

# Request for Proposals - AI Strategy

**RFP n#:** 2026-1-FS-AISTRATEGY

**Location:** Remote – able to align with UK working hours

**Start date:** 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026

**End date:** 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026

**Technical Team:** IT & Data



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

You may submit questions to [tender@bettercotton.org](mailto:tender@bettercotton.org) – RFP n# 2026-1-FS-AISTRATEGY” until 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026, noting that the **final submission deadline for bids is the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2026**.

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

## 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](http://www.bettercotton.org)

# Background

We are seeking proposals from skilled individuals or organisations interested in helping us shape a strategy for how AI can be leveraged to accelerate impact and improve efficiencies. We need a strategy that is bespoke to who we are and what we are aiming to achieve. We're a relatively small organisation but are spread across multiple countries, time zones, and ways of working. With this relatively small team, we support hundreds of partners, thousands of members, and millions of farmers. We also manage the BCI standard and keep on top of a variety of risks and opportunities throughout our countries of operation and in the textile value chain.

We believe that AI offers genuine opportunities. We are also aware that not every idea will make sense for us. We need someone who can look at our strategic ambitions, our current systems, culture, and pressures and help us see where AI might create tangible value. The strategy you develop should give us practical next steps, a sense of what is likely to work in our context, and a roadmap that feels achievable rather than aspirational.

Our challenges include a proliferation of ideas for the use of AI, the resource limitations you'd expect from a non-profit organisation, and consideration of the environmental impact of AI. We also have a mix of expectations around how AI should (or shouldn't) show up in day-to-day work.

The right partner may suggest approaches we haven't considered, challenge our assumptions, and point out things we shouldn't do in addition to what we should be doing. We're looking for expertise that respects the scale and culture and uniqueness of a distributed organisation like ours and can deliver a value-enhancing strategy that is pragmatic and realistic.

# Scope of Work

This project is expected to deliver a clear, actionable AI Strategy for BCI, along with the materials we need to communicate it across a globally distributed organisation. The work should be focused, time-bound, and realistic for a **five-week engagement**, with enough depth to guide decision-making without over-engineering the process.

In terms of outputs, applicants should be prepared to deliver the following:

1. AI Strategy Document. A written strategy that:
  - a. Outlines where AI is likely to create meaningful value for BCI. Our AI Vision should connect organisational strategy, BAU processes and external pressures with the significant value adding opportunities that AI provides.
  - b. Includes a section on how we can build internal capacity for adoption of AI. This would likely take the form some competency development programme for our staff.
  - c. Describes principles and guardrails for responsible adoption, including a clear approach to maintaining transparency and building in adequate governance structures and processes
  - d. Highlights opportunities worth exploring—and areas we should probably deprioritise.
  - e. Explains the rationale behind recommendations in clear, human language
2. Strategy Visuals / Communication Materials

- a. A small set of visuals, diagrams, or narrative summaries that help us socialise the strategy internally.
3. Short, Medium and Long-Term Objectives. A structured breakdown of what we can (and should) do in:
  - a. 0–6 months (quick wins, foundational steps)
  - b. 6–18 months (more deliberate adoption, capability building)
  - c. 18+ months (long-term ambitions and larger strategic bets)
4. Final Readout Session
  - a. A walkthrough of the strategy and visuals, time for questions, and recommendations for immediate next steps.

### Suggested Workstreams and Activities

#### 1. Discovery & Current-State Understanding

In the first phase, applicants should form a practical view of BCI's current tools, data landscape, and operating reality. This may include:

- Interviews with a cross-section of staff
- A quick review of existing systems, datasets and processes, including a maturity / readiness assessment of these areas.
- A sense of organisational habits that may shape adoption.

We're not after a deep audit, just enough insight to ground the strategy in reality.

#### 2. Use Case Exploration & Prioritisation

Applicants should help identify where AI may matter for BCI. We would expect:

- A shortlist of feasible early opportunities
- An honest look at trade-offs, dependencies, and risks
- An idea on likely environmental impact per use case
- Prioritisation that is thoughtful but not overcomplicated

#### 3. Strategy Development

The strategy should reflect the specifics of a 300-person organisation spread across multiple time zones. It should strike a balance between ambition and what's manageable for a team of our size, including the financial and environmental implications of different choices. It should also consider our existing technology stack from an implementation perspective.

#### 4. Road mapping Across Time Horizons

We would like a clear breakdown of short, medium, and long-term objectives, each one accompanied by indicative cost ranges, so teams can see what is achievable immediately versus what requires building capacity or investing in technology.

#### 5. Communication Materials

Applicants should provide simple visuals or summaries that make the strategy easier to share internally—no need for high-gloss design, just clarity.

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

## High-level Timeline

<b>2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026</b>	Questions deadline  All questions must be sent only to tender@bettercotton.org with the RFP Reference in the Subject line.
<b>9<sup>th</sup> February 2026</b>	<b>Applications deadline</b>  All applications must be submitted via this <a href="#">form</a> .
<b>9<sup>th</sup> February to 18<sup>th</sup> February 2026</b>	Applications review & shortlisting / Interviews
<b>By 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025</b>	The successful applicant will be notified  Unsuccessful <u>shortlisted</u> applicants will also be notified
<b>23 February 2026</b>	<b>Start of the consultancy</b>
<b>By 13 March 2026</b>	DRAFT Strategy document
<b>By 20 March 2026</b>	Final readout to key stakeholders
<b>By 27 March 2026</b>	Final Strategy Document / Communications Materials

## Required Skills & Knowledge

<b>Skills, Knowledge and Experience</b>
<b>Essential</b>
Demonstrable Experience in AI Strategy
Solid Understanding of Applied AI (Not Just Theory)
An understanding of the environmental impact of AI, and how to estimate it
Experience Delivering Short, Time-Bound Strategy Work
Strong Communication Skills
Familiarity with Global Ways of Working
Understanding of AI Governance, Compliance & Risk, including how to handle PII across multiple countries
Ability to Provide Indicative Costing
Fluent English: BCI's language of operation is English
Background in fields such as Data Science, AI, Computer Science, Information Systems, or similar
<b>Optional</b>

Sector Experience - Experience working in industries with similar scale, complexity,
A track record of honest, balanced, impartial, advice
Experience with specific tooling we have at BCI (e.g. M365, Azure, Salesforce, CoPilot)

# 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 10 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