Request for Proposals - Consultancy
RFP: Implementing Partner Due Diligence Validation Process
Application deadline: Wednesday 18th November 2020

RFP n#: 2020-11-IMP-DUEDILIGENCE
Location: Remote
Start date: 30th November 2020
End date: TBC
BCI key contact: Emma Dennis
Implementation Team
tender@bettercotton.org

All applications must be sent to tender@bettercotton.org and addressed to the BCI key contact, with the subject header: “2021-11-IMP-DUEDILIGENCE Implementing Partner Due Diligence validation process”. Further information about the application timeline and process is detailed below. Questions, requests and applications sent after the deadline (Wednesday 18th November 2020) will not be considered.

BCI BACKGROUND:
The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) is a global not-for-profit organisation and the largest cotton sustainability programme in the world. BCI exists to make global cotton production better for the people who produce it, better for the environment it grows in and better for the sector’s future. In the 2018-19 cotton season, BCI and our on-the-ground partners provided training on more sustainable farming practices to 2.3 million cotton farmers across 23 countries, and Better Cotton accounted for 22% of global cotton production.

PROJECT BACKGROUND:
BCI is focused on affecting change: reducing the environmental impact of cotton production and improving the livelihoods of cotton farmers through the production of Better Cotton. To achieve this change, BCI coordinates a capacity building programme, delivered through experienced field-level partners, referred to as BCI Implementing Partners (IPs). These IPs help farmers to adopt practices consistent with the Better Cotton Standard System (BCSS). In 2020, approximately 40% of the IPs were funded by BCI through the Better Cotton Growth and Innovation Fund (Better Cotton GIF).

The credibility of the BCSS therefore relies, in part, on BCI’s ability to select and work with competent IPs. BCI developed its current IP Endorsement process, and the corresponding IP Agreement in 2013, to support a phase of rapid growth. As BCI has continued to expand and develop, the Endorsement Process and IP Agreement no longer meet BCI’s needs in terms of due diligence, governance and transparency of information.

Consequently, BCI recognises the need to increase the rigour of the IP Endorsement process; introducing a new ‘enhanced’ due diligence framework and a more robust IP Agreement, to ensure credibility in both the selection of IPs and the implementation of the BCSS. Furthermore, following the recent outcomes of the Decent Work Taskforce, BCI needs to better understand the structure and delivery modality of each IP in order to support them to operate with integrity and regard for farmer and worker welfare. This is increasingly important as BCI strives to achieve its 2030 goal of greater environmental, economic and social impact at farm level.
PROJECT OBJECTIVES:
Initial work has been completed by BCI to assess the existing due diligence process, identify gaps and ascertain needs. BCI is now seeking a consultant to review the enhanced due diligence framework which must:
- Be appropriate for the sector and applicable in the different country contexts in BCI operates.
- Allow BCI to apply a consistent, but proportional, approach to due diligence over range of IPs which BCI works with i.e. unfunded, funded (via the Better Cotton GIF), NGO, commercial, governmental.
- Not be beyond the management capacity of BCI given the number of endorsements conducted annually and the requirement to conduct future due diligence.
  - On average, 10 newly endorsed IPs per season.
  - 2021/22 forecasted between 5-7 new IPs.
- Minimise unnecessary burden on IPs, but identify any risk of engagement with each IP, enabling BCI to make an informed decision on latter endorsement.
- Include sections on Governance and Control (including Decent Work and Safeguarding), Financial Sustainability and Financial Governance and Downstream Partner Management.

The enhanced due diligence framework, once finalised, will be piloted with a selection of IPs proposed by BCI (between 3-5) that represent the range of IPs that BCI work with. The consultant will be required to work remotely with the IPs in question and local BCI staff to conduct the due diligence, acquire necessary evidence and review the findings.

The findings of the enhanced due diligence pilot should be used to inform minimum acceptable standards/ or risk thresholds that IPs must meet to be endorsed. In the event that risks are identified, the consultant should consider what mitigating and/or remedial actions should be taken and what support should be provided by BCI to help IPs to meet due diligence requirements going forward. As part of the endorsement process, BCI will also assess an IPs ‘Ability to Deliver’ – this component will be designed and delivered by BCI.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES:
I. Review of due diligence framework to ensure it meets the project objectives, making recommendations where not
II. Define ‘non-negotiable’ requirements that any BCI IP should meet and/or acceptable risk levels appropriate for BCI
III. Provide guidance on how BCI or external auditors can validate supporting evidence provided by the IPs in response to the due diligence – e.g. financial controls or the presence of a safeguarding policy. BCI would seek recommendations for the scope of validation are reasonable for IP’s to deliver. BCI GIF seeks to obtain Government Funding for some IP’s. These donors will require the IP’s to comply with best practise for donor reporting and contracting.
IV. Recommend methodology for how BCI will mitigate, remediate and monitor risks highlighted by due diligence. This should include; realistic timeframes/cut-offs, milestones and monitoring needs.
V. Tools and templates to support the due diligence process.
VI. Remotely review outputs of the pilot due diligence with 3-5 IPs, submitting a due diligence report on each IP.
VII. Provide recommendations on potential adjustments post pilot, as well as when and how to review the due diligence framework going forward.
We expect the consultant to seek comments and feedback from BCI in sufficient time to discuss and incorporate them into the final deliverables. The project timeline may be adapted pending recommendations from the consultant.

WAYS OF WORKING:
BCI will provide access to our current due diligence and endorsement materials and any other relevant resources internally.

The BCI Project team will include, but is not limited to:

- Senior Manager: Sustainable Agricultural Practice
- Senior International Finance Manager
- Assurance Manager
- Senior Global Programme Coordinator
- Global Programme Officer

Microsoft Teams is our preferred platform for project coordination and collaboration. Weekly meetings will be organised for the duration of the consultancy. To maximise the learning potential from the consultancy, BCI may publish materials or excerpts from them or may otherwise share them with interested parties.

EXPERIENCE, SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES:

- Demonstrable experience writing, deploying and reviewing due diligence frameworks in the development sector
- Experience working in international organisations
- Field level experience in India, Pakistan and/or any other countries in which BCI operates
- Financial and/or legal expertise
- Strong analytical and communication skills
- Excellent reporting and presentation skills
- Fluency in spoken and written English

TIMELINE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application process</th>
<th>By 18th November</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submission of project proposal, CV and two references. Proposals must include:</td>
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<td>Application review and shortlisting / Interviews</td>
<td>November 19th to 25th</td>
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<td>By November 27th</td>
<td>The successful applicant will be notified Unsuccessful shortlisted applicants will also be notified</td>
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<td>November 30th</td>
<td>Project kick-off</td>
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<td>By end December 2020</td>
<td>Deliverable I: Review of due diligence framework to ensure it meets the project objectives, making recommendations where not</td>
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<td>Deliverable II: Provide guidance on how BCI will validate supporting evidence provided by the IPs in response to the</td>
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<td>Due Diligence</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td><strong>By end of February 2021</strong></td>
<td><strong>Deliverable III:</strong> Recommend methodology for how BCI will mitigate, remediate and monitor risks highlighted by due diligence. This should include: realistic timeframes/cut-offs, milestones and monitoring needs.</td>
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<td><strong>By April 2021</strong></td>
<td><strong>Deliverable IV:</strong> Remotely review outputs of the pilot due diligence with 3-5 IPs, submitting a due diligence report on each IP.</td>
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<td><strong>Deliverable V:</strong> Provide recommendations on potential adjustments post pilot, as well as when and how to review the due diligence framework going forward</td>
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<td><strong>Deliverable VI:</strong> Define ‘non-negotiable’ requirements that any BCI IP should meet and/or acceptable risk levels appropriate for BCI</td>
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We thank all applicants for their interest; however only shortlisted applicants will be contacted. BCI is committed to good practice and transparency in the management of natural, human and financial resources. All applications will be reviewed under these principles and subject to BCI’s policies on equal opportunity, non-discrimination, anti-bribery & corruption and conflict of interest. If you have any questions on the RFP please submit them to tender@bettercotton.org in good time ahead of the final submission date and we will respond as promptly as possible.