



Open Call for Consulting Services

Title:	Level UP: Regional Gaming Industry Catalyst Programme
RCC Department:	Programme Department
Duration:	July 2025 – June 2026
Application Deadline:	21 July 2025 by 12:00CET
Reference Number	053-025
Eligible:	Consulting companies, consortia of individual experts or individual experts

TERMS OF REFERENCE:

I. BACKGROUND

The Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025-2028 (CRM 2.0) is a regionally-owned framework based on the EU rules and standards to consolidate and enhance competitiveness and dismantle barriers. It is a catalyst for deeper regional economic integration and a stepping stone towards the EU Single Market of the Western Balkans Six (WB6). CRM 2.0 seeks to further boost the socio-economic convergence between the WB6 and the EU and paves the way for closer integration with the Single Market.

The CRM 2.0's Human Capital Development pillar aims to enhance job opportunities and combat brain drain. It emphasizes, inter alia, equipping the workforce with the skills necessary for the digital transition and improving the region's innovation performance and competitiveness to create added value for various players including businesses and academia.

The gaming industry has emerged as a dynamic and rapidly growing sector in the WB6, generating economic opportunities, driving technological innovation, and fostering creative industries. However, the gaming sector still faces a range of challenges in the WB6, such as a lack of skilled workforce and cohesive policy frameworks, insufficient support for game development studios, fragmented regional markets, and limited collaboration between policymakers and industry stakeholders.

Recognising the untapped potential of this sector, the LevelUP programme is designed to provide highly targeted support to gaming studios, associations, and wider digital content actors by identifying actionable funding pathways, fostering meaningful collaborations, and enhancing project design capacity. It seeks to translate the gaming sector's innovation energy into measurable impact—through funding wins, skilled workforce pipelines, and sustained cross-regional networks that elevate the industry from promising to an economic powerhouse.

II. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Objectives of the assignment

The purpose of LevelUP programme is to develop and implement a focused support mechanism that equips the region's gaming sector with the tools, knowledge, partnerships, and expertise necessary to access EU (and other) opportunities and scale regionally and internationally. This assignment aims to tackle both structural and capacity-related challenges within the gaming ecosystem in the Western Balkans. It will map and promote EU-based funding and development opportunities specifically relevant to the sector. The assignment will also strengthen the collaborative and technical abilities of local stakeholders to craft strong, cross-regional proposals under programmes such as Creative Europe and Digital Europe. Additionally, it will support the development of high-quality, expert-led project applications. The assignment will also provide strategic policy insights and programmatic guidance designed to foster the gaming industry's continued growth beyond 2026.

III. SCOPE OF WORK

Specific Tasks

More specific tasks include:

- (1) Mapping and disseminating EU-based financing and development opportunities**
 - Conduct a comprehensive mapping of EU-level programmes (e.g., [Grant Scan for Digital Innovation Hubs](#)) relevant to the gaming industry (Creative Europe, Digital Europe, Horizon Europe, Interreg, EIT Culture & Creativity, InvestEU, etc.).
 - Identify accelerators, venture networks, and mentorship programmes with EU outreach or backing.
- (2) Building consortium capacity in the WB6 region**
 - Map potential consortium partners in WB6 and the EU: studios, universities, non-profits, tech firms, and creative hubs.
 - Host bi-monthly online matchmaking events (e.g., Consortia Builders' Meetups to introduce complementary partners and guide forming eligible consortia (legal structures, roles, and governance models).

- Provide 1:1 support for consortium idea shaping, especially for regional clusters new to EU funding.
- (3) Developing high-quality project proposals led by sector experts**
 - Deliver competitive, well-aligned EU funding proposals on behalf of regional gaming stakeholders—drawing on their insights while leveraging the consultants' expertise.
 - Conduct initial consultations with studios and associations to collect project ideas and strategic inputs.
 - Match collected ideas with relevant EU funding calls based on fit, timing, and objectives.
 - Assign expert proposal writers to lead development using a co-design approach with partners.
 - Draft full proposals, including KPIs, budgets, work plans, and consortium structures.
 - Integrate input from stakeholders via feedback sessions and review cycles.
 - Finalise and assist consortia to submit high-quality proposals, ensuring technical and administrative compliance.
- (4) Developing forward-looking programmatic recommendations for future regional initiatives to encourage the further growth of the region's gaming industry beyond 2026.**

Methodology

The consultants are expected to propose a comprehensive work plan which, at a minimum, outlines a clear and coherent methodology addressing all specified tasks, and presents a detailed timeline for delivery.

IV. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

Timeline

The engagement is expected to start in July 2025 and end in June 2026.

Lines of Communication

- The task will be implemented in close consultation with the RCC Secretariat.
- The contracted bidder will report to and closely liaise with the RCC's Senior Expert on Human Capital Development and Expert on Competitiveness.

V. REQUIRED OUTPUTS/REPORTING

	Deliverables	Due date
1.	Work Plan agreed with the RCC	Last week of July 2025
2.	Mapping and disseminating EU-based financing and development opportunities	January 2026
3.	Building consortium capacity in the WB6 region	June 2026
4.	Developing at least three and preferably more high-quality project proposals led by sector experts	June 2026
5.	Develop forward-looking programmatic recommendations	June 2026

VI. REQUIREMENTS

Expert Qualifications:

Education:	<p>Degree in sciences, engineering, economics, finance, business, public policy or other fields directly related to the assignment.</p> <p>Master's or PhD degree is an advantage.</p>
Experience:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proven track record in developing and submitting successful EU-funded proposals (Creative Europe, Digital Europe, Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, Interreg, cascade funding, etc.) within the digital, creative or research & innovation sectors. - Minimum 5 years of consultancy or programme implementation experience in innovation, digital transformation, or cultural and creative industries—ideally including support to SMEs or tech/start-up ecosystems. - Demonstrated capacity to lead end-to-end project development, from idea structuring to writing full application packages (narratives, budgets, Gantt charts, KPIs, and annexes). - Deep familiarity with EU funding mechanisms, eligibility criteria, evaluation frameworks, and application portals (e.g. Funding & Tenders Portal, Creative Europe desk procedures). - Experience facilitating multi-stakeholder collaboration, including formation and coordination of international or regional project consortia.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prior work in the WB6 economies, including regional knowledge and sensitivity to institutional and market maturity levels. - Ability to deliver structured capacity-building and feedback mechanisms, and to translate stakeholder input into compelling funding narratives. - A strong understanding of gaming industry dynamics, particularly the challenges and opportunities for studios and associations in emerging European markets will be considered an advantage.
Language requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fluency in written and spoken English, as the official language of the RCC. • Knowledge of other RCC languages is desirable.
Other:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N.A.

Core Values

- Demonstrates integrity and fairness by modelling RCC values and ethical standards;
- Independent and free from conflicts of interest in the responsibilities defined by the Terms of Reference;
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability.

Core Competencies

- Demonstrates professional competence to meet responsibilities and post requirements and is conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments, observing deadlines and achieving results;
- Result-oriented; plans and produces quality results to meet the set goals, generates innovative and practical solutions to challenging situations;
- Communication: Excellent communication skills, including the ability to convey complex concepts and recommendations clearly;
- Team work: Ability to interact, establish and maintain effective working relations in a culturally diverse team;

- Ability to establish and maintain productive partnerships with regional and national partners and stakeholders.

Quality Control:

The experts should ensure an internal quality control during the implementing and reporting phase of the assignment. The quality control should ensure that the draft reports and deliverables comply with the above requirements and meet adequate quality standards before sending them to stakeholders for comments. The quality control should ensure consistency and coherence between findings, conclusions and recommendations. It should also ensure that findings reported are duly substantiated and that conclusions are supported by relevant judgment criteria.

The views expressed in the report will be those of the contractor and will not necessarily reflect those of the Regional Cooperation Council. Therefore, a standard disclaimer reflecting this will be included in the reports. In this regard, the expert may or may not accept comments and/or proposals for changes received during the above consultation process. However, when comments/proposals for changes are not agreed by the expert, they should clearly explain the reasons for their final decision in a comments table.

RCC employees and partners participating in any programme or activity conducted or funded by RCC are prohibited from discriminating based on race, religion, political beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, marital status and national origin.

VII. APPLICATION RULES

Technical Offer:

The technical offer needs to contain the following:

For the companies and consortia of individual consultants:

- Company profile including a brief description (up to 2 pages) of the company. In case of a bidding consortium, the team leader should submit the profile of the consortium;
- Copy of Company's/Institution's Registration Certificate;
- In case of bidding consortia of individual consultants or individual professionals participating in this Call, they must indicate the members and show how the work is divided between them. Specifically, all members must name the team leader and authorise this member to represent the consortium and receive payments on behalf of the other members. A corresponding written authorised power of attorney must be attached to the bid;
- CVs of key members of the project team (maximum 2 pages per expert), outlining the most relevant knowledge and experience as described in the Terms of Reference;

- Financial records - company's balance sheet and profit-and-loss statement for the past 2 years (only in case of bidding of consulting companies);
- An outline work program of a maximum of 5 pages
- List of references demonstrating relevant experience in the subject matter;
- Signed Statements of Availability (Annex I).

For the individual consultants:

Financial offer

- CV outlining the most relevant knowledge and experience as described in the Terms of Reference;
- An outline work program of a maximum of 5 pages;
- List of references demonstrating relevant experience in the subject matter;

The financial offer should reflect the following:

- All figures should be expressed in EUR;

When preparing the financial offer, the applicant should take into account the following:

- Maximum budget should not exceed EUR 15,000. The offers above the threshold will not be considered.
- Use a free format for the budget offering the global price for the work to be provided.
- Fee rates should be broadly consistent with the regional framework rates for these types of professional services.

Note:

Applications need to be submitted by 21 July 2025. The offers should be submitted through the web site link [Apply now](#).

VIII. EVALUATION AND SELECTION

The assignments will be awarded to the highest qualified applicant based on the skills, expertise, and the quality of the concept note(s) and the cost-effectiveness of the financial offer. Applications will be evaluated on the basis of the profile and competencies of the candidate and the responsiveness to the Terms of Reference for consulting services.

The best value for money is established by weighing technical quality against price on an 80/20 basis.

The applications are evaluated following these criteria:

EVALUATION GRID	Maximum Score	Actual scoring
A. Technical Offer (A.1+A.2+A.3)	100	
A.1. Competencies: Work experience, references list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proven experience in consultancies dealing directly with developing and submitting successful EU-funded proposals; • Consultancy or programme implementation experience in innovation, digital transformation, or cultural and creative industries; • Proven communication and presentation skills and ability to work in an environment requiring liaison and collaboration with multiple actors including government representatives, businesses, civil society institutions, donors and other stakeholders; • Experience in working with WB governments and/or WB institutions, science and innovation hubs and innovation-enabling organisations is considered an advantage. 	15 15 5 5	
A.2. C.V Quality and professional capacity of the consultants: Degree in sciences, engineering, economics, business, or other fields directly related to the assignment. Master's or PhD degree is an advantage; Minimum of seven (and five) years of proven experience in consultancies dealing directly with startups and startup ecosystems.	10 20	
A.3 Quality of the Work Plan	30	

A work plan, up to a maximum of 5 pages, indicating the individual tasks to be undertaken against a timeframe.		
B. Financial Proposal/ lowest price has maximum score	100	

Score for offer X =

A: [Total quality score (out of 100) of offer X / 100] * 80

B: [Lowest price / price of offer X] * 20

In addition to the results of the technical and financial evaluation, a competency-based interview will be held with the selected bidder.

Information on selection of the most favourable bidder

The RCC Secretariat shall inform candidates and bidders of decisions reached concerning the award of the contract as soon as possible, including the grounds for any decision not to award a contract for which there has been competitive tendering or to recommence the procedure.

Standard letter of thanks for participation to unsuccessful bidders shall be sent within 15 days after the contract is signed with the awarded bidder.

The candidates and bidders wishing to receive feedback may send a request within 15 days after receipt of the standard letter of thanks.

The request may be sent to the e-mail address ProcurementforRcc@rcc.int or to the address of the RCC Secretariat:

Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat
 Attention to: Administration Department
 Building of the Friendship between Greece and Bosnia and Herzegovina
 Trg Bosne i Hercegovine 1/V
 71000 Sarajevo
 Bosnia and Herzegovina

Appeals procedure

Bidders believing that they have been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may petition the RCC Secretariat directly. The RCC Secretariat must reply within 15 days of receipt of the appeal.

The appeal request may be sent to the e-mail address ProcurementforRcc@rcc.int or to the address of the RCC Secretariat:

Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat
Attention to: Administration Department
Building of the Friendship between Greece and Bosnia and Herzegovina
Trg Bosne i Hercegovine 1/V
71000 Sarajevo
Bosnia and Herzegovina

ANNEX I: STATEMENT OF AVAILABILITY

REF: 053-025

Level UP: Regional Gaming Industry Catalyst Programme

By representing the Entity_____ we agree to participate in the above-mentioned tender procedure. We further declare that we are able and willing to work for the period(s) foreseen for the position for which our CVs have been included in the event that this tender is successful, namely:

[illegible]