

# National Freelancer Development Endeavour

**FIND YOUR TALENT.  
BUILD YOUR BUSINESS.  
EXCEL IN YOUR CAREER.**

**EMBARK ON A JOURNEY AS  
A FREELANCER TODAY...**

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## 1.0 Background

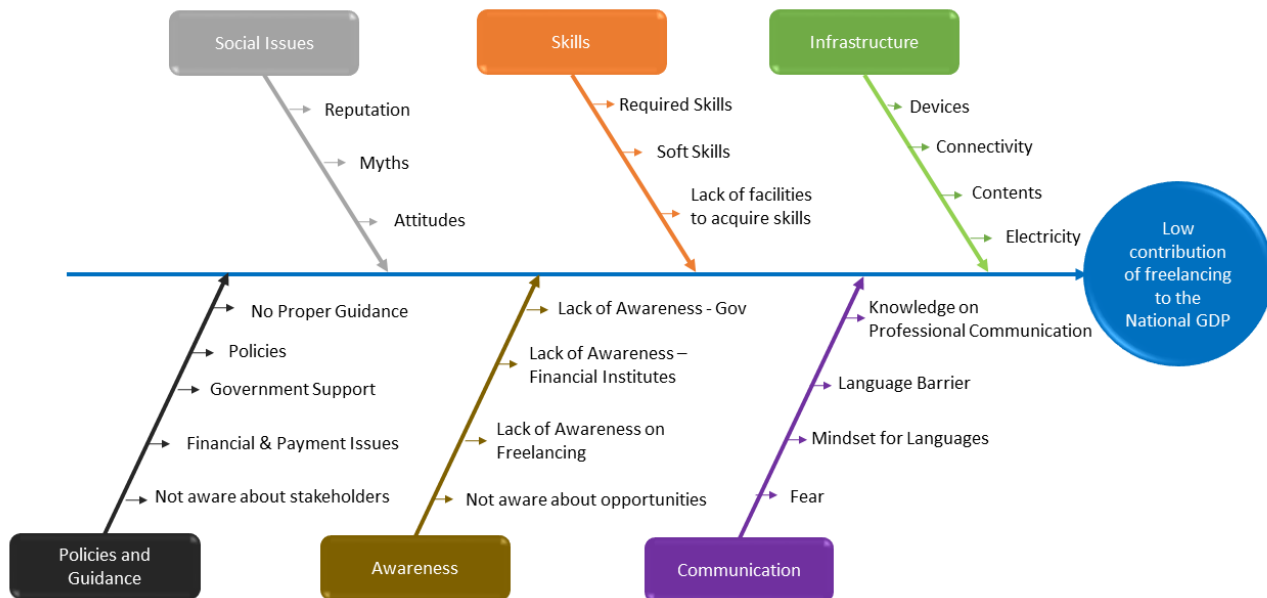
The ICT Agency of Sri Lanka has embarked on various initiatives aimed at achieving the national vision of 3 Billion US dollar export revenue. The agency has adopted the digital economy strategy where there is significant importance placed on building the required skills of all levels of citizens, thus improving their employability. The adopted Digital Economy Strategy outlines the need of at least 300,000 ICT Workforce where 150,000 will need to be skilled or specialized.

Considering the rapid inflow of capable youth required to fulfill the rising demand of the ICT sector, ICTA is working on multiple fronts to enable the supply of employable inflow to the industry. In order to achieve these numbers, ICTA has identified that it is imperative to drive NVQ holders, non-ICT job holders, household women, job seekers, school leavers, non-ICT undergraduates, and graduates who otherwise would not choose ICT, to incorporate ICT in their career. And it has also been identified that there need to utilize their digital competencies and skills to increase the national GDP.

## 2.0 Problem Statement

The growth of the Information and Communication Technology and Information Technology enabled Services sector is vital for global economic development. According to the 2021 Freelance Forward Survey carried out by Upwork, one of the leading freelancing platforms, the last two years have ushered in monumental change for the labor market. The study confirmed that new business registrations and self-employment reached their highest point in over a decade. Moreover, it stated, that excluding temporary workers, freelancing increased to the highest share of the labor force in the eight years that they have been surveying. According to the study, Freelancers contributed \$1.3 trillion to the U.S. economy in annual earnings, up \$100 million from 2020. That proves the freelancing sector has tremendous potential and several other South Asian countries have invested heavily in this sector.

Freelancing opportunities are on the rise and the increase in freelancing, reflects that numerous doors are open for several skills categories. As a country toward a knowledge-based economy and digitally empowered society through the use and adoption of inclusive, affordable, and sustainable technology, still, Sri Lanka has not considered the opportunities in freelancing to face the current economic crisis. Considering the national importance, requirement, and contribution to the economy, ICTA has devised the National Freelancer Development Endeavor as a high-impact initiative for economic development and it will enhance Sri Lankan youth's skills, attitudes, and digital competencies, and their socioeconomic status and reduce unemployment and poverty.



## 2.0 Objectives

### 2.1 Overall Objective

Increase the freelancer contribution to the national digital economy to achieve 3 billion USD by 2024

### 2.2 Specific objectives

- To promote freelancing among Sri Lankans and to encourage, facilitate and capacitate Sri Lankan Youth to join with ICT freelancing workforce
- To build a strong conducive ecosystem for freelancers along with all stakeholders including freelancers, entrepreneurs, administrators, gov officials, educators, industry associations, innovators, and policymakers
- To develop a freelancer registration platform and maintain a freelancer database

## 3.0 Outcomes and Outputs

### 3.1 Outcomes

- Reduced the unemployment rate among youths
- Improved job opportunities for Sri Lankan Youth
- Increase the potential of youth employability in the ICT Industry
- Improved collaboration between different groups including relevant authorities, industry associations, freelancers, vocational training institutes, academic institutes, and other stakeholders
- Increased the registered freelancers who contribute to the national GDP
- Enhanced the quality and efficiency of freelancing
- Increased the knowledge and understanding on Freelancing among Gov Officials

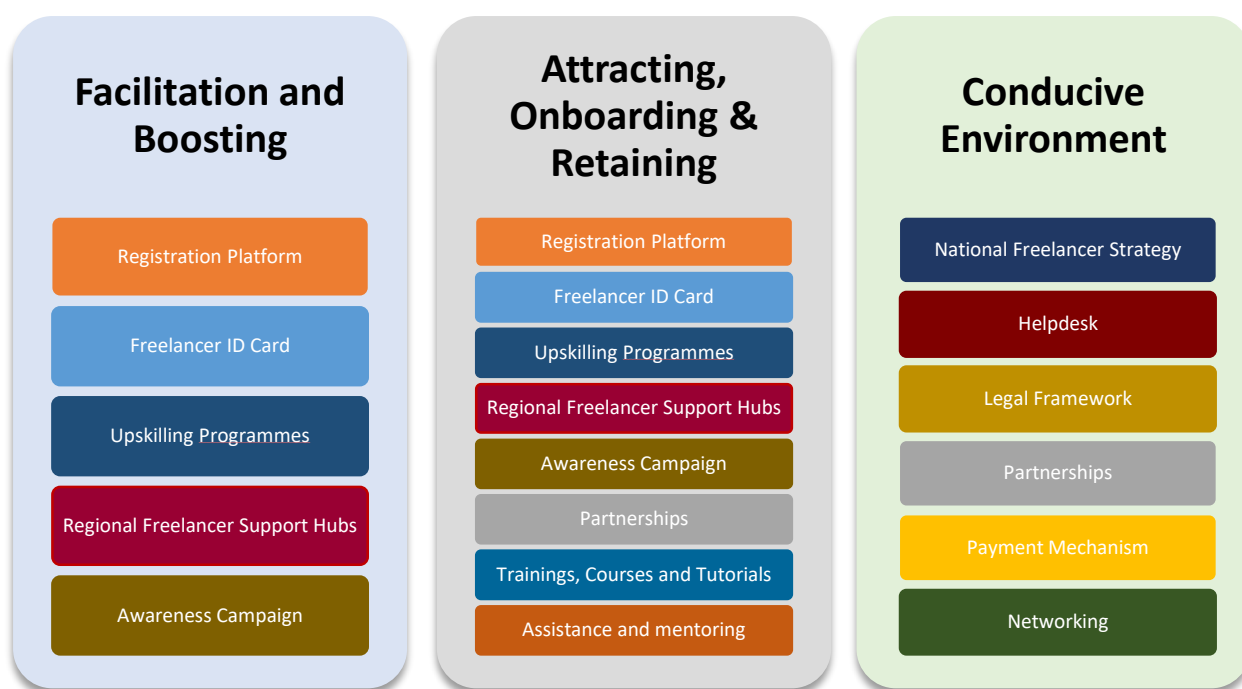
### 3.2 Outputs

- **162 USD** Mn contribution from freelancers to 3 Bn USD IT-BPM industry export revenue goal
- National Freelancer Strategy
- Registration platform for freelancers, and 50,000 new freelancer engagements by 2023
- Establishment and functioning of 25 Regional Freelancing Support Hubs
- 340 Freelancer Master Trainer programs for each divisional secretariat, 1,700 Master Trainers
- 100 Freelancer Development Officers
- Membership Card with benefits and Freelancer Wallet for Registered Freelancers
- National Freelancer Meetup / Forum for networking

## 4.0 Scope to be carried out

The ICTA has clearly identified the proper guidance, infrastructure development, financial support, government support, a proper mechanism for freelancing ecosystem development, training, and awareness of freelancing needs vital for the Sri Lankan freelancing community.

National Freelancer Development Endeavor is set to develop the future of Sri Lankan Freelancers and Digital Entrepreneurship. To develop a conducive environment, and to ensure the sustainability of the freelancing ecosystem, ICTA's National Freelancer Development Endeavor will be focused on new entries and already established freelancers. ICTA will be engaged to enable National Freelancer Development Endeavor under three interconnected strategies to increase Sri Lankan freelancer's footprint globally and a gain larger share of the global outsourcing businesses.



### Facilitation and Boosting

It has focused on already established freelancers and enables a user-friendly environment for freelancing with a supportive framework.

#### *Registration Platform*

National Freelancer Registration platform developed to register freelancers and provide multiple services to freelancers including following services

- Register already established freelancers
- Connect with investors
- Facilitate to exchange services

#### *Freelancer ID Card*

Freelancer ID Card with benefits including special loan schemes, affiliated credit card and access to multi-currency accounts.

#### *Regional Freelancing Development Support Hubs*

Establish in collaboration with key strategic partners across the country to promote freelancing, building capacities, facilitate freelancers to grow their businesses.

### ***Upskilling Programmes***

Execute upskilling programmes in collaboration with strategic partners to build capacities of already established freelancers.

### ***Awareness Campaign***

Country wide multi-channel awareness campaign to make citizens aware on freelancing and enhance the number of youth to join with freelancing workforce

## **Attracting, Onboarding and Retaining**

It is set to promote freelancing among Sri Lankans, develop the future of freelancers, support new freelancers to achieve better career goals, grow their businesses, and develop required skills.

### ***Trainings, Courses and Tutorials***

For proper guidance and building capacities of new freelancers, ICTA will be partnered with recognized institutes to upskill Sri Lankan freelancers by introducing recognized courses on freelancing to provide practical exposure, theoretical knowledge, and qualifications.

### ***Assistance and Mentoring***

Train 1,700 master trainers to assist and mentor new freelancers across the country. 100 freelancer development officers will be trained and appointed to execute Regional-level freelancing development activities in collaboration with business partners to promote freelancing and guide new freelancers.

## **Build a strong conducive ecosystem for freelancers**

### ***National Freelancer Strategy***

To develop the freelancing ecosystem and conducive environment, ICTA has planned to develop the National Freelancer Development Strategy with an operational model and governance mechanism. It will be ensured the sustainability of the National Freelancer Development Endeavor.

### ***Help Desk***

Freelancer Help Desk will be established as a hybrid help desk to facilitate all interested parties on freelancing.

### ***Legal Framework***

ICTA will be established legal framework to create enabling environment

### ***Partnerships***

ICTA will collaborate and partner with international and local associations to develop a conducive environment and get maximum benefits to local freelancers including enhance freelancing opportunities, enhance demand generation and enable required services.

### ***Payment Mechanism***

ICTA will lobby with relevant financial institutions to minimize inefficiencies in payment mechanisms.

### ***Networking***

National Freelancer Forum will be the networking platform to meet all freelancers, industry partners, and strategic stakeholders.