



भारतीय गुणवत्ता परिषद्
**QUALITY COUNCIL®
OF INDIA**
Creating an Ecosystem for Quality

Eol ref. no. EOI/QCI/0425/429

Dated: - 17.04.2025

Expression of Interest

**Empanelment of Assessment Agency
under MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification Scheme**



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Eol for Empanelment of Assessment Agency under MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification Scheme
Eol ref. no. EOI/QCI/0425/429

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EOI Notice

1. Quality Council of India (QCI) invites proposals for **“Empanelment of Assessment Agency under MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification Scheme”**.
2. The content of this Expression of Interest (EOI) enlists the requirements of the QCI. It includes the Bidding Terms which details out all that may be needed by the potential bidders to understand the terms and bidding process and explain the contractual terms that the QCI wishes to specify at this stage.
3. The Technical Bids may be submitted in a PDF format to procurement.zed@qcin.org **on or before 28th of every month (till February 28, 2026) with subject line “Expression of Interest (EOI) for Empanelment of Assessment Agency under MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification Scheme_DD/MM/YYYY [Date of submission]”**

EOI Summary

S. No.	Particulars	Details
1.	Last date and time for submission of Applications	28 th of every month till February 28, 2026
2.	Validity of the Proposal	90 Days
3.	Tender Processing Fee	N/A
4.	Contact Person for clarification	Procurement Team, QCI. procurement.zed@qcin.org
5.	Technical Discussion Round (if needed)	To be notified via email
6.	Documents to be submitted	Refer Clause-VII: Submission of Proposal

I. INTRODUCTION

Quality Council of India

The Quality Council of India (QCI) is a pioneering experiment of the Government of India in setting up organizations in partnership with the Indian industry. The mandate of QCI is to lead nationwide quality movement in India by involving all stakeholders for emphasis on adherence to quality standards in all spheres of activities primarily for promoting and protecting interests of the nation and its citizens. To achieve this, QCI is playing a pivotal role in propagating, adoption, and adherence to quality standards in all important spheres of activities including education, healthcare, environment protection, governance, social sectors, infrastructure sector and such other areas of organized activities that have significant bearing in improving the quality of life and well-being of the citizens of India.

II. BACKGROUND

As the MSMEs are amongst the strongest drivers of economic development, innovation and employment, it becomes imperative to strengthen their ecosystem. The Government of India envisioned Zero Defect & Zero Effect (ZED) initiative to enhance MSME competitiveness, make them sustainable and transform them as National and International Champions. MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification Scheme is an extensive drive to create awareness amongst MSMEs about Zero Defect Zero Effect (ZED) practices and motivate and incentivize them for ZED Certification while also encouraging them to become MSME Champions. Through the journey of ZED Certification, MSMEs can reduce wastages substantially, increase productivity, enhance environmental consciousness, save energy, optimally use natural resources, expand their markets, etc. MSMEs will also be motivated to adopt best practices in work culture, standardization of products, processes and systems etc. in order to enhance their global competitiveness and sustainability. The ZED Certification aims at enhancing the competitiveness of an MSME by assessment, modification through guidance, handholding, managerial and technological intervention – not just certification.

III. SCOPE OF WORK

The following is the indicative brief of scope of work:

MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification has THREE certification levels and an MSME can apply for any of the Certification level after taking the ZED Pledge. The three Certification levels are:

- ZED Pledge
- Certification Level 1: BRONZE
- Certification Level 2: SILVER
- Certification Level 3: GOLD

1. Certification Process

The certification process involves following steps:

i. Registration and ZED Pledge

- Every MSME that embarks on the journey of MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification will have to take the “ZED Pledge” before applying for MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification for any level i.e., Bronze, Silver, and Gold.
- The provision for undertaking ZED pledge is made on the ZED portal and the MSME will also be able to download the ZED Pledge from the portal.

ii. **Application for Certification Level**

- After taking the ZED Pledge, the MSME can apply for any Certification Level if it feels that it can fulfil the requirements for the respective level.
- MSME shall be required to apply separately for different units.

iii. **Undertaking of Compliance**

The applicant MSME shall upload an undertaking of compliance towards the applicable regulatory & statutory norms/requirements as necessary for operating the unit.

iv. **Basic Information and Document Upload**

As a part of the application process, the applicant MSME will require to provide/upload basic information and prescribed documents, as applicable, on the online portal. This information will be related to (but not limited to) the details about the product(s) manufactured, Safety systems, Quality Certificates (if any), operational processes, etc.

v. **Desktop Verification**

QCI, where necessary, shall conduct the desktop verification (of the uploaded documents) for the Bronze Certification and for the Silver and Gold Certifications, desktop verification shall be conducted by the Assessment Agencies (that are allocated the assessments).

vi. **Certification- Bronze Level**

A desktop verification will be conducted by the assigned Desktop Assessor. In case of any Non-Conformance (NC) raised during the desktop verification, the applicant MSME will be required to close the NC(s); the MSME shall get 5 opportunities, within 30 days to close the NCs. Once the NC(s) are closed, a recommendation for award of the Certification will be made. Based on the recommendation, a Certificate will be issued along with a report to the applicant MSME. The validity of the certificate will be for a period of 3 years.

vii. **Certification- Silver Level**

- Once the relevant information is furnished and documents are uploaded & verified, a remote assessment on relevant parameters will be conducted. The assessment requirement/checklist will be made available to the applicant MSME through the portal.
- In case of any Non-Conformance (NC) raised during the assessment, the applicant MSME will be required to close the NC(s); the MSME shall get 5 opportunities, within 60 days to close the NCs. Once the NC(s) are closed, a recommendation for award of the Certification will be made.
- Based on the recommendation, a Certificate will be issued along with a report to the applicant MSME. The validity of the certificate will be for a period of 3 years.

viii. Certification (Gold level)

- Once the relevant information is furnished and documents are uploaded & verified, a site assessment on relevant parameters will be conducted. The assessment requirements/checklist will be made available to the applicant MSME through the portal.
- In case of any Non-Conformance (NC) raised during the assessment, the applicant MSME will be required to close the NC(s); the MSME shall get 5 opportunities, within 60 days to close the NCs. Once the NC(s) are closed, a recommendation for award of the Certification will be made.
- Based on the recommendation, a Certificate will be issued along with a report to the applicant MSME. The validity of the certificate will be for a period of 3 years.

2. Assessment process and certification

i. Assessment Team Selection

The Assessment Agency will assign qualified ZED Assessor/ Assessment team. Further, the assessors shall also be qualified as per the competence criteria of the NABCB accredited CB for the scope sector for which the Assessment Agency holds accreditation from NABCB. The Remote/On-site assessment will be conducted with minimum two qualified ZED Assessors, supported by technical experts, if needed. The team selected shall be such, so as to be competent to assess all the applicable parameters. One of the assessors must have competency in the environmental aspects/areas.

ii. Assessment Duration

The duration of the assessment will be as under:

- Bronze Level (Remote Assessment): 1 man-day
- Silver Level (Remote Assessment): 2 man-days
- Gold Level (Site Assessment): 4 man-days

The above man-days are inclusive of the man-day required for 'document verification'. The assessment man-days are based on 8 hours per day.

iii. Opening Meeting

A formal opening meeting shall be held with the MSME's management and, where appropriate, those responsible for the functions or processes to be assessed. The purpose of the opening meeting, usually conducted by the assessment team leader, is to provide a short explanation of how the assessment activities will be undertaken. During the opening meeting, the Team leader shall collect information on the situation and on changes, if any, concerning the MSME, equipment, raw materials, processes, and anything else relevant.

iv. Assessment

- Assessment will be based on specific ZED Certification requirements. The assessment is app-based and in accordance with the checklist provided.
- During the assessment, the assessment team shall periodically check assessment progress and exchange information. The assessment team leader shall re-assign work as needed between the assessment team members and periodically communicate the progress of the assessment and any concerns to the MSME.

- When conducting the assessment, the assessor shall collect and verify evidence related to performance of various processes/activities of the MSME as per MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification parameters and requirements.
- During the assessment, information related to the assessment objectives, scope and criteria (including information related to interfaces between functions, activities and processes) shall be obtained and verified.
- Methods to obtain information shall include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Interviews
 - b. Observation of processes and activities
 - c. Review of documentation and records
- The information captured shall be supported by objective evidence

v. Closing Meeting

A formal closing meeting, where attendance shall be recorded, shall be held with the MSME's management and, where appropriate, those responsible for the functions or processes assessed. The purpose of the closing meeting, usually conducted by the assessment team leader, is to present the assessment conclusions.

vi. Safety during On-site assessment

The on-site assessment involves risk linked to the need to travel to work environments. Responsibility of risk analysis and the identification of the most suitable means of protection during the assessment, is of the MSME that manages the building or factory. However, assessors must have personal protective equipment which may be reasonably required.

vii. Assessment Report

After closure of Non- Conformance (NC), if any, an assessment report will be generated with a recommendation for award of certification. The report shall be duly reviewed and approved by the assessment agency.

viii. Recommendation & Award of Certificate

- Based on the assessment report and recommendation received from the Assessment Agency, award of Certification will be made. The certificate will have a validity for a period of 3 years.
- For each accepted report, the Assessment Agency shall be paid for the assessment conducted, as per the prescribed fee structure.

3. Surveillance Assessment Process:

- A surveillance assessment will be conducted by the Assessment Agencies with the help of ZED qualified assessors as a part of the ZED Certification.
- The surveillance assessment will be applicable for the MSMEs which have achieved Bronze, Silver & Gold Certification levels.
- The surveillance assessment will be conducted as an onsite assessment for Bronze Certification level and a remote assessment for both Silver & Gold Certification levels.
- The frequency of the surveillance assessment shall be as under:
 - ✓ Bronze Level: Once after 18 months from the date of certification (1 Surveillance assessment in a certification cycle)
 - ✓ Silver & Gold Level: Annual (2 Surveillance assessments in a certification cycle)

i. **Duration:**

The duration of the surveillance assessment will be as under:

- Bronze Level (Onsite/Physical Assessment): Half man-day
- Silver Level (Remote Assessment): 1 man-day

- Gold Level (Remote Assessment): 2 man-days

The assessment man-days are based on 8 hours per day.

ii. **Opening Meeting:**

A formal opening meeting shall be held with the MSME's management and, where appropriate, those responsible for the functions or processes to be assessed. The purpose of the opening meeting, usually conducted by the assessment team leader, is to provide a short explanation of how the assessment activities will be undertaken. During the opening meeting, the Team leader shall collect information on the situation and on changes, if any, concerning the MSME, equipment, raw materials, processes, and anything else relevant.

iii. **Assessment:**

- Assessment will be based on defined ZED Certification requirements. The assessment will be web and mobile app based.
- During the assessment, the assessment team shall periodically check assessment progress and exchange information. The assessment team leader shall re-assign work as needed between the assessment team members and periodically communicate the progress of the assessment and any concerns to the MSME.
- When conducting the assessment, the assessor shall collect and verify evidence related to performance of various processes/activities of the MSME as per MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification parameters and requirements.
- During the assessment, information related to the assessment objectives, scope, and criteria (including information related to interfaces between functions, activities, and processes) shall be obtained and verified.
- Methods to obtain information shall include, but are not limited to:
 - a) Interviews
 - b) Observation of processes and activities
 - c) Review of documentation and records
- The information captured shall be supported by objective evidence

iv. **Closing Meeting:**

A formal closing meeting, where attendance shall be recorded, shall be held with the MSME's management and, where appropriate, those responsible for the functions or processes assessed. The purpose of the closing meeting, usually conducted by the assessment team leader, is to present the assessment conclusions.

v. Assessment Report:

After closure of Non- Conformance (NC), if any, an assessment report will be generated with a recommendation for continuation of certification. The report shall be duly reviewed and approved by the assessment agency.

vi. Recommendation for Continuation of Certification:

- Based on the surveillance assessment report and recommendation received from the Assessment Agency the certification may be continued/suspended/withdrawn.
- For each accepted report, the Assessment Agency shall be paid for the assessment conducted, as per the prescribed fee structure.

IV. PRE-QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

S. No.	Basic Requirements	Specific Requirements	Documents Required
a.	Accreditation	Applicant should be accredited as a Certification Body/ Inspection Body by National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB)	Certificate of Accreditation
b.	Blacklisting	The Applicant should not have been blacklisted by any Govt. department or any PSU in India as on the date of bid submission.	Non-Blacklisting Undertaking / Self-Declaration as per Annexure-C

V. PREFERRED REQUIREMENT FOR ASSESSORS

S. No.	Basic Requirements	Specific Requirements	Documents Required
a.	Educational Qualification of Assessor	The proposed assessor shall be a Graduate from a recognised University or Diploma in Engineering from a recognised Institute/University.	Copy of relevant educational qualification
b.	Additional Qualification of Assessor	Qualified Lead Auditor Certification in Quality Management Systems or any other ISO Management Systems, as relevant OR A qualified ZED Assessor under the erstwhile "Financial Support to MSMEs in ZED Certification Scheme"	Copy of relevant certificate
c.	Experience of Assessor (a)	Minimum experience of 5 years (for Graduates) and 8 years (for Diploma Holders) in manufacturing industry, of which at least 3 years of experience should be in operations/quality/management /auditing/ assessing/ consulting.	CV of Assessors with relevant certificates of experience

d.	Experience of Assessor (b)	Experience of minimum 25 man- days of Management System Audits/Assessments for Quality/ any other ISO Management Systems, as relevant OR Experience of minimum 25 man-days in assessment for any Business Excellence Award like CII-EXIM Awards/ MBNQA, EFQM etc.	Certificate of experience
e.	Technical Knowledge of Assessor	Technical Knowledge in at least 1 ZED discipline from each group with reference to Annexure-B	Recognised Certification/ Training Course

VI. GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Disclaimer

The QCI shall not be responsible for any late receipt of applications for any reasons whatsoever. The applications received late will not be considered.

2. The QCI reserves the right.

- To reject any/all applications without assigning any reasons thereof.
- To relax or waive any of the conditions stipulated in this document as deemed necessary in the best interest of the QCI without assigning any reasons thereof.
- To include any other item in the Scope of work at any time after consultation with applicants or otherwise.

3. **Presentation:** As a part of evaluation of proposals submitted by the applicants, QCI may seek further information or a presentation from the Organizations for evaluation purposes. QCI may call for such information/presentation at a short notice.

4. **Amendments to EOI:** At any time prior to the last date (if prescribed) for receipt of applications, QCI may for any reason, whether at its own initiative or in response to a clarification requested by a prospective applicant, modify the EOI document by an amendment. In order to provide prospective applicants reasonable time in which to take the amendment into account in preparing their proposals, QCI may at its discretion extend the last date (if prescribed) for the receipt of proposals and/or make other changes in the requirements set out in the EOI. Any such amendment shall be communicated to the applicants.

5. **Conflict of Interest:** QCI requires that assessment agency provides professional, objective, and impartial analysis and data, strictly avoid conflicts with other Assignment/jobs or their own corporate interests and act without any consideration for future work.

6. **Language:** The Proposal should be filled by the applicant in English language only. If any supporting documents submitted are in any language other than English, translation of the same in English language is to be duly attested by the applicant. For purposes of interpretation of the documents, the English translation shall prevail. All correspondence and documents relating to the Proposal exchanged by the applicant and QCI shall also be written in the English language.

7. **Safety and Insurance:** Ensuring safety of auditor at the time of physical audit shall be the responsibility of the agency. QCI has no obligation or responsibility towards any individual in any such cases or situations. The agency must have and maintain Covid-19 protocols as per government guidelines, valid and enforcement insurance policies for public liability, professional indemnity, workers Compensations required by law.
8. Travelling, boarding, and lodging expenses to be borne by the Assessment Agency.
9. **Security:** The agency shall ensure that all the data collected and processed and information received under this work order or during the execution of this work order and or required to be shared with QCI, by the agency under this Contract shall be in totally secure mode and that the agency shall take all necessary steps to prohibit any unauthorized sharing/publishing of data in the public domain or with any other party or person who is not authorized by QCI to receive such information and or data. That the agency shall ensure that all the data collected, and information received under this contract shall be used only for the purpose of execution of this contract and once the purpose of this contract is fulfilled then all the papers, drawings, notes, manuals, specifications, designs, documents.
10. **Force Majeure:** The parties shall ensure due compliance with the terms of this agreement. However, no party shall be liable for any claim for any loss or damage whatsoever arising out of failure to carry out the terms of the agreement to the extent such a failure is due to force majeure events such as pandemic/epidemic, fire, rebellion, mutiny, civil commotion, riots, strike, lockout, force of nature, accident, act of God, or any other reason beyond the control of concerned party. However, the concerned party must give notice of such event as and when it arises or is perceived as soon as possible and make all possible efforts to minimize the effects of such circumstances on the performance of work. If non-performance or diminished performance continues for more than 15 days by the affected party due to the circumstances mentioned under this clause, the other party may terminate the contract with immediate effect.
11. **Subcontracting:** There must be no sub-contracting of work without prior written consent of QCI.
12. **Ethics:** QCI expects agency and auditors to show highest ethical standards during the course of the assignment. If any complaints/information regarding any incident of malpractices (bribery, seeking monetary or non-monetary favor/gifts) is brought to the notice, the assessment agency shall take the necessary action (to the extent of expulsion/removal) as per its organization rules and laws applicable at that time. QCI is absolved of any liability/claim arising out of any such above situations.
13. **Amendments:** The terms and conditions in this document are liable to change any time during the project subject to mutual consent between QCI and the agency. Any such changes shall be communicated in writing/e-mail only.
14. **Rejection of Application:** The application is liable to be rejected if:
 - i. Not in prescribed forms and not containing all required details.
 - ii. Received after the expiry of due date and time, if prescribed.
 - iii. Absence of any supporting document(s) with the Proposal.
15. **Indemnity:** The organisation undertakes to indemnify QCI from any losses that are incurred due to any deficiency in services rendered by the organisation or any instance of corruption or improper payment.

16. **Maintenance of Confidentiality:** The organisation must not divulge any confidential information and ensure that reasonable steps are taken to provide for the safe custody of any and confidential information in its possession and to prevent unauthorized access thereto or use thereof. The organisation must not, without the prior written consent of QCI, disclose any confidential information about QCI or any government department or relating to any ministry or any other party. In giving written consent to the disclosure of confidential information, QCI may impose such conditions as it thinks fit, and the agency must comply with these conditions.
17. **Removal of Data:** The organisation must ensure that its employees/ professionals' subcontractors and/ personnel do not:
- i. remove any data or allow any Data concerned with this contract to be removed from the places as notified / directed by QCI; or
 - ii. take any Data or allow any Data to be taken outside of India, without the QCI's prior written consent.
18. **Validity:** The proposals shall remain valid for a period of 90 days from the last date of submission. In exceptional circumstances, QCI may solicit the applicant's consent to an extension of the period of validity. The request and the responses thereto shall be made in writing. An applicant consenting to such request will not be required nor permitted to modify its Proposal.

VII. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL

The technical proposal must include the following:

1. Form A (**Annexure-A**)
2. Certificate of Accreditation by National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB)
3. Documents required for Preferred Requirement for Assessors (if any)

VIII. SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. All the pages of the proposal must be sequentially numbered and must contain the list of contents with page numbers. Any deficiency in the documentation may result in the rejection of the Bid.
2. All pages of the application including the duplicate copies, shall be signed, and stamped by the authorised signatory.

Interested parties may submit the technical documents in a PDF format to procurement.zed@qcin.org on or before 28th of every month (till February 28, 2026) with subject line "Expression of Interest (EOI) for Empanelment of Assessment Agency under MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification Scheme_DD/MM/YYYY [Date of submission]"

For further queries, you may please contact the below mentioned:

Procurement Team

Email id: procurement.zed@qcin.org

Annexure-A

**Quality Council of India (QCI)**

2nd Floor, ICCW Building, 4, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi - 110002

Form – A: Application Form**MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification Scheme***(A Scheme by Ministry of MSME)***APPLICATION FORM FOR REGISTRATION AS ASSESSMENT AGENCY***(Only NABCB accredited agencies/bodies are eligible to register)***GENERAL INFORMATION**

1	Name of the Agency			
2	Address of Main Office			
		<i>City</i>		
		<i>State</i>		<i>PIN</i>
3	Single Point of Contact (SPOC)	<i>Name</i>		
		<i>Designation</i>		
		<i>Phone</i>		
		<i>Mobile</i>		
		<i>E-mail</i>		
4	Details of NABCB Accreditation <i>(Please specify Accreditation Cert. No. and Validity Period)</i>			
5	Sector Scope(s) of Accreditation			
6	Preferred States where the Agency/Body would undertake assessments			
7	NIC Sector(s) (2 Digit) As per Section C, NIC 2008			
8	PAN Number			

9	GSTIN Number	
Signatures of Authorized Signatory		
Name		
Designation		
Date		
Place		

Annexure - B

Group	ZED Disciplines	Area of Knowledge /Expertise (Indicative)	Remarks
A	Best Business Practices	Know-how of Best Business Practices like Balanced Score Card, Six Sigma, Risk Management, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), etc.	At least 1
	Good Manufacturing Practices	Know-how of Good Manufacturing practices like Lean, TQM, TPM, FMEA, SPC, Poka-Yoke / mistake proofing, OEE, Product and Process Validation, etc.	
B	QMS	Quality Management System, Quality Improvement Tools & techniques, Auditing	At least 1
	Occupational Health & Safety	Occupational Health & Safety Management System, Safety Practices and Auditing	
	Environment Management	Environment Management System, Environmental Impact Assessment, Natural Resource Management, Auditing	
C	Energy Management	Energy efficiency & conservation techniques, Energy Management and Auditing	At least 1
	Material & Supply Chain Management	Material and Inventory Management, Traceability and Supply Chain Management	
	Human Resource Management	Human Resource Management, Competency Mapping, Multiskilling, Employee Engagement Techniques	

Note: Certifications/Training course(s) should be recognized by the industry (and its stakeholders) as being appropriate and relevant. The applicants are required to provide their appropriate training certificates or Relevant Details related to Practical Experience along with their resumes.

Annexure-C

Format for Non-Blacklisting Undertaking

(To be submitted on the Letterhead of the responding firm)

To,
Deputy Director (Accounts & Administration),
Quality Council of India,
Institution of Engineers Building,
2nd Floor, 2, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg,
New Delhi-110002

Subject: Non-Blacklisting declaration in connection with RFP Ref. No. _____ dated____ for

Dear Sir,

This is to notify you that our Firm/Company/Organisation _____ intends to submit a proposal in response to invitation for Tender Ref. No. _____ for <>. In accordance with the above, we declare that:

- a. We are not involved in any major litigation that may have an impact of affecting or compromising the delivery of services as required under this agreement.
- b. We are not blacklisted by any Central/ State Government/ agency of Central/ State Government of India or any other country in the world/ Public Sector Undertaking/ any Regulatory Authorities in India or any other country in the world for any kind of fraudulent activities.

Dated this Day of 2024

(Signature) (In the capacity of)

Duly authorized to sign the Proposal Response for and on behalf of:

(Name and Address of Company) Seal/Stamp of Vendor