

Request for Proposals Country Strategy and Holistic Programme Design

RFP n#: 2025-4-PR-CSHPRDESIGN

Location: Global

Start date: 27 May 2025

End date: 07 Dec 2025

Better Cotton key contact:

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Global Programmes



All applications must be submitted via this [form](#).

You may submit questions to tender@bettercotton.org - RFP n# 2025-4-PR-CSHPRDESIGN until 2 May 2025.

Questions, requests and applications sent after the **EXTENDED DEADLINE of 11th May 2025** will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

PLEASE NOTE THE DEADLINE HAS NOW BEEN EXTENDED UNTIL THE 11TH MAY 2025. IF YOU HAVE ALREADY SUBMITTED A PROPOSAL BUT WISH TO RESUBMIT BASED ON INFORMATION FOUND IN THE Q&A SECTION, PLEASE DO SO BY COMPLETING THE FORM AGAIN, VIA THE LINK PROVIDED IN THIS DOCUMENT.

AT THE END OF THIS DOCUMENT, THERE IS A QUESTION AND ANSWER SECTION WHICH YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO GO THROUGH IN PREPARATION FOR SUBMITTING YOUR BIDS

Description

Better Cotton is the world's largest cotton sustainability programme. Our mission: to help cotton communities survive and thrive, while protecting and restoring the environment. In difficult times, we are meeting the challenge head on. Through our network of field-level partners we have provided training on more sustainable farming practices to more than 2.9 million cotton farmers in 26

countries. More than a fifth of the world's cotton is now grown under the Better Cotton Standard and our membership network includes more than 2,400 members.

More information about Better Cotton can be found on our website: www.bettercotton.org

Background

We are seeking proposals from skilled individuals or organisations interested in supporting multistakeholder organisations such as Better Cotton to develop country specific strategies. Better Cotton works through partners to strengthen the capacity of farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural practices, improve livelihoods while enhancing environmental and social outcomes for farm workers and farmers.

As part of our commitment to create lasting systemic change, Better Cotton aims to develop country specific, programme strategies and holistic programme designs that respond to local contexts, align with national policies, and integrate best practices in sustainability and align with other internal approaches and strategies. The strategies should be in line with [Better Cotton's strategy 2030](#), support farmers to produce cotton in line with the Principles and Criteria v.3.0, (P&C) and tangibly contribute to our internal social impact strategies on decent work, gender, livelihoods and climate as well as align with the global evidence framework. The country strategies should align with country level sustainability 'hot spots', which can be used as a method of prioritising support.

The country strategies will guide programme design and implementation, ensuring effective partner engagement, risk management and impact measurement.

To achieve this, Better Cotton is seeking proposals from skilled individuals or organisations to support the development of country-specific strategies. This consultancy has two distinct components:

1. Developing generic tools and templates – creating standardised resources that Better Cotton teams can use independently for country strategy development
2. Facilitating country strategy and holistic programme design – support Better Cotton teams in applying these tools to develop tailored country strategies and programme frameworks.

The consultant(s) will ensure that all resources and strategies align with Better Cotton's Strategy 2030, the Better Cotton farm-level standard (P&C), national policies on agriculture (and cotton) in countries where there are direct programmes and global sustainability best practices.

Objectives of the Consultancy:

Develop generic processes, tools and templates

- Design tools, templates, and guidance documents, that can be adapted to any country context, to streamline country strategy development and ensure alignment.
- Train Better Cotton teams (Programmes and Impact) on how to use the tools effectively.

Facilitate the Development of Country Strategies and Holistic Programme Design

- Work with Better Cotton's Senior Directors, Country Directors and Programme Leads to use the tools to develop country-specific strategies for 2 countries.
- Support country teams to conduct situational/context analysis, including desk research, stakeholder consultations, and workshops.
- Support the creation of holistic programme designs that integrate sustainability, social and environmental impact and risk management.

Scope of Work

The consultant will be expected to undertake the following key activities:

Resource Development to guide the Country Strategy Process

1. **Develop generic tools, resources and guidance templates**
 - o Kick-off meetings with Better Cotton teams to align expectations
 - o Develop standardised tools and templates for country strategy development
 - o Create guidance documents covering situational analysis, programme design and implementation
 - o Train Better Cotton teams on the use of tools and resources.

Deliverables

- Tools and templates for country strategy development
- Guidance document on process and methodology
- Training sessions for Better Cotton teams

Facilitate the Development of Country Strategies and Holistic Programme Design

This work will be led by the Better Cotton country teams with relevant collaboration at the Global level. The role of the consultant is to facilitate and provide targeted support.

1. **Inception**
 - o Kick-off the project with relevant inception meetings
 - o Collect/assess available documentation
 - o Draft an inception report and prepare a workplan
2. **Desk Review and Contextual/Situational Analysis**
 - o Working with country teams conduct a situation analysis (needs, geographic, funding, competitor landscape). Review existing country-specific policies, sustainability challenges, and sector reports.
 - o Review current strategic documents

- Conduct interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders (partners and other functions at Better Cotton)
- Integrate approach papers and functional or thematic strategies into the analysis and narrative and hold validation workshops with relevant stakeholders
- Draft situational analysis report.

Deliverables

- Situational/context analysis
- Stakeholder engagement summary

3. Strategy and Programme Design

- Conduct workshops with country teams on their strategic objectives to 2030
- Facilitate workshops to gather insights and validate proposed strategies.
- Produce country-specific strategy documents and a theory of change in line with Better Cotton's global theory of change with clear objectives, priorities, and implementation pathways.
- Design a holistic programme framework, integrating environmental, social, and economic sustainability principles, providing a clear direction of travel for Better Cotton's work with the farming communities, including farmers and workers in each country of operation.
- Work with Better Cotton's MEL team to align key performance indicators (KPIs) to existing MEL frameworks.
- Outline phased implementation plans with key milestones and timelines
- Identify funding opportunities and partnerships to support programme sustainability under the programme design framework.
- Hold final discussions on strategic decisions with leadership and key country stakeholders.
- Finalise strategy documents – narrative, ToC, ready-made programme concepts.

Deliverables

- Country strategy documents (one per country)
- Programme Design Framework
- Risk Mitigation Strategy
- Implementation Roadmap
- Final Strategy presentation

In addition to skills, competencies and expertise, we will consider value for money and demonstrable commitment to the sustainability field to evaluate applications.

Deliverables

The key deliverables for this consultancy(ies) include:

Resource Development to support/guide the Country Strategy Process

- Tools and templates for country strategy development
- Guidance document on process and methodology

Facilitate the Development of Country Strategies and Holistic Programme Design

- Training sessions for Better Cotton teams
- Situational/context analysis
- Stakeholder engagement summary
- Country strategy documents (one per country)
- Programme Design Framework
- Risk Mitigation Strategy
- Implementation Roadmap
- Final Strategy presentation

High-level Timeline

11th May 2025	Applications deadline All applications must be submitted via this form .
11th – 19th May	Applications review & shortlisting / Interviews
20th May 2025	The successful applicant will be notified Unsuccessful <u>shortlisted</u> applicants will also be notified
27th May 2025	Start of the consultancy
29th May – 2nd June	Kick-off meetings
2nd June -16th June 2025	Development of tools & guidance
30th June – 27th July	Training of Better Cotton teams
28th July – 21st Sept	Situational Analysis & Stakeholder Engagement
29th Sept – 10th Nov	Strategy and Programme Design
10 Nov – 7th Dec	Implementation Roadmap & Finalisation

Required Skills & Knowledge

Skills, Knowledge and Experience
<i>Essential</i>
Proven experience in developing country strategies and programme designs for a multistakeholder membership-based organisation
Strong stakeholder engagement skills- Ability to connect with diverse teams based in different contexts
Strong understanding of agricultural supply chains, livelihood, gender and climate
Expertise in participatory approaches
Experience in working within MEL systems and frameworks
Excellent analytical, report writing and facilitation skills
<i>Optional</i>
Fluent English: Better Cotton's language of operation is English
French/Urdu/Hindi language skills would be an asset
Experience of working with multistakeholder organisations.
Experience of working in a Better Cotton country (India, Pakistan, West Africa, Mozambique, China)

Application Requirements

Please note that we have changed our RFP submission protocol, and this is now in two phases:

- **Phase 1: Initial details will be submitted on the form found in this [link](#).**
- **Phase 2: You will receive an email with live links to upload relevant documents (please check your Spam and Junk folders).**

Proposals responding to this Request for Proposals should be a maximum of 3-4 pages (excluding CVs), and include the following:

- Overview of relevant experience
- Proposed methodology and timeline
- Detailed and transparent budget, in EUROS, including time allocation and day rates

We thank all applicants for their interest; however, only shortlisted applicants will be contacted. Better Cotton is committed to good practice and transparency in the management of natural, human and financial resources. All applications will be reviewed under the principles and subject to Better Cotton's policies on equal opportunity, non-discrimination, anti-bribery & corruption and conflict of interest.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Technical Evaluation Criteria

- Demonstrated understanding of this RFP
- Quality and clarity of the proposed approach and methodology
- Feasibility of the proposed activity plan and timeline, and appropriateness of time allocated to delivering each task
- Relevant professional experience of the proposed consultant(s)
- Quality and relevance of the sample work submitted

Financial Evaluation Criteria

- Quality and clarity of budget provided, and level of detail included
- Alignment of the budget to the activity timeline detailed in the technical proposal
- Value for money
- Adherence to the available budget

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Questions & Answers

Questions Linked To Budget, Costs & Current Strategy

1. Please advise current status of country-specific strategies. Do these already exist for any countries? If so, can these be shared?

We don't currently have any country-specific strategies. You can find BC global strategy and [here](#)

2. Please can you share either the budget for this assignment or the anticipated level of effort?

To ensure value for money we would like to see how much each applicant budgets for the proposal. Please use your cost estimations for similar projects to provide us with an estimated cost.

3. What is the anticipated range of budget allocated for this scope of work? A not-to-exceed or minimum viable amount is sufficient for development of the proposal

To ensure value for money we would like to see how much each applicant budgets for the proposal. Please use your cost estimations for similar projects to provide us with an estimated cost.

4. Request Better Cotton to kindly share the budget for this scope.

To ensure value for money we would like to see how much each applicant budgets for the proposal. Please use your cost estimations for similar projects to provide us with an estimated cost.

5. For payment terms, could you clarify the payment structure (% wise breakup) tied to each deliverable.

We generally pay in installments related to deliverables and key milestones. These will be agreed on at contracting.

6. Is it envisaged that travel to offices outside the UK will be required for this assignment? If so, should this be included within the budget in the financial proposal?

As this has been advertised as Global, both virtual and in person options are viable, it will be up to the consultant to provide a budget according to what they believe will be best suited.

Travel expenses will be reviewed and need to be in line with our Travel Policy for Externals.

If you are able to travel, please provide a budget for remote working entirely and an alternative budget with travel and remote (hybrid).

7. Please advise if there is a standard format for submission of the Financial Offer or a structure that should be followed. Should reimbursable expenses (such as travel costs) be included in this?

Please provide a detailed budget of how much your services to deliver what is expected would cost.

Budgets should be submitted in Excel format.

Please also take note of the answer in question 4 of this Q&A section.

8. Does the 3-4 page limit for the proposal include the budget, or can the budget be submitted as a separate document?

Please submit the budget as an annex using the link for Financial Proposal.

9. Is there an indicative budget range available for the project, particularly since budget considerations are listed as part of the evaluation criteria?

To ensure value for money we would like to see how much each applicant budgets for the proposal. Please use your cost estimations for similar projects to provide us with an estimated cost.

10. We understand field work would be required for any 2 specific countries while we are working with Better Cotton's Senior Directors, Country Directors and Programme Leads to use the tools to develop country specific strategies for 2 countries. Kindly clarify whether the financials should include this cost or would it be reimbursed separately.

When sending your Financial Proposal, field and travel related costs can be included if you are sure of the costs you have provided as part of the overall value. Please note that

expenses related to travel will be reviewed and must be in line with our Travel Policy for externals.

Travel costs can either be included as part of the overall financial proposal or undertaken separately and will only be reimbursed against valid original receipts which will be approved by Better Cotton.

Questions Linked To Existing Processes, Stakeholder Management & Other

11. Does Better Cotton have the two countries in mind, or a shortlist already defined, for the country-specific 'Strategy and Programme Design' component of the project?

We have shortlisted some countries, including Pakistan, India, Mozambique or a West African country. A decision has not been taken yet.

12. Does Better Cotton have the two countries in mind, or a shortlist already defined, for the country-specific 'Strategy and Programme Design' component of the project?

We have shortlisted some countries, including Pakistan, India, Mozambique or a West African country. A decision has not been taken yet.

13. Do we have the flexibility to propose an alternative timeline for individual tasks, based on our understanding of the expected workload, as long as the final deliverable is submitted by 7th December?

Yes

14. Can we submit samples of previous work in addition to the 3–4 page proposal?

If you would like, please do. These can be uploaded using the link for Additional Documents.

15. For all tools, templates and guidance documents adapted to country contexts, is there an expected design and review period? Or do these tools, templates, and guidance documents imply internal processing for the scope of work only?

For the two shortlisted countries the consulting team/consultant will be expected to support the use and uptake. For the remaining countries it is expected that the tools are generic and useable across various contexts.

16. Would these tools, templates, and guidance documents need to be translated into any other language than English?

At this point in time, no.

17. It is stated that the Consultant will work with the MEL team/s to align KPIs and strategic goals with MEL frameworks. Is it suggested that the existing MEL frameworks, and other industry frameworks, will be fixed as part of the strategic approach, or is there latitude to introduce and apply novel frameworks that the consultant may possess?

There is an existing MEL Framework but feedback on how we can improve them will be welcome.

18. Are the workshops with country teams all virtual, or is there a planned opportunity to conduct these workshops in-person, and in one or more countries with those country teams?

Both virtual and in person options are viable, it will be up to the consultant to provide a budget according to what they believe will be best suited. I would suggest you plan for travel if you are able to, as face to face is always better than not.

19. Are all finalized strategy documents planned as raw, editable files supplied to BCI, or are these documents to be furnished preferred format?

Raw editable files, as close to final as possible would be preferred.

20. Please could you share your standard version of a consulting contract.

Better Cotton will be happy to share the contract with the selected supplier during the contracting process.

21. Who are the key stakeholders involved in this project (internally at Better Cotton Initiative and externally), and how do you envision their roles throughout the project?

The key stakeholders are outlined on the RFP. They are Country Programme and Operations Teams, Global Programmes Team and the Fundraising and Impact Team. The consultants will be reporting to the Senior Director of Global Programmes and the Director of Farm Programme Quality and Partnerships. The Country Teams will work with the consultants to lead the development of the strategic frameworks and approve/use the final tools that are developed.

22. Regarding the team requirements, could you specify any preferred team composition or qualifications for the consultants?

As the consulting team, it is up to you to understand the requirements of the RFP and suggest team composition based on your areas of expertise. We want to develop country

strategies and holistic programme designs for two of Better Cotton's country programmes. The hope is that these will guide strategic decisions about programming and funding based on the strategic direction outlined. Therefore, if we were conducting this exercise, we would look for people with experience developing strategies for multistakeholder organizations (NGO and private) and a deep understanding of programme design using tools such as log frames, theories of change, etc

23. Request Better Cotton to kindly consider- experience in evaluation of country strategies and programme designs and for a multistakeholder membership-based organization. This is for point one: "Proven experience in developing country strategies and programme designs for a multistakeholder membership-based organisation"

All proposals will be evaluated using the same criteria based on what is submitted by each agency. We will assess value for money, skills, and content of the proposal. Please do apply even if you don't meet all the criteria.