

Request for Proposals

- Development of Gender-Responsive Agricultural Training Guidance

RFP n#: 2025-12-ID-GRTRAINING

Location: Global

Start date: 16-02-2026

End date: 31-03-2026

Technical Team: Impact Team



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

You may submit questions to tender@bettercotton.org – RFP n# 2025-11-ID-GRTRAINING until 16th January 2026, noting that the **final submission deadline for bids is 23rd January 2026**.

Questions, requests and applications sent after the deadline will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Please note that the responses over the Christmas and new year period may be delayed, however we will endeavour to work on these as quickly as possible.

Important Submission Process Information:

After submitting your details through the [form](#), you will receive a separate email to upload your supporting documents to a secure platform.

Description

The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) 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 BCI Standard and our membership network includes more than 2,400 members.

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

Background

We are seeking proposals from qualified individuals or organisations to develop guidance materials for partner organisations working directly with smallholder cotton farmers and workers in cotton farms on how to deliver gender-responsive agricultural training. The objective is to address gender inequalities in cotton farming by increasing women's voice and strengthening their role in farming decisions. A key pathway to this is ensuring equitable access to agronomic skills and knowledge for women farmers. By building partner capacity in this area, BCI aims to promote more inclusive and effective agricultural training across its programmes.

BCI supports farmers to improve their practices through a global network of trusted programme partners in cotton-producing countries. Programme partners lead farmer training and community engagement, typically through field facilitators who work at significant scale (for example, one facilitator may support 200–300 farmers in India). Many partners are still at an early stage of integrating gender into their training and extension work. There is therefore a need for practical, farmer-facing tools that can be used within existing agronomic training activities and do not require specialist gender expertise.

Scope of Work

The expected output will be:

- A 10–12 page guidance document outlining practical steps for delivering gender-responsive agricultural training for women cotton smallholders and workers.
- Guidance and tools should be aligned with Better Cotton Initiative's Principles & Criteria. They should include gender-responsive pedagogies embedded across agronomic training content and short case studies or examples.
- A set of 3–4 practical tools and templates that field staff can use directly with farmers (for example: gender analysis tool, gender-sensitive training checklists, facilitator guidance notes, session plans, monitoring sheets). Tools should be simple to use and suitable for partners with limited prior experience in gender equality programming.
- Recommendations for adapting existing agronomic training materials to be more inclusive and accessible for women farmers
- A short orientation deck (PowerPoint) that partners can use to train field staff and facilitators
- A set of indicators to track women's participation and learning outcomes
- A suggested implementation plan, including key steps and capacity needs for field staff

Please note that the scope of work is global. The guidance materials should be to allow adaptation to different country and local contexts.

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

The expected tasks will be:

- Conducting a literature review and mapping of existing training resources
- Reviewing relevant sections of Better Cotton Initiative's Principles and Criteria to ensure all guidance aligns with agronomic requirements and embeds gender-responsive pedagogies
- Conduct a short needs assessment with a sample of programme partners (for example, through remote interviews or a brief survey) to understand current training practices, constraints, and gaps in reaching women farmers.
- Develop an inception report outlining the methodology, analytical framework, detailed workplan, proposed structure of the guidance materials, and list of tools to be developed.
- Draft the full set of guidance materials, including:
 - Practical guidance document on delivering gender-responsive agricultural training
 - Tools and templates for field staff (e.g., gender analysis tool, checklists, session plans, facilitator guidance notes, monitoring sheets)
 - Recommendations for adapting existing agronomic materials to be more inclusive
 - A simple monitoring framework to track women's participation and learning outcomes
- Facilitate at least one review and validation process with BCI's team (and selected partners if required), incorporating feedback into revised drafts.
- Finalise and design all guidance materials, tools, and templates for distribution, ensuring they are user-friendly and adaptable across different geographies.

High-level Timeline

The estimated total time for this assignment is 30 days

16 January 2026	Questions deadline All questions must be sent only to tender@bettercotton.org with the RFP Reference in the Subject line.
23 January 2026	Applications deadline All applications must be submitted via this form .
26 January to 6 February 2026	Applications review & shortlisting / Interviews
By 9 February 2026	The successful applicant will be notified Unsuccessful <u>shortlisted</u> applicants will also be notified

16 February 2026	Start of the consultancy
By 6 March 2026	Deliverable I – Inception Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workplan - Methodology - Outline of guidance materials All materials should be submitted in Word or PPT.
By 25 March 2026	Deliverable II – Draft resources and tools for review
By 31 March 2026	Deliverable III – Designed guidance materials and tools.

Required Skills & Knowledge

Skills, Knowledge and Experience
Essential
Relevant degree or professional qualification in gender, rural development, agriculture, or a related field
Demonstrated experience in developing guidance materials, training tools, or capacity-building resources for implementing partners or field practitioners
Solid knowledge of gender-responsive training approaches and practical tools for engaging women farmers
Strong understanding of social and gender norms in rural contexts, preferably in smallholder agriculture
Proven ability to translate technical concepts into clear, user-friendly materials for diverse audiences
Demonstrated experience developing tools that can be adapted to multi-country and different cultural and programme contexts
Fluency in English (BCI's primary working language); additional languages from cotton-producing countries are an asset
Experience working with or designing tools for field staff, NGOs, farmer organisations, or agricultural extension services

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 6 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.

BCI 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 BCI'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

Questions & Answers For RFP 2025-12-ID-GRTRAINING

1. Question 1

Could BCI please confirm whether there is an indicative budget range or ceiling for this consultancy, to help applicants calibrate scope, level of effort, and day rates appropriately while ensuring value for money?

Answer

The indicative budget for this consultancy is EUR 20,000–30,000. All costs must be inclusive (fees, travel, subsistence, and applicable taxes). Applicants are requested to submit their most competitive financial proposal within this range.

2. Question 2

Are there specific cotton-producing countries or partner contexts that Better Cotton would particularly like reflected in the guidance and examples, or should these remain fully generic and globally adaptable?

Answer

The guidance should remain generic and globally adaptable, so it can be applied across diverse contexts where BCI and its partners operate. At the same time, we would value the guidance being grounded in practical examples from the cotton sector, drawing on the types of smallholder farming country contexts where BCI is active. These are: India, Mali, Mozambique, Pakistan, and Türkiye. The examples should be illustrative, helping partners and field staff understand how gender-responsive approaches can be applied in real-world cotton programmes.

3. Question 3

For the partner needs assessment, does Better Cotton have preferred partners or regions to include, or should the consultant propose a representative sample?

Answer

We would prefer the needs assessment to draw on a sample of partners working in smallholder cotton contexts, with particular focus on partners operating in India, Mali, Mozambique, Pakistan, and Türkiye.

To provide context, the number of BCI programme partners in these countries is as follows (indicative):

- India – 15
- Mali – 1
- Mozambique – 3
- Pakistan – 8
- Türkiye – 1

Programme partners may implement farm training through their own local partners. Further information on Better Cotton's country presence is available on: [Where BCI Cotton is grown – Better Cotton Initiative](#)

4. Question 4

Following completion of the guidance, does Better Cotton envisage additional phases such as piloting, facilitator training, or partner roll-out that applicants should be mindful of when proposing the implementation plan?

Answer

The piloting and roll-out phase is envisaged to take place at a later stage in FY2027 and is not part of the scope of this consultancy. At this stage, applicants are not expected to design or cost these phases but are expected to outline a suggested high-level implementation plan, including indicative next steps such as a potential piloting phase and subsequent training roll-out.

5. Question 5

What is the division between smallholder farmers and workers among your suppliers? Are the agricultural trainings different between these two groups and does the guidance

need to address this?

Answer

Smallholder cotton farmers and workers receive support based on their role within the cotton production system, and these roles are not always clearly distinguished—particularly for women in smallholder contexts. Within many smallholder cotton farms, women play a crucial role in cotton production, yet they are often perceived as ‘helpers’ or workers on family farms rather than recognised as farmers in their own right. This has historically limited their access to full agricultural training.

To address this, Better Cotton adjusted its definition of a farmer from “decision-maker at farm level” to “persons of any gender, background and identity and any member of households or family who share farming duties.”, in order to better enable women farmers to be recognised and to access training.

In practice, there are three categories relevant to training delivery:

- Women smallholder farmers registered as Better Cotton farmers: receive training across all aspects of the Principles & Criteria.
- Workers: women hired by farmers to carry out farm activities; training typically focuses on gender awareness, human rights, and decent working conditions, rather than full agronomic content.
- Women family farmers: women engaged in farming activities on family farms but not formally registered as farmers. This group is not currently measured in a consistent way across programmes. Better Cotton aims to improve the identification, inclusion, and outreach to this group in order to ensure more equitable access to training and support.

The overarching objective is to increase outreach and provide appropriate, tailored training across all three groups. As such, the guidance should explicitly address these distinctions and provide direction on how gender-responsive training can be adapted to different roles and levels of recognition within smallholder cotton systems, ensuring that women’s participation and learning needs are consistently and equitably addressed.

6. Question 6

In which countries does BCI work and are there any countries of focus for this guidance?

Answer

Please refer to the response above regarding geographic scope and use of examples.