

TERMS OF REFERENCE

External Service Provider (ESP)

External Service Provider (ESP) to Support Productive Partnerships (PPs) under the RNR Jobs Project

1. Background and Context

The Royal Government of Bhutan, with support from the World Bank, is implementing the Renewable Natural Resource (RNR) Jobs Project, which aims to accelerate job creation and income growth through strengthened RNR value chains.

A key instrument under the Project is the Productive Partnerships (PPs) approach, which promotes structured collaboration between Producer Groups (PGs), cooperatives, farmers' organizations, and private sector enterprises through jointly prepared and implemented Business Plans (BPs).

To ensure inclusive participation, quality proposal development, effective onboarding of capable partnerships and timely implementation, monitoring and reporting of the BPs, the Project Management Unit (PMU) intends to engage an External Service Provider (ESP) with strong agribusiness and partnership development expertise.

The ESP will provide targeted, harmonized, and tailored support to potential and selected PPs, complementing PMU-led awareness and outreach activities.

2. Objectives of the Assignment

The overall objective of the assignment is to strengthen the quality, viability, and readiness of Productive Partnerships to submit quality BPs to the project by supporting interested stakeholders throughout the PP timeline — from post-awareness engagement to Business Plan preparation, implementation, monitoring and reporting — thereby improving the effectiveness and impact of the RNR Jobs Project.

Specific objectives are to:

- Enable interested Producer Groups and enterprises to form viable, market-oriented partnerships through dedicated match making and capacity needs assessment;
- Improve the quality of Expressions of Interest (EoIs) submitted through training;
- Build the capacity of shortlisted PPs to prepare sound, bankable, and implementable Business Plans;
- Ensure clear, consistent, and timely communication on PP procedures and requirements throughout the Call for Proposals.
- Support timely implementation, monitoring, and reporting on progress, milestones, issues, and challenges.

3. Scope of Work

The ESP shall carry out the following tasks, structured around the different stages of the PP process. The tasks defined below are for the 1st round of call for proposal which is expected to be completed in a period of 12 months including six months of preparatory phase for EoI and BP, and another six months for monitoring and reporting during implementation. There is a scope for extension of contract considering the performance of the ESP and the requirements for the 2nd round of call for proposal.

3.1 Post-Awareness Activities and Pre-EoI Support

Following PMU-led awareness and sensitization activities, the ESP shall:

a. Engage Interested Participants

- Work with Producer Groups (PGs), cooperatives, farmer groups, and agribusiness enterprises that express interest in participating in the PP during or after awareness activities.
- Maintain a registry of interested participants who do not yet have engagement with PG or buyers or have no solid business idea and track follow-up engagements.

b. Capacity Needs and Opportunity Assessment

- Assess technical, organizational, financial, and market-related capacities of PGs and enterprises who are interested in submitting a business proposal to the project.
- Identify complementarities, gaps, and risks relevant to forming viable PPs.

c. Matchmaking and Partnership Formation

- Facilitate matchmaking between PGs and enterprises based on value-chain logic, geographic proximity, scale, and market potential.
- Support partners in clarifying roles, responsibilities, and preliminary commercial understanding.

d. Support to EoI Conceptualization

- Guide emerging PPs in articulating a clear and coherent business idea aligned with Project objectives.
- Ensure that EoIs reflect realistic scope, partnership readiness, and eligibility requirements (without drafting or submitting EoIs on behalf of applicants).

3.2 Support During the Entire Call for Proposals

Throughout the Call for Proposals period, the ESP shall lead structured communication and clarification activities, including:

a. Workshops

- Conduct regular group workshops to explain:
 - ✓ EoI preparation: EoI requirements and evaluation criteria;
 - ✓ BP preparation: Business Plan structure, expectations, and evaluation process;
 - ✓ Onboarding: PP onboarding process and post-approval obligations.
 - Compile and provide standardized responses and explanations to frequently asked questions (FAQs).
- Share findings from workshops with PMU immediately after each workshop to ensure that the project can take immediate course correction
- Coordinate closely with the PMU to align messages, schedules, and materials (FAQs etc) as per the communications strategy of the project.
- Ensure consistency with the PMU guidance and official project documents.
- Flag recurring issues or bottlenecks observed among applicants.

3.3 Post-EoI Selection Support for Business Plan Development

For PPs whose EoIs are declared eligible and selected, the ESP shall:

a. Financial Education and Business Literacy (FEBL)

- Design and deliver FEBL modules covering, inter alia, to strengthen the capacity of selected PPs to accurately estimate financial indicators in the BP:
 - ✓ Basic financial concepts and record-keeping;
 - ✓ Costing, pricing, and revenue estimation;
 - ✓ Cash flow management and profitability;
 - ✓ Understanding matching grants and co-financing.

- Tailor delivery methods to participant capacity (workshops, hands-on sessions, games, simplified tools etc).

b. Capacity Development for Business Planning

- Provide structured guidance on:
 - ✓ Value chain analysis and market assessment;
 - ✓ Production planning and aggregation models;
 - ✓ Governance and operational arrangements within PPs;
 - ✓ Budget planning and the concept of tranche based disbursement
 - ✓ Risk identification and mitigation measures.
- Respond to reasonable, PP-driven requests for additional capacity development to improve BP quality through group workshops.

c. Quality Enhancement (Non-Substitutive Role)

- Support PPs to improve clarity, coherence, and completeness of BPs without preparing or finalizing BPs on their behalf through group workshops.
Reinforce ownership and understanding by PP members.

3.4 Support during implementation phase

a. Coordination between PPs and PMU

- Facilitate communication between PPs and PMU
- Ensure roles and commitments are adhered to by the PPs.
- Support the PMU in resolving operational issues and misunderstanding
- Monitor implementation progress and timelines as per the agreement
- Support PMU in establishing systems (monitoring, reporting, review, dashboards etc)

b. Business plan implementation support

- Tracking milestones as detailed in the business plan
- Facilitate timely submission of documents for tranche release
- Regularly engage with PPs to ensure alignment with project objectives
- Support PMU in undertaking capacity building programs
- Promote participation of women, youth, PwDs and marginalized groups.

c. Reporting and documentation

- Support collection, collation of field data for reporting.
- Ensure timely submission of quality reports as per the agreement
- Document learning from the implementation experience
- Support PMU in updating website

4. Indicative Workload Assumptions

The following assumptions are provided for proposal preparation and indicative workload estimation purposes only. Actual requirements may vary depending on implementation progress, stakeholder participation, and Project requirements.

Item	Indicative Estimate
Number of Productive Partnerships (PPs) expected to be supported	Approximately 100-150 PPs, 150-250 proposals
Geographic coverage	10-15 Dzongkhags across Bhutan
Number of awareness / clarification / training workshops	Approximately [15–25] workshops
Number of Business Plan support workshops	Approximately [10–15] workshops
FEBL and capacity building group trainings delivered	5 – 6 depending on number of PPs
Expected number of field visits	Regular field engagement throughout implementation period
Expected beneficiaries/stakeholders	Producer Groups, cooperatives, agribusiness enterprises, SMEs, and other relevant stakeholders
Expected implementation duration	Approximately 12 months

5. Duration of the Assignment

The assignment is expected to cover the full duration of one Call for Proposals cycle, including pre-EoI, EoI, BP preparation and onboarding phases and implementation phase, estimated at **12 months**, with the possibility of extension subject to performance and project needs and dependent on the project's plan for organizing additional rounds of call for proposals.

6. Deliverables

Indicative deliverables include:

Deliverable	Indicative Timeline / Frequency	Minimum Requirements
Inception Report	Within 2 weeks of contract signing	Detailed work plan, staffing plan, engagement strategy, approaches to FEBL and other trainings, implementation schedule, and coordination arrangements with PMU
Registry of potential interested partners	During pre-EoI phase	An excel based database that contains basic information on the partner and type of support received from the ESP
Capacity Needs Assessment and Matchmaking Reports	During pre-EoI phase	Summary of stakeholder engagement, capacity assessment findings, matchmaking activities, and identified partnership opportunities
Consolidated Workshop Report and Documentation	After finishing the workshops/activities	Consolidated findings from the workshop with detailed annexes on individual workshop agenda, presentation materials, attendance records, photographs (where applicable), and summary of discussions/issues raised
FEBL Training Modules and Delivery Reports	During BP preparation phase	Training materials, participant records, workshop reports, and summary of capacity-building activities conducted

Monthly Progress Reports	Monthly	Summary of activities undertaken, field engagements, progress against work plan, implementation challenges, and planned activities for following month
Final Consolidated Report	At completion of assignment	Summary of activities undertaken, outputs achieved, lessons learned, implementation challenges, recommendations, and overall assignment assessment

All reports and deliverables shall be submitted in formats acceptable to the PMU.

The PMU may request revisions or clarifications on submitted deliverables prior to approval.

Submission and approval of deliverables shall form the basis for contract monitoring and payment certification.

7. Reporting and Coordination

- The ESP shall report to the Project Management Unit (PMU).
- PP coordinator, with guidance from Project Manager, will be the focal point to provide oversight and coordination.
- Regular coordination meetings shall be held to ensure alignment and timely issue resolution.

Logistics and Coordination Responsibilities

The ESP shall be responsible for planning and organizing activities necessary for implementation of the assignment, including field visits, workshops, meetings, training activities, communication support, and stakeholder engagement activities.

Unless otherwise agreed by the PMU, the ESP shall make necessary arrangements related to:

- Travel and accommodation of consultant personnel;
- Workshop organization and coordination;
- Preparation and printing of training and communication materials;
- Translation and interpretation support, where required;
- Documentation of workshops and field activities;
- Logistical arrangements necessary for delivery of agreed activities.

The PMU shall facilitate coordination with relevant government agencies, local authorities, and stakeholders, and may support venue coordination and participant mobilization where feasible.

Detailed logistical arrangements and responsibilities shall be finalized during contract negotiations and implementation planning.

8. Required Qualifications and Experience of the ESP

The ESP shall be a legally registered firm with:

- a) **Core business and organizational experience:** At least five years of demonstrated institutional experience in agribusiness development, renewable natural resource value chains, enterprise development, productive partnerships, or other fields directly relevant to the assignment.

- b) **Relevant experience in similar assignments:** Demonstrated experience in at least three completed or substantially completed assignments during the last five years involving a combination of agribusiness or value-chain development, productive partnership facilitation, business-plan development and implementation support, and capacity building of farmer organizations, cooperatives, or SMEs. Experience in comparable assignments financed by governments, development partners, or other clients involving similar coordination, reporting, capacity-building, and stakeholder-engagement requirements.
- c) **Technical capacity:** Demonstrated institutional capacity to provide multidisciplinary support in agribusiness, partnership development, business and financial planning, capacity building, stakeholder facilitation, and implementation support.
- d) **Managerial and organizational capacity:** Demonstrated capacity to manage and coordinate decentralized, field-based assignments involving multiple beneficiaries, government agencies, private-sector entities, and other stakeholders.

9. Ethical Standards, Confidentiality, and Ownership of Outputs

The ESP shall maintain strict confidentiality of applicant information, avoid conflicts of interest, and adhere to applicable ethical standards and World Bank procurement and integrity guidelines.

All reports, databases, training materials, workshop outputs, attendance records, communication materials, field documentation, and other outputs prepared under the assignment shall become the property of the Project Management Unit (PMU).

The ESP shall not disclose, reproduce, distribute, or use project-related information or outputs for purposes unrelated to the assignment without prior written approval from the PMU.

All data collected during implementation shall be treated as confidential and shall be submitted to the PMU upon request or completion of the assignment.

10. Team Composition and Key Experts

The ESP shall deploy a multidisciplinary team with demonstrated experience in agribusiness development, partnership facilitation, and capacity building. The indicative team structure is outlined below. Firms may propose alternative structures, provided all required competencies are met.

Indicative Team Composition

Position	Minimum Qualifications	Key Experience	Indicative Level of Effort
Team Leader / Agribusiness Specialist (1*)	Postgraduate degree in Agribusiness, Economics, Rural Development, or related field	Minimum 7 years' experience in agribusiness development, value chain projects, or Productive Partnerships; prior experience in World Bank or IFI-funded projects preferred	12 person-months

Partnership & Value Chain Development Expert (2)	Graduate/Postgraduate in Agriculture, Agribusiness, or related field	At least 5 years' experience in producer organization strengthening, enterprise linkages, and market-led agriculture	24 person-months
Financial Education & Business Planning Expert (1)	Graduate/Postgraduate in Finance, Accounting, Economics, or Business Administration	At least 3 years' experience in FEBL delivery, SME finance, business planning, or cooperative finance	5 person-months
Monitoring, reporting & compliance officer (1)	Graduate degree in Social Sciences, Education, or related field	Minimum 3 years' experience in monitoring, evaluation and reporting	5 person-months
Field**Coordinators / Facilitators (3)	Relevant graduate degree or equivalent experience	Experience working with farmer groups, cooperatives, or rural enterprises in Bhutan	24 person-months

* One each for Agriculture and Livestock

** To be based in central, east, and west - they will be the key liaison person to link the PMU, ESP, RAMCOs and coordinate the field verifications.

Note:

- Consultants are encouraged to propose Experts have experience of working in Bhutan.
- Local expertise and use of national professionals is strongly encouraged.

11. Selection Procedure

The consultant firm will be selected following the consultants' qualification-based selection (CQS) as set forth in the World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers, February 2025.

Conflict of Interest and Ineligibility

- Firms or individuals involved in evaluation of EoIs or Business Plans under the Project shall be ineligible for this assignment.
- The ESP shall not prepare, draft, or submit EoIs or Business Plans on behalf of applicants.
- Any actual or potential conflict of interest must be disclosed at proposal submission stage.

12. Evaluation Criteria

The EoI will be evaluated using the following criteria and scoring system:

Criteria	Description	Maximum Score
A. Firm's Relevant Experience	Demonstrated experience in agribusiness development, value chain support, Productive Partnerships, and donor-funded projects	55 5-7years-15 8-10 years-35 10 above-55
B. Team Composition & Key Experts	Qualifications, relevance, balance of skills, and adequacy of proposed level of effort	30

C. Local Presence & Contextual Knowledge	Experience in Bhutan or similar contexts; engagement of national professionals and local institutions	15
Total Technical Score		100

13. Roles and Responsibilities of the PMU

The PMU shall:

- Lead awareness and sensitization activities;
- Provide official guidelines, templates, and eligibility criteria;
- Facilitate coordination with relevant government agencies and stakeholders;
- Review and approve deliverables in a timely manner.

The ESP shall **not** be involved in evaluation or approval of EoIs or Business Plans.

14. Indicative Payment Milestones

Payments to the External Service Provider (ESP) shall be linked to satisfactory submission and approval of deliverables by the Project Management Unit (PMU).

The following indicative payment milestone structure may be considered during contract negotiation:

Milestone	Indicative Deliverable	% of Contract Value
Milestone 1	Submission and approval of Inception Report	10%
Milestone 2	Completion of post-awareness engagement, capacity needs assessment, and matchmaking support activities	15%
Milestone 3	Completion of workshops, communication support activities, FAQs, and clarification support during Call for Proposals	20%
Milestone 4	Completion of FEBL delivery and Business Plan capacity development support activities	25%
Milestone 5	Submission and approval of final consolidated report and completion of implementation support activities	30%

Payments shall be made only upon satisfactory completion and approval of agreed deliverables.

The PMU may request revisions, clarifications, or additional supporting documentation prior to approval of deliverables and release of payments.

Detailed payment terms shall be finalized during contract negotiations.