Terms of Reference

Position Title:	**Training on Operating, Maintaining and Optimizing Clean-Growth Solutions for MSMEs, Cooperatives and Producer Groups**
Location:	Lao Cai (former Yen Bai Province)
Period of Assignment:	From March to May 2026
Reporting To:	Clean Growth, Energy & Environment Specialist and Grant Manager
Project:	SMEs Promote Resilience, Inclusion, and Innovative Transformation (SPRINT)
Activity Code:	Sub-Activity 1123.1 – Training on Operating, Maintaining and Optimizing Clean-Growth Solutions for MSMEs, Cooperatives and Producer Groups

1. Background

The Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Promote Resilience, Inclusion, and Innovative Transformation (SPRINT) Project is a flagship initiative funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) in Vietnam, with an implementation period from 2023-2029. The SPRINT is implemented in the province of Lao Cai (formerly in Yen Bai Province) and managed by Cowater International.

Cowater International is a leading global development consulting company founded in 1985. Headquarter in Ottawa, Cowater International has successfully delivered a portfolio of over 2,500 projects and assignments in more than 95 countries. Cowater works with governments, private sector actors, and communities to implement projects that support socio-economic development, institutional strengthening, environmental improvements, and advancing equal opportunities for all.
(Website: https://www.cowater.com/en/home/)

Introduction of SPRINT Project:

The project will be implemented over six years, from 2023 to 2029 (including the project initiation and approval phase). It will focus on addressing skills and knowledge gaps, while encouraging innovation and the adoption of agricultural recovery and clean growth solutions, including Renewable Energy (RE) and Energy Efficiency (EE), for SMEs/cooperatives/industrial production units, with a focus on SMEs operating in the agricultural sector.

The project aims to improve the socio-economic well-being of ethnic minority women working in agriculture by enhancing their economic status, leadership capacity, and proactive role in promoting clean growth. The project will implement a series of interventions designed to strengthen the operational efficiency of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), cooperatives, and production groups, focusing on ethnic minority women in the agriculture and food sector. Project interventions will prioritize and focus on eight key agricultural value chains: Shan Tuyet tea, cinnamon, hawthorn/wild apple, bamboo shoots, glutinous rice, medicinal herbs, mulberry, and mixed vegetables. The primary beneficiaries are ethnic minority women in Lao Cai province (formerly Yen Bai province).

Information pertaining to the consulting service request

Drawing on SPRINT's recent GHG baseline and value-chain assessments, six priority chains show highly concentrated emissions hotspots—methane from flooded rice systems (≈68%), electricity-intensive Shan-tea processing (≈96%), agro-inputs in cinnamon (≈89%), and transport-dominated bamboo-shoot chains (≈75%)—highlighting the need for operational upgrades, fuel switching and tighter process control . In response, SPRINT has oriented its Clean-Growth grant portfolio toward standardized, chain-specific EE and RE packages, such as electrified tea lines, biomass dryers, Alternate Wetting and Drying (AWD) irrigation and solar drying—now rolled out across at least nineteen investments and already accounting for over 70% of the programme's 200 tCO_2e annual mitigation target, with each grant required to produce auditable baseline-to-endline evidence through meters, fuel logs, batch records and operator certification.

However, portfolio risk screening simultaneously flags persistent weaknesses in operator readiness, preventive maintenance, key performance indicator (KPI) tracking and Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system compliance, confirming that capital investments alone cannot secure durable emissions reductions. Sub-Activity 1123.1 is therefore positioned as a core performance-safeguarding intervention, embedding intensive, field-based coaching on equipment operation, load optimization, diagnostics, fuel-displacement tracking, batch-level logging and climate-smart agriculture (CSA) which fully integrated with SPRINT's approach to measuring the GHG emissions —while applying a gender-transformative lens that prioritizes women for operator certification, builds women-led maintenance teams and strengthens control over productive assets, thereby locking in technical gains, safeguarding donor credibility and converting clean-growth investments into sustained reductions in energy use, emissions and post-harvest losses.

The consultancy is designed in response to increasing climate stresses in northern Viet Nam and the need to ensure that clean-growth technologies continue to perform reliably under more volatile temperature and rainfall conditions.

2. Purpose of the Consultancy

This consultancy activity is undertaken to contribute to the achievement of the following objectives:

- **Intermediate Outcome 1100**: Improved performance of EMW-focused MSMEs/coops/producer groups in gender responsive and climate resilient value chains in agriculture
- **Immediate Outcome 1120** Enhanced climate adaptive capacity of EMW-focused MSMEs/coops/ producer groups in agriculture

Output **1123: Facilitate support to MSMEs/coops/ producers on use, care, and general maintenance of clean growth solutions**

Consulting to support the implementation of activity 1123.1: Training on using, maintaining/operating of clean growth solutions for MSMEs/coops/producer groups are selected to participate in the pilot (Specific training/coaching topics will be decided when clean growth solutions are identified in the assessment report).

Contribution to SPRINT Theory of Change

This assignment functions as a core performance-safeguarding mechanism within SPRINT's Theory of Change, ensuring that capital investments in clean-growth technologies translate into sustained behavioral change, technical competence and measurable climate outcomes. By embedding women-led operation, maintenance and monitoring systems, the consultancy supports SPRINT's pathway toward climate-resilient value chains, improved incomes and strengthened leadership of ethnic minority women.

3. Objectives of the Assignment

The objective of this assignment is to design and deliver a field-based technical training and coaching programme that ensures SPRINT-financed Clean-Growth investments operate effectively, generate verified emissions reductions and inclusive economic benefits, and strengthen the technical leadership of ethnic minority women (EMW) by building the capacity of EMW-focused MSMEs, cooperatives and producer groups to safely operate RE and EE systems, optimize resource use, maintain product quality, and implement audit-ready performance monitoring aligned with SPRINT's Approach to measuring the GHG emission.

At portfolio scale, the assignment strengthens SPRINT's ability to achieve and sustain its overall GHG-reduction ambitions by ensuring that pilot sites generate reliable operational data, stable performance and audit-ready evidence. These improvements enable aggregation across grant cohorts and reinforce the credibility of programme-level climate reporting to donors.

Specifically, the assignment will:

1. **Translate technology-assessment findings into site-specific training programmes** tailored to each value chain and equipment package, ensuring relevance to local operating conditions and grant-financed assets.

2. **Build operational capacity for continuous and safe use of clean-growth systems**, enabling beneficiaries to achieve stable production, energy savings and quality improvements.
3. **Institutionalize preventive-maintenance practices** through standard operating procedures, inspection schedules and spare-parts planning that protect investments and reduce downtime.
4. **Strengthen beneficiaries' ability to monitor technical and climate performance**, including systematic data capture on energy use, fuel substitution, production outputs and CSA practices aligned with SPRINT's approach to measuring the GHG emission.
5. **Promote women's leadership in technical roles** by certifying EMW as operators, maintenance leads and data stewards for clean-growth assets.
6. **Generate documented evidence of pilot performance and learning**, producing auditable records, lessons learned and replication guidance to inform scale-up across SPRINT's clean-growth portfolio.

4. Expected Results

By the completion of Sub-Activity 1123.1, the assignment will deliver:

1. **Site-specific training programmes implemented** for each value chain and equipment package, reflecting technology-assessment findings and local operating conditions.
2. **Sustained operational capacity among MSMEs, cooperatives and producer groups**, enabling safe and continuous use of clean-growth systems, lower unit energy consumption, improved production stability and enhanced product quality.
3. **Preventive-maintenance systems are institutionalized**, including SOPs, inspection schedules and spare-parts management that reduce downtime and safeguard grant-financed assets.
4. **Facility-level SPRINT's MRV system and performance-monitoring practices embedded**, with routine capture of energy use, fuel substitution, production volumes and CSA adoption through audit-ready templates aligned with SPRINT's approach to measuring the GHG emission.
5. **EMW certified as technical leaders**—operators, maintenance leads and data stewards for clean-growth assets—with strengthened decision-making authority.
6. **Verified performance evidence and standardized training packages produced**, generating lessons learned and replication tools for scale-up across SPRINT's clean-growth portfolio.

5. Integration with MERL and Learning Systems

Training records, performance scorecards and verification outputs generated under this assignment will be integrated into SPRINT's MERL system and contribute to annual results reporting, learning briefs and scale-up strategies. Lessons from field-based coaching will inform future grant design, technical packages and gender-responsive delivery models.

6. Target Groups and Outputs

Beneficiaries: The primary beneficiaries of this assignment are **EMW-focused MSMEs, cooperatives and producer groups** participating in SPRINT-financed pilot clean-growth investments across priority value chains. These entities operate RE systems, energy-efficient processing lines, CSA practices and circular-economy technologies introduced through the program and therefore require advanced operational capacity to ensure sustained performance and verified climate impacts.

Targets: The assignment will deliver the following minimum outputs:

- **Five (05) hands-on coaching packages—**each lasting up to three (03) days—will be delivered at pilot sites[1] and organized across five (05) commune/ward clusters (corresponding to the former five districts plus Yen Bai City), namely: Mu Cang Chai Commune, Van Chan Commune, Mau A Commune, Luc Yen Commune, and Yen Bai Ward**.**

[1] The exact number of pilots per VC and specific technologies will be confirmed during inception based on the portfolio of installed grants and readiness of equipment. Indicatively, technologies include energy-efficient processing lines, biomass/solar dryers, renewable-energy applications, and CSA practices supported by SPRINT.

- **One hundred and fifty (150) trainees** in total, with a strong focus on participation by EMW.
- **Eighty percent (80%) of trainees** demonstrate the ability to apply acquired skills in routine operations, as verified through supervised practice and post-training assessments.

7. Scope of Works, Tasks, Deliverables and Timelines

The assignment shall be implemented through five integrated workstreams designed to embed field-level operational excellence, strengthen preventive-maintenance systems, operationalize grant-level MRV, and safeguard the performance of SPRINT's Clean-Growth investments in line with Year-4 indicators and donor verification requirements.

No.	Specific Task	Detailed Description	Deliverable (s)	Deadline
Workstream 1 – Inception and Training-Needs Assessment				
1	Desk review of grant documentation	Review technology assessments, grant dossiers, GHG baselines, CSA plans, and risk matrices to identify operational gaps, MRV weaknesses and priority sites for coaching.	Desk-review notes highlighting risks, readiness gaps and Year-4 linkages.	25 March 2026
2	Site confirmation and coaching prioritization	Confirm participating cooperatives and MSMEs; classify equipment packages, CSA practices and optimization needs to sequence field visits.	Site list and coaching plan.	25 March 2026
3	Training-needs and gender analysis	Assess operator capacity, maintenance systems, safety compliance, data-logging readiness and gender participation across sites.	Training-needs matrix and gender-gap analysis.	25 March 2026
Total consultancy days: 3 days; SPRINT's GHG Specialist: 03 days				
Workstream 2 – Curriculum and Tool Development				
4	Modular curriculum design	Develop practical modules on equipment operation, optimization, fault diagnostics, climate-smart agriculture (CSA), safety, and MRV integration (number of modules to be confirmed during inception based on technology packages and site needs).	Training curriculum.	06 April 2026
5	SOP and logbook preparation	Draft SOPs for O&M, batch logging, fuel switching, irrigation records and maintenance schedules.	SOP manuals and logbooks.	06 April 2026
6	Gender-responsive asset-management tools	Develop tools to support women-led maintenance teams and operator certification.	Gender-responsive templates.	06 April 2026
Total consultancy days: 6 days; SPRINT's GHG Specialist: 04 days				
Workstream 3 – Field-Based Coaching and Optimization Cycles				
7	Coaching Cycles 1–3	Classroom sessions, live demonstrations, supervised operation, troubleshooting simulations and batch-level data-recording practice.	Coaching records and attendance sheets.	13 April 2026

No.	Specific Task	Detailed Description	Deliverable (s)	Deadline
8	Coaching Cycles 4–5	Advanced optimization, CSA reinforcement, diagnostics and corrective-action planning.	Optimization notes and coaching summaries.	20 April 2026
9	Performance scorecards	Develop and apply KPI scorecards covering uptime, energy use, fuel switching, maintenance compliance, and data quality (to be operationalized at site level where tools do not yet exist, or adapted from existing SPRINT monitoring tools where available)	Site scorecards.	20 April 2026
Total consultancy days: 15 days; SPRINT's GHG Specialist: 05 days				
Workstream 4 – Piloting				
10	Follow-up mentoring visits	Conduct targeted on-site mentoring to stabilize performance and reinforce logging discipline.	Mentoring visit reports.	27 April 2026
11	Verification of operational gains	Verify energy savings, downtime reduction and MRV compliance using invoices, meter photos and logs.	Verification notes.	27 April 2026
12	Draft reporting	Consolidate results, lessons and replication logic into a draft technical report.	Draft Final Report.	01 May 2026
Total consultancy days: 6 days; SPRINT's GHG Specialist: 02 days				
Workstream 5 – Final Reporting, Validation and Scale-Up Guidance				
13	Final reporting and debrief	Finalize documentation; conduct management briefing and validation workshop.	Final Completion Report and presentation deck.	15 May 2026
14	Scale-up roadmap	Develop prioritization logic for replication across Year-5 grants.	Scale-up roadmap and guidance note.	15 May 2026
Total consultancy days: 4 days; SPRINT's GHG Specialist: 02 days				
Total working days of Consultant: 34 days; SPRINT's GHG Specialist: 14 days				

Note:

- Gender-responsive and inclusive approaches shall be integrated throughout, with specific attention to **EMW**, culturally appropriate facilitation, language support and mobility constraints.
- Participation and learning outcomes shall be systematically documented in deliverables.
- All outputs shall be submitted in **English and Vietnamese**.

8. Key Risks and Mitigation Measures

Risk	Mitigation Strategy
Operator turnover	Certification systems and training of multiple operators per site
Weak maintenance practices	SOPs, spare-parts planning and mentoring visits
Low EMW participation	Gender-responsive scheduling and women-led maintenance teams
Poor MRV compliance	On-site coaching, simplified logbooks and verification checks
Equipment downtime	Preventive-maintenance protocols and rapid diagnostics

9. Required Qualifications

Criteria	Required
Education	The consultant/team shall include at least one senior expert with a postgraduate qualification (Master's degree or higher preferred) in climate change, environmental engineering, agriculture, energy systems, natural-resource management, or a closely related discipline. Other team members, including equipment-specific trainers, may demonstrate equivalent practical expertise and relevant technical experience in operating and maintaining the respective technologies.
Experience	The consultant/team must demonstrate strong, relevant experience delivering operational support for clean-growth investments in agri-food value chains, including the following minimum competencies: • **Renewable-energy and energy-efficiency systems** – hands-on experience with solar dryers, biomass boilers, electrified processing lines, photovoltaic systems or thermal-efficiency optimisation in rural or agro-industrial contexts. • **CSA implementation** – field experience with AWD irrigation, agroforestry and low-emission production practices. • **Engagement with ethnic-minority communities** – culturally sensitive approaches suited to upland or remote contexts. • **Performance-monitoring and MRV tools** – ability to design simple, audit-ready templates for energy use, production volumes, maintenance logs and CSA data.
Technical Skills	• **Adult technical training and coaching** – proven capacity to design and deliver hands-on, competency-based operator training and on-site mentoring. • **Gender-responsive facilitation** – demonstrated experience promoting women's participation and leadership in technical roles.
Language	• **Fluent English** is required for reporting and coordination. • **Vietnamese language skills** are highly desirable for field delivery and engagement with beneficiaries.

10. Coordination and Compliance

All activities must comply with SPRINT operational and fiduciary requirements. The consultant/team shall:

- **Coordinate closely with SPRINT's technical and grant teams**, grantees and suppliers.
- **Follow programme procurement rules and cost-eligibility procedures.**
- **Apply safeguarding and gender policies**, ensuring safe and inclusive training environments.
- **Maintain audit-ready documentation**, including attendance, financial records and technical logs.
- **Align all training with pilot investments**, installation schedules and performance targets.

11. Application Process

Consultants or firms will be selected through a competitive evaluation of technical and financial proposals.

Interested applicants shall submit their applications by email with the subject line: **[Application for Consulting – Sub-Activity 1123.1 – Name of Consultant/Company]** to the email address: procurement@sprint-vietnam.com no later than **17:00 on 31 March 2026**.

Applicants must include the following:

- **Letter of interest** outlining relevant experience and approach;
- **Curriculum vitae** of proposed experts;
- **Technical proposal** describing methodology, workplan and team composition;
- **Financial proposal** developed strictly in line with the scope and requirements of this ToR;
- **Examples of similar assignments** (optional but encouraged).

Financial Proposal Requirements

The financial proposal must be comprehensive and inclusive of all applicable taxes. Travel and accommodation costs for field missions, if required, shall be presented as a separate budget line and are not included within the stated consultancy ceiling.