

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)
(CONSULTANCY SERVICES - FIRM SELECTION)

Country – India

Reference No. - KERA/08/CS/2024/REOI

Date: 29/01/2024

**Consultancy Services - Technical Support Agency for selection and handholding of 250
Agri & Food SMEs in the state of Kerala**

The Government of India has applied for financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the *Kerala Climate Resilient Agri Value Chain Modernization (KERA) Project* and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services.

The consulting services include selection and handholding of 250 SMEs and support the client in undertaking initiatives related to Agri -Food MSME for a duration of 4 years, ensuring full consistency with the TOR attached or referred to in this REOI.

The detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) for the assignment are attached to this request for expressions of interest.

The KERA now invites eligible consulting firms (“Consultants”) to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services. The shortlisting criteria are:

- i. Experience working on projects related to MSME for cluster/value chain diagnostic, proposal preparation, linkages with private players (supply chain, market and credit) and capacity building for central/state government or externally aided projects.
- ii. The firm shall furnish details of relevant similar assignments undertaken during the last 5 years supported by copies of the award /contract agreement letter.

The firm shall furnish relevant documents such as award /contract agreement letter, audited balance sheet statement etc.

- iii. Financial Capacity - The firm shall have an average annual turnover of Rs. 190 crores in India in three out of the previous 5 financial years (FY 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 & 2022-23).

The Expressions of interest (EOI), preferably not more than 100 pages prepared by firms shall be containing all relevant information but not limited to:

- i. Introductory letter on letterhead (with contact details – name of contact person, address, telephone, fax, email, etc.) for participation in REOI.
- ii. Organization profile and branches/ offices within the country.
- iii. Brief note on explaining how the firm is best to deliver the task.
- iv. Information regarding fulfilment of criteria listed above. The EOI should contain relevant supporting documents to substantiate the claims of the Consultant.

The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to Section III, paragraphs, 3.14, 3.16, and 3.17 of the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers" July 2016 and fifth edition September 2023. ("Procurement Regulations"), setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.

Consultants may associate with other firms to enhance their qualifications but should indicate clearly whether the association is in the form of a joint venture and/or a sub-consultancy. In the case of a joint venture, all the partners in the joint venture shall be jointly and severally liable for the entire contract, if selected.

A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the QCBS method set out in the Procurement Regulations.

The Client use the following electronic-procurement system to manage this Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) process: e-procurement system of Government of Kerala, <https://etenders.kerala.gov.in>. The electronic-procurement system will be used to manage REOI process such as issuing REOI, submissions of EOI, opening of EoIs etc.

Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours

Dr. B. Ashok, IAS

Project Director, KERA

Trans Tower, 3rd Floor, Vazhuthacaud, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India, PIN 695014

Telephone: +91 9496171960/ +91 7558975762

E-mail: keraprocurement@gmail.com

For further details, Terms of Reference (ToR) may be referred as follows: -

Terms of Reference

Assignment Title	Technical Support Agency for selection and handholding of 250 Agri & Food SMEs in the state of Kerala
Assignment Area	Kerala
Duration of Contract	Forty-Eight months

Background

Kerala, a state renowned for its progressive strides in economic development, is now embarking on a journey to revitalize its agricultural sector. While services form the cornerstone of its economy, agriculture continues to play a vital role, employing over 22%¹ of the state's population and possess untapped potential amidst diverse agroecological conditions. However, challenges such as fragmented landholdings, low adoption of technology, low productivity and an ageing farming population have impeded agricultural growth. Government of Kerala seeks World Bank funding through the KERA (Kerala Climate Resilient Agri Value Chain Modernisation) project to address these challenges and unlock the sector's latent potential. This project envisions to transform agri supply and value chains to empower MSMEs and farmer-producer organizations to strengthen market infrastructure, and to promote regenerative agriculture practices to revive natural ecosystems and to build climate resilience. The envisioned outcomes include a thriving local economy with increased land and labour profitability, adoption of climate-smart agriculture, reduced GHG emissions, enhanced agricultural service delivery, and expanded employment opportunities.

Objectives of the Assignment

Agri and Food MSMEs hold special importance due to their multifaceted contributions in Agriculture and allied sector. They serve as major employers in rural areas, thereby addressing issues related to unemployment and poverty. Furthermore, these enterprises play a crucial role in the value addition of agricultural produce, transforming agri-produce into processed goods and enhancing the income of farmers and other stakeholders along the value chain. Through their involvement in the agricultural supply chain, they facilitate seamless transition of produce from farm to market, providing crucial linkages for farmers to access broader markets and increase income opportunities. Moreover, these enterprises contribute to the innovation and modernization of food processing techniques, incorporating advanced technologies to meet quality and safety standards. By fostering these enterprises, the state can enhance its export potential by offering processed and value-added agricultural products to the international markets, thereby contributing to foreign exchange earnings to the state. Kerala is

¹ Kerala Economic Review 2022

home to about 17,000 Agri-Food based MSMEs which are spread across 14 districts of the state (as per Udyam Portal) These Agri-Food based MSMEs are spread across of diverse agri value chain pertaining to horticulture crops, paddy, pulses, rubber, coconut, coffee & tea, spices, honey, beverages, agri-machineries, warehousing and storage, logistics etc.

Department of Industries, Government of Kerala has launched a scheme named Mission 1000 for scaling up of 1000 selected MSME by providing assistance in form (i) subsidy for Capital Investment subsidy; (ii) Working Capital Interest Subvention; (iii) Assistance to prepare DPR; and (iv) One-to-one handholding, Capacity Building and Training. One of the objectives of KERA project is to develop market-oriented agribusiness value chain ecosystem by promoting high growth Agri – Food SMEs.. The focus is on selecting Agri – Food SMEs having potential to grow for creating higher employment and bring in additional investment leading to higher contribution to the GSDP. As Department of Industries is implementing similar scheme for all type of MSMEs, under the KERA project the aim is to provide support to selected 250 Agri and Food SMEs (Year 1-50, Year 2-100, Year 3-100), in similar lines to Mission 1000 (selection criteria of Mission 1000 will be followed with customization if required and intervention will be as per KERA project objectives). The interventions shall be based as per the requirement of selected SMEs. The KERA project will provide grant to each SME up to INR 90,00,000 based on the proposal / DPR and also provide assistance in backward, forward and credit linkages along with developing ecosystem for quality Business Development Service (BDS) / Technical Assistance (TA) providers to benefit all the MSMEs.

For providing handholding support to the selected Agri and Food SMEs, to avail the benefit of KERA programme related to MSME and its implementation, a Technical Support Agency (TSA) needs to be hired for a period of 48 months with a provision of 1 year of extension. Based on the project requirement and mutual consent yearly fee escalation (10 %) is allowed during the extension phase only.

1. To support the selected MSMEs in bridging the existing gaps. Some of the indicative areas of interventions could be but not limited to are technology upgradation, improved access to credit, improving inputs (raw material) and other factors of production including skilled manpower, quality conformance and compliance including certification, branding initiatives, improved market access and connect including export orientation and related certification, accelerated adoption of digital technology, adoption of green practices for energy efficiency & waste management, etc.
2. To support the client in undertaking following initiatives related to Agri -Food MSMEs:
 - a. Managing overall agribusiness MSME support interventions for KERA project (in line with Mission 1,000 scheme of Department of Industries)
 - b. Identification, empanelment, onboarding and managing of pool of national and international Business Development Service (BDS) / Technical Assistance (TA) providers to bring Kerala agri-food MSMEs to global standards and provide serviced to the selected SMEs
 - c. Capacity building, awareness programme and exposure for selected MSMEs in Entrepreneurship, Business Management, Skill Development and all others as identified/suggested by the client (i.e. PMU, KERA and Department of Industries)

- d. Development and adoption of export protocols for selected commodities.
- e. Promotion of bank linkages and facilitating access to commercial financing for MSMEs
- f. Organizing Market development events and programmes for all MSME to participate.
- g. National/International exposure visits for MSMEs and Government project staff.
- h. Capacity Building of government project staff on Agri and Food MSME.
- i. Identification of agency for technical advice & assessment of improving energy efficiency, waste management, etc.
- j. Other activities as per client (Department of Industries or KERA) requirement

Scope of Services, Tasks and Expected Deliverables

The following indicative activities shall encompass the scope of work for the project:

Outreach and Selection of 250 SMEs

- a. The consultant shall assist in planning and conducting outreach program in order to create awareness about the program interventions and generate encouraging responses and relevant applications under the program for year 2 and 3. For year – 1 after TSA is on boarded, they will assist in SME selection.
- b. The consultant shall facilitate in scrutinizing, evaluating the application as per the laid down criteria and presenting the findings before the competent selection committee for selection of Agri and Food SMEs for implementing suitable interventions.

Intervention

- c. The consultant shall be responsible for undertaking individual enterprise level SME analysis and diagnostics for developing business plans, specific DPR preparation including environmental and social management plan. The consultant will handhold the SME in preparation and approval of DPR from the client, bank linkage (if required), grant agreement, release of grant and implementation as per DPR. For assessment, business plan development and DPR preparation, the agency will bring specialized technical consultants / technical consulting partners on board for specific technical interventions related to certification, specific training, enhancing exports, new technology identification & adoption, access to financing, adoption to greener energies for energy efficiency, online marketing, etc.
- d. The consultant will also support the client (Department of Industries and KERA) in providing technical and managerial advisory on the below-mentioned activities:
 - Managing MSME support interventions as laid out in the Project Implementation Manual (PIM).
 - Develop a communications campaign to raise awareness about MSME interventions under the project.

- Identification and onboarding of best practice BDS/TA providers for MSME support in specific areas.
- Market development (providing market access, participation in trade fairs, onboarding on e-commerce platforms, joint marketing and branding efforts in targeted markets; and catalyze supplier development agreements with corporates, evolve stewardship, etc.).
- Development and adoption of export protocols for selected commodities.
- Facilitating access to commercial financing
- Promotion of bank linkages (organizing events between bankers and MSME)
- Identification and convergence for the supported SMEs with other central and state schemes.
- Exposure visits - National/International for the selected SMEs and govt. staff/line department functionaries
- Capacity building programs on thematic areas including but not limited to program on various government of India schemes for promotion of MSMEs and Agri Business, best practices in development of SME ecosystem including in the areas of policy advocacy, successful models for credit facilitation, convergence with GoI/State schemes, Institutional building, BDS linkages etc.
- Appropriate support shall be rendered in terms of providing benchmarking for various best national and international practices for promotion and development of MSME sector .
- Other activities as per client (Department of Industries or KERA) requirement

Reporting:

- e. The consultant shall be responsible for submission of brief monthly reports on agreed interventions performance parameters regarding project progress and registered, emerging problems, if any. They will also brief the Department of Industries on key issues and progress in bi-weekly meetings, or on a cadence as decided by the project.
- f. The consultant shall draft half yearly newsletter about the interventions to be shared in public domain.
- g. A presentation will have to be made on the achievements and challenges every quarter (3 months) or such earlier time as decided by the client (Department of Industries and KERA) The full project level review meeting will be based on this presentation on quarterly basis.

Monitoring & Evaluation:

- h. The consultant shall develop a short, medium, and long-term implementation action plan, milestone linked key performance indicators (KPIs) for the same and approaches to monitor them.
- i. The consultant shall develop Assessment Framework for evaluating the SME support interventions.

- j. The consultant shall monitor the implementation of the business plan and utilization of the grant as per the grant agreement and procurement process as per WB procurement norms.
- k. The consultant shall be responsible for a quarterly report capturing the progress, the emerging contours and the problems, if any.
- l. A presentation will have to be made to Department of Industries and KERA on the achievements after every quarter (3 months)
- m. At the beginning of every working year, the consultant will develop its Annual Work Plan in collaboration with the client (Department of Industries and KERA) and the project partners (Agri & Food SMEs). Subsequently, the consultant will be responsible for developing an annual report including case studies on success / failures.
- n. The consultant will be required to indicate the road map for the exit and sustainability plan.

Key Deliverables

Sl. No.	Deliverable
1	Inception Report with work plan
2	Outreach activity for the selection of 250 SMEs Target SME (Y-1: 50; Y-2: 100; Y-3; 100)
3	Interventions for 50 SMEs (assessment, business plan and intervention / support plan completed)
4	BDS/TA provision completed for 50 SMEs
5	Intervention for additional 100 SMEs (assessment, business plan and intervention / support plan completed) and monitoring of selected SMEs
6	BDS/TA provision completed for additional 100 MSMEs
7	Intervention for additional 100 SMEs (assessment, business plan and intervention / support plan completed) and monitoring of selected SMEs
8	BDS/TA provision completed for additional 100 SMEs, and monitoring of selected SMEs
9	Submission on successful case study report

Team Composition & Qualification Requirements for the Key Experts

Sl. No.	Key Experts	Number of Experts	Roles and Responsibilities	Expected Qualification & Experience
1	Team Leader / Project Manager -	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall management and establishing full functionality of the TSA as planned and ensuring programme targets are met with • Periodic reporting of the overall performance of the Programme to the PMU • Ensuring timely communication and compliance with all agreed upon financial and procurement procedures at the State level, where required • Establishing clear working relationship with district and field level agencies/key stakeholders and ensuring flow of information, discussions and feedback among the various stakeholders of the Programme • Facilitation in preparation, timely submissions and implementing of the approved plan • Support to the KERA team to enable convergence with various schemes identified under the program • Support in shortlisting of SMEs under the program • Any other work allotted by PMU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Graduate degree in economics / social sciences /public administration or Post Graduate Diploma / Master / MBA in business management from national/ international premier institutes or related streams • Eight years of experience in managing development projects preferably in MSME domain. • Three years of experience in Programme implementation in a leadership role. • Experience of working in externally aided projects • Proficiency in local language is preferable

Sl. No.	Key Experts	Number of Experts	Roles and Responsibilities	Expected Qualification & Experience
2	Credit & Finance Manager	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and coordinating partnerships with commercial banks/financial service providers • Coordinating with banks for facilitating credit proposals of the select beneficiaries • Coordinating with the team to review business plans for enterprises. Facilitation in preparation of business /credit /other plans- CGTMSE convergence • Facilitating convergence with Central schemes and availing benefits of State incentives for MSMEs; • Tasks as assigned by the Team Leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBA /PGDM/ CA / Economics or related fields, from a premium Institute • Six years of experience in working with commercial banks / FI / DFI / Financial sector with at least 3 years in leadership role • Experience in appraisal of business plans and financing MSMEs • Prior experience in dealing with MSMEs as part of credit linkages • Proficiency in local language is preferable
3	Business Development Service Manager-	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design outreach plan for creating awareness and eliciting maximum participation from Agri and Food based SMEs in the state • Market development and linkage and support in Capacity building programs • Identification and convergence with the BDS providers for sustainability and impactful implementation of the program • Providing domain inputs in review of applications • Participation in trade fairs, onboarding on e-commerce platforms, joint marketing and branding efforts in targeted markets; and catalyse supplier development agreements with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post graduate degree /MBA / equivalent in Agri Business /marketing / Rural / business management/ other relevant field • Demonstrated experience of working with State/Central Governments / public agencies in establishing business and marketing is preferrable • Five years of experience in business development of enterprises / MSMEs / enterprises / organization in establishing backward and forward (market) linkages • Experience with managing BDS / TA provision for the

Sl. No.	Key Experts	Number of Experts	Roles and Responsibilities	Expected Qualification & Experience
			corporates, evolve stewardship etc	<p>MSME / enterprises / organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in Agri-Business sector preferable • Proficiency in local language is preferable
4	Agri-business Promotion Specialist	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical input in terms of development of Business Plan, DPRs for the select SMEs, technical inputs in terms of machinery to be procured, quality conformance required etc • Support in undertaking complete value chain analysis at individual enterprise level and provide related technology inputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBA/PGDM in Agri Business or equivalent /Master's in food technology / engineering or relevant field • Five years of specific technology experience in food processing / agribusiness manufacturing / green technologies (energy efficiency / waste management) • Experience in undertaking value chain analysis, preparation of DPR including benchmarking of technology, developing technical document for procurement of the same, etc. • Proficiency in local language is preferable
5	M&E Manager	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide professional advice and support to the State in all matters relating to M&E and Data analysis in the Programme • Developing MIS to track the progress of the Programme in the State and aligning it with the State MIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post graduate degree /MBA / equivalent / Graduate with certificate on data analytics • Three years' experience in monitoring or data handling or data analytics on development Programme at national level

Sl. No.	Key Experts	Number of Experts	Roles and Responsibilities	Expected Qualification & Experience
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing regular reports on the physical and financial progress of the Programme • Participate in regular monitoring and evaluation of the Programme at the State level • Developing reports with respect to inputs, outputs, outcomes, processes and impacts of the various interventions and their compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to handle data for interpretation of information, experience in using statistical and M&E tools and dashboard preferred • Proficiency in local language is preferable
6	Procurement Specialist –	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating and assisting the Programme implementation agencies in the procurement of goods, works and services in accordance with approved procurement plan, following Procurement Regulations • To provide operational advice to the State on concepts, policies, and procedures for procurement • To gather client needs and liaise with the domain experts for preparation of bid documents- including EOI, RFPs, etc • Maintenance of procurement related records and documentation for audit/ review by the World Bank • Extend support on any and all procurement related activities under the Programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postgraduate / MBA / PGDM / similar, preferably with focus in contract management/ procurement • Minimum 3 years' experience in procurement function from preparation of tender document to awarding of tender • Experience in WB projects will be preferable
7	Business Development Service – Field Level Facilitators	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with identified and selected beneficiaries under the program and develop their business plan, including adoption of new technology, quality and conformance, investment in upgradation of plant & 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post graduation from any discipline. Preference shall be given to postgraduates from agri-business, business management or food technology domain

Sl. No.	Key Experts	Number of Experts	Roles and Responsibilities	Expected Qualification & Experience
			machinery, credit facilitation, market linkage, training & skill development etc • Local level liaison with line department officials, other stakeholders relevant to the program and activities • Support in implementation of the program on-ground and ensure adherence as per the program guidelines	• At least 2 years of relevant experience • Proficiency in local language is preferable

**T- Date of signing of contract*

Non-Key Experts: As required by selected Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), the client will notify the bidder to involve suitable technical experts. These experts will conduct assessments of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in specific technical domains, including but not limited to technology upgradation, certification processes, product quality, food safety, energy efficiency, and waste/effluent management, in accordance with the needs of the MSMEs. Their responsibilities will extend to facilitating linkages with Business Development Services (BDS) and Technical Assistance (TA), as well as participating in the preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs). Additionally, they will play a role in the implementation of SME proposals/DPRs and offer support as per the client's requirements. Applicants for this position should hold a graduate or postgraduate degree in any discipline and possess expertise or certification in relevant fields such as food technology/engineering, product quality, food safety, energy efficiency, water/effluent management, or similar areas.

Reporting Requirements and Time Schedule for Deliverables

The consultant is expected to submit reports and documents in collaboration with other stakeholders (if any) according to the specified milestones. Payments will be disbursed in phases, contingent upon the delivery of the final versions of each output, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Time Schedule for Deliverables

Sl. No.	Deliverable	Timeline In Months
1	Inception Report with work plan	T+2 Month

Sl. No.	Deliverable	Timeline In Months
2	Outreach activity for the selection of 250 SMEs Target SME (Y-1: 50; Y-2: 100; Y-3: 100)	T+6 Month
3	Interventions for 50 SMEs (assessment, business plan and intervention / support plan completed)	T+18 Months
4	BDS/TA provision completed for 50 SMEs	T+24 months
5	Intervention for additional 100 SMEs (assessment, business plan and intervention / support plan completed) and monitoring of selected SMEs	T+30 Months
6	BDS/TA provision completed for additional 100 MSMEs	T+36 months
7	Intervention for additional 100 SMEs (assessment, business plan and intervention / support plan completed) and monitoring of selected SMEs	T+42 Months
8	BDS/TA provision completed for additional 100 SMEs, and monitoring of selected SMEs	T+48 months
9	Submission on successful case study report	T+48 months

- Billing shall be on a monthly basis. However, the milestones will be monitored on half yearly basis, as mentioned in the above deliverables. In case the delay is attributed to the consulting agency, then the monthly payments will be withheld till the time deliverables are achieved. If the delay is due to other reasons not attributed to the consulting agency, then the monthly payment will be processed.
- The client shall periodically assess the execution of the assignment. On being found unsatisfactory, the KERA project team shall have the right to take necessary corrective action including terminating the contract after providing required notice as per World Bank norms.

Client's Input and Counterpart Personnel

- The consultant will report to the KERA PMU.
- The activities of the consultancy will be monitored and evaluated by the PMU through monthly meetings and progress reports.
- The KERA PMU shall support the successful bidder in facilitating collection of published and non-sensitive information from relevant departments by providing authorization support to the successful bidder.
- The consultancy should arrange for seating arrangement/office of their own in Thiruvananthapuram.