
- Technical Approach and Methodology