

Terms of Reference

Lead Consultant - Global Thought Leadership Report on Youth Entrepreneurship

Working title: From Necessity to Economic Opportunity

Youth Business International

We are the global leader in youth entrepreneurship. For over 25 years we've combined global influence with local knowledge and expertise.

Young entrepreneurs have the power to boost employment and drive economic growth, their fresh perspectives and bold ideas also have the potential to reshape industries and societies for the better.

But for too many young people, starting a business feels out of reach and they need the right support to succeed.

At Youth Business International (YBI) we support aspiring young entrepreneurs around the world to start, scale and sustain their businesses.

We develop and scale the most effective solutions to help young entrepreneurs succeed, from developing business skills, driving innovation and nurturing talent to unlocking finance and access to markets.

Join us to unleash the potential of young entrepreneurs to drive a generation for change.

Background to ToR

The global labor market is undergoing a profound transformation. In low- and middle-income countries, millions of young people enter the workforce each year in contexts where formal employment growth is insufficient to absorb them. As a result, youth necessity entrepreneurship, defined as entrepreneurs having small, informal, and undercapitalized ventures, has become one of the largest, yet least strategically leveraged, employment systems globally.

Generation Unlimited (GenU) and Youth Business International (YBI) are jointly developing a flagship thought leadership report that reframes necessity entrepreneurship not as a marginal survival mechanism, but as a potential pathway to livelihoods, job creation, and inclusive economic transformation. The report will combine analytical rigor, youth-generated evidence, and implementation-informed insights to influence policy, financing, and ecosystem design at scale.

YBI, in close collaboration with GenU, will engage a Lead Consultant (or small consultant team) to develop this report. The engagement will be through a competitive process.

Objectives

The purpose of this assignment is to produce a high-quality, globally relevant thought leadership report that:

- Reframes necessity entrepreneurship as economic opportunity

- Synthesizes global evidence, youth perspectives, and practice-based learning
- Delivers clear, actionable recommendations for policymakers, funders, and ecosystem actors
- Positions GenU and YBI as joint leaders in shaping the global youth entrepreneurship agenda

Scope of Work

Under the strategic guidance of GenU and operational coordination by YBI, the consultant will be responsible for the following:

1. Inception and Framing

- Convene an inception workshop with the GenU and YBI teams to gain insights into the technical perspectives of the team.
- Develop an inception report that outlines objectives, workplan, timeline, and an annotated outline of the report
- Develop a hypothesis of the analytical framework and narrative arc of the report, for testing against literature review and data

2. Research and Evidence Synthesis

- Review existing literature, data, and partner materials
- Conduct desk-based research drawing on global sources as well as resources provided by Generation Unlimited and YBI
- Integrate macro-level data with micro-level enterprise insights
- Synthesize evidence across regions, sectors, and income contexts, summarize as part of a “Literature Summary”

3. Youth Voice Integration

- Work closely with GenU to incorporate findings from U-Report polling, recognizing that the results of the survey will come later in the process, so youth voice integration will not be a linear process
- Reflect insights from youth consultations and YPAT engagement
- Ensure youth perspectives are embedded throughout the report rather than treated as a standalone section

4. Partner and Case Study Integration

- Integrate case studies and examples from GenU, YBI, and partners
- Integrate Generation Unlimited’s Global Leadership Council members’ insights into the report narrative and recommendations
- Incorporate contributions from private sector and ecosystem actors where relevant

5. Drafting and Revision

- Produce a full first draft of the report
- Revise drafts based on structured feedback from GenU, YBI, and selected partners
- Ensure coherence, consistency, and clarity across sections

6. Finalization and Launch Readiness

- Prepare a polished final report
- Draft a concise executive summary
- Support preparation of launch-ready messaging if requested

Deliverables

Indicative deliverables include:

- Inception note and detailed outline
- Analysis of U-Report survey outcomes, GLC survey outcomes, FGD outcomes
- First full draft of the report
- Provide revised drafts following internal feedback, partner and peer reviews
- Final report including executive summary
- Practitioner focused policy brief based on outcomes of the thought leadership report

Deliverables will be refined during inception

Management and Reporting Arrangements

- The consultant will be contracted and administratively managed by Youth Business International
- Strategic direction will be jointly provided by GenU and YBI
- The consultant will report to designated focal points from both organizations
- Major deliverables will be reviewed and approved jointly

Timeline

The assignment is expected to run over a defined period aligned with the following launch pathway:

- Launch aligned with the UN General Assembly 2026

The final timeline will be agreed at inception, with clear milestones and review points.

Qualifications and Experience Required

Education:

- Advanced university degree (Master's or PhD) in economics, development studies, public policy, international development, labor economics, entrepreneurship, or a closely related field or equivalent experience.

Experience

- Minimum 7+ years of relevant professional experience in international development, economic policy, employment, entrepreneurship, or inclusive growth.
- Demonstrated experience working with multilateral organizations, UN agencies, development finance institutions, foundations, or global partnerships.

- Proven track record of operating in multi-stakeholder, co-authoring environments, managing inputs from diverse partners while maintaining analytical coherence and narrative clarity.
- Strong understanding of:
 - Youth labor markets in low- and middle-income countries
 - Necessity entrepreneurship and informal or microenterprise dynamics
 - MSME ecosystems, finance, and policy environments
- Familiarity with sectoral pathways such as green economy, digital/AI, care, or creative industries is a strong asset.
- Experience integrating equity and gender perspectives, including girls' entrepreneurship, into analytical work.
- experience working with youth-centered or participatory research approaches, including:
 - Youth consultations
 - Lived-experience narratives
 - Bottom-up evidence integration
- Ability to translate youth perspectives into policy-relevant insights without tokenization.

Thought Leadership and Publications

- or national thought leadership publications, policy reports, or flagship studies relevant to:
 - Entrepreneurship or MSME development
 - Youth employment or livelihoods
 - Jobs, skills, or inclusive economic transformation
- At least one publication should have been produced for or with a recognized international institution (e.g., UN entity, multilateral development bank, international foundation, global NGO, or research institute).
- Ability to provide writing samples or published work that demonstrate:
 - Strong analytical depth
 - Clear, persuasive policy-oriented writing
 - Capacity to synthesize data, qualitative insights, and case examples

Core competencies

- The consultant is expected to demonstrate the following competencies:
- Exceptional analytical and synthesis skills, with the ability to connect macro-level trends and micro-level realities.
- Outstanding writing and narrative development capability, producing clear, compelling, and policy-relevant outputs for senior audiences.
- Strong conceptual discipline, ensuring consistency of framing, terminology, and recommendations throughout the report.
- Proven ability to manage complex feedback loops, incorporate diverse inputs, and resolve conflicting perspectives constructively.

- High standards of quality control, attention to detail, and deadline discipline.
- Professional maturity and judgment in handling politically and institutionally sensitive content.

Duration, Intellectual Property and Attribution

- **Duration:** 7-8 months, beginning in March 2026
- **Engagement Model:** Fully remote
- All outputs will be jointly owned by Generation Unlimited and Youth Business International
- The consultant will not claim authorship independently
- Appropriate acknowledgment will be provided in the final publication

Budget and payment schedule

Payments will be linked to the satisfactory completion of agreed deliverables, with a schedule finalized at contract signature.

The budget for this consultancy is US \$30,000 (including VAT and taxes)

Submission of proposals

Proposals for conducting this consultancy must be submitted in English to Miranda Page, Director of Strategic Communications, at miranda.page@youthbusiness.org by **10.00 am (GMT) on 23 February 2026.**

Proposals must include:

- CV
- short cover letter outlining approach, relevant experience, and fee
- links or samples of similar reports/thought leadership work you've led or contributed to

Shortlisting and interviews will be conducted jointly by YBI and GenU and final selection will be agreed jointly

For any questions, please contact Miranda Page by email.

Privacy statement

YBI promises to respect any personal data you share with us. We aim to be clear about why we need to collect your data and we will not do anything you wouldn't reasonably expect. We store all data securely and restrict access to only those people necessary. This may include other agencies, which are bound by Confidentiality agreements. In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act, we want and strive to ensure that the data we hold is accurate, adequate, relevant and not excessive. We will only retain it for as long as we need it. Please see our Data Protection policy to find out more.

You have the right to a copy of all the information we hold about you. To obtain a copy, write to the Data Protection Officer at YBI. The most efficient way to do this is by email to info@youthbusiness.org, including the words "Subject Access Request" in the *subject line*. We aim to reply as promptly as we can and, in any case, within the legal maximum of 1 month.