

Terms of Reference

Position Title:	Individual Consultant / Consultant(s) / Consulting Firm for designing and delivering capacity-building training on market access, product standardization and digital business management for MSMEs and cooperatives
Location:	Ha Noi and Lao Cai province (former Yen Bai Province) and online platform.
Period of Assignment:	October - December 2026
Reporting To:	Agribusiness & Resilience Specialist and Project Officer under OC1
Project:	MSMEs Promote Resilience, Inclusion, and Innovative Transformation (SPRINT)
Activity Code:	1113.4

1. Background

- **About Cowater**

Cowater International is a leading global development consulting company founded in 1985. Headquartered 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/>)

- **About the SPRINT project**

The SMEs Promote Resilience, Inclusion and Innovative Transformation (SPRINT) Project is a flagship initiative of Global Affairs Canada in Vietnam and is being implemented by Cowater International Inc. in the province of Lao Cai (formerly in Yen Bai province) in northern Vietnam.

The Project aims to improve the socio-economic well-being of ethnic minority women working in the agricultural sector by elevating their economic status, leadership, and agency through the promotion of clean growth. The program will implement a series of interventions designed to strengthen the performance of ethnic minority women (EMW)-led MSMEs, cooperatives and producer groups in the agri-food sector, with a focus on enhancing agricultural value chains for key commodities such as sticky rice, chayote, Shan Tuyet tea, cinnamon, indigenous apple, and Bat Do bamboo shoots. The primary beneficiaries are

women living in the province of Yen Bai, while an overarching emphasis is placed on the inclusion of EMW.

The Project is scheduled to run for six years from 2023 until 2029. It will respond to critical skill gaps, knowledge gaps, and incentivize innovation and adoption of agriculture resilience and clean growth, including Renewable Energy (RE) and Energy Efficient (EE) solutions among EMW-led agri-food businesses while promoting sustainable agricultural product marketing and business development strategies to enhance market access and profitability.

- **Summary of Activity 1113.4**

Activity 1113.4: Conduct coaching sessions for MSMEs, cooperatives, producer groups, and affiliated households (with a focus on EMW) participating in the project's priority value chains.

Under Activity 1113.4, SPRINT will provide practical capacity-building support to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and cooperatives (HTXs) participating in the project's priority value chains. The activity will build on the foundational business development and marketing training delivered in Year 3 and place greater emphasis on application, problem-solving and business-specific coaching.

The activity will target the 47 SPRINT grantees and is also expected to engage new EMW - focused MSMEs, cooperatives and producer groups in the project areas that demonstrate potential for further business development, such as female members of Women's Business Associations in Lao Cai. Priority will be given to businesses owned or managed by ethnic minority women, businesses employing a significant proportion of ethnic minority women, and grantees that demonstrate a clear need and readiness to apply the coaching content.

The activity will be implemented in coordination with relevant local stakeholders, including the Lao Cai Provincial Cooperative Alliance (LMHTX), and will contribute to the province's broader direction on digital transformation and support to MSMEs in the project sites, including the 47 SPRINT grantees and relevant new MSMEs.

Year 3 implementation

In Year 3 (2025), SPRINT delivered a series of business development capacity-building activities for around 109 MSMEs, cooperatives and producer groups working across priority value chains, including mulberry, sticky rice, medicinal herbs, cinnamon, indigenous apple, tea, mixed vegetable and bamboo shoots. The training covered basic business planning and financial management, value chain development, e-commerce and basic marketing (eg., 5P principles), product branding, and product trademark and labelling.

The Year 3 training helped participants strengthen their foundational knowledge and introduced practical tools, including market analysis, cost calculation, cash-flow management, pricing, risk management, e-commerce, social media marketing and the use of AI-supported tools. Practical exercises were incorporated into several sessions, including participants working directly on their own social media channels and products.

The Year 4 approach will therefore move from general training towards deeper, practical and case-based coaching, with the objective of helping selected grantees apply the skills directly to their own businesses.

Year 4 approach: practical, case-based and tailored coaching

In Year 4 (2026), Activity 1113.4 will focus on strengthening the practical application of digital marketing, sales and business development skills across the project's eight priority value chains, including mulberry, sticky rice, medicinal herbs, cinnamon, indigenous apple, tea, bamboo shoots, and mixed vegetables. The consultant(s) will use real business cases from SPRINT grantees as the basis for coaching and classroom exercises to help participants observe, analyse and learn from existing practices, identify practical gaps, and apply relevant improvements to their own businesses.

The coaching approach could combine:

- **Real case studies:** Selected grantees with businesses focusing on bamboo shoots, indigenous apple, medicinal plants, green tea, and cinnamon, will provide real products, social media channels, customer information, existing marketing materials and business challenges for analysis during the sessions.
- **Demonstration:** The consultant(s) will demonstrate the process using a real business case before participants apply the same process to their own businesses.
- **Hands-on practice:** Participants will work directly on their own business information, products, digital channels, marketing materials or financial records, as relevant to each topic, to develop practical improvements during the sessions.
- **Problem-solving:** The consultant(s) will diagnose specific weaknesses in the participants' current marketing and sales practices and provide practical recommendations that can be implemented immediately.
- **Peer learning:** Successful practices from selected grantees and other relevant local businesses will be used as practical examples for other participants.
- **Follow-up-oriented coaching:** The consultant will provide simple actions and outputs for participants to complete after each session through online coaching, allowing SPRINT to assess whether the coaching has resulted in practical application.

2. Purpose of the Consultancy

The purpose of this consultancy is to design and deliver a practical, needs-based capacity-building programme that strengthens the ability of participating MSMEs and cooperatives to improve their existing market and digital practices, access new markets, build business networks, improve product presentation and standardization, and apply appropriate digital tools to manage and develop their businesses.

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The results of the activity will contribute to:

- Intermediate Outcome 1100: Increased access to innovation and green growth opportunities for EMW in agriculture; and
- Immediate Outcome 1110: Enhanced business development and market access capacity for EMW-focused MSMEs/cooperatives/producers.

The consultancy will support Output 1113: Promote e-commerce adoption among MSMEs/cooperatives/producer groups, particularly through strengthening participants' capacity to use market information, digital tools and business management practices.

This consultancy will contribute directly to the achievement of SPRINT's Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) indicators, including 1113.1: # (total) of e-commerce platforms and/or other appropriate marketing approaches established or improved targeting EMW-focused MSMEs/coops/producers; 1113.2 : # (total) of targeted EMW adopting appropriate e-commerce platforms/marketing tools; 1110.1 : # and % of total targeted EMW-focused MSMEs/coops/producers reporting increased confidence in their business capabilities and 1110.2: % of total targeted EMW-focused MSMEs/coops/producers, apply recommended practices on business and financial management from their trainings/awareness (usage) and 1110.3: # (total) targeted EMW reporting positive changes in business development service and management services, information, and new/expanding markets/linkages (usage/adoption)

3. Scope and Key Requirements

3.1. Scope

The Consultant(s) or consulting team will be responsible for the design, preparation, delivery and evaluation of a practical and context-specific training and coaching programme for SPRINT grantees.

Building on the digital marketing, market access and business management training already delivered in previous years, the assignment will focus on **strengthening participants' existing practices, addressing identified gaps and developing practical skills that can be applied directly to their businesses**. The consultancy will cover three interconnected thematic areas:

Topic 1 – Markets & B2B Trade Networks, and the Application of Digital Tools in Market Analysis

This topic will build on the foundational digital marketing and market access training delivered in Year 3 by focusing on the practical review, improvement and application of participants' existing market channels and practices, while developing their capacity to access new markets and business opportunities.

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Key areas should include:

- Review and assessment of current digital and market channels: understanding how participating businesses currently use Facebook, TikTok, Zalo, e-commerce platforms (eg., Shopee), direct sales, trade events and other market channels; identifying strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement.
- Product storytelling and digital content creation: developing compelling and authentic stories that highlight products, producers, local identity and value propositions, and using accessible tools such as Canva, CapCut and AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) to create product visuals, short-form videos and other promotional content.
- Improving existing digital channels: strengthening product presentation, content, customer engagement, communication and conversion approaches on the platforms that businesses already use.
- B2B networking and business linkages: developing practical skills to identify, approach, communicate with and follow up with potential business partners and buyers.
- Preparing for market linkage opportunities: improving participants' ability to prepare for and make effective use of business networking events, study visits, trade events and other market linkage opportunities, including opportunities generated through SPRINT activities such as SPRINT Connect.

Topic 2 – Product Standardization and Packaging

This topic will focus on strengthening participants' ability to improve product presentation, packaging and product information in response to market requirements and customer expectations, building on their existing products and practices.

Key areas will include:

- Product standardization and consistency in relation to target markets and customer requirements.
- Product labelling, essential product information and traceability.
- Product presentation and packaging for different customers and market segments.
- Practical, market-oriented and environmentally friendly packaging solutions, including appropriate materials and formats.
- Use of QR codes and digital product information to support traceability, product identification, product storytelling and consumer confidence.
- Practical review of selected grantees' existing packaging and labels to identify areas for improvement.
- Application of product presentation and packaging improvements to B2B, retail, online and other relevant market channels.

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Topic 3 – Digital Financial and Cost Management

This topic will focus on moving beyond basic financial recording and cash-flow management covered in Year 3, and strengthening participants' ability to use digital business and financial information for performance monitoring, planning and decision-making.

Key areas will include:

- Review of participants' existing financial and business information management practices and identification of practical gaps.
- Use of accessible digital tools such as Google Sheets and appropriate business management software to organize and monitor business information.
- Development of simple digital dashboards or tracking tools to monitor sales, products, customers, inventory and key business performance indicators.
- Use of business and financial data to identify trends, operational issues and opportunities for improvement.
- Linking market, sales and financial information to support decisions on products, customers, markets and resource allocation.
- Use of simple digital tools for business planning, forecasting and performance monitoring.
- Practical exercises using participants' own business data to develop or improve simple digital management tools for continued use after the training.

The Topic 3 training may be delivered with participation from the Lao Cai Provincial Department of Science and Technology, where appropriate, to integrate relevant provincial support for digital transformation of MSMEs and align the training with the province's mandate and MSME digital transformation orientation.

3.2. Target participants

The training will target business owners/managers and experienced staff of women entrepreneurs' organizations, MSMEs/ cooperatives/producers group participating in the eight SPRINT priority value chain with priority given to ethnic minority women including tea, cinnamon, bamboo shoots, mulberry/silk, sticky rice; indigenous apple (in Vietnamese name: táo mèo/sơn tra), vegetables and medicinal herbs. The training will also target women's business associations in Lao Cai.

Each training class is expected to have approximately 40–45 participants, of whom 75–85% are expected to be ethnic minority women. Participants will primarily include key leaders and managers of MSMEs/cooperatives, staff responsible for sales, communications, marketing or product development, and representatives of linked households.

3.3. Training format

- Approximately 15 face-to-face training classes;
- Two days per class;
- Each class focuses on one thematic topic, with the following proposed allocation (The above allocation may be adjusted based on the training needs assessment and actual implementation requirements, in consultation with SPRINT):
 - Topic 1 – Market Access/B2B Networking and Digital Market Analysis: 5 classes × 2 days = 10 days;
 - Topic 2 – Product Standardization/Packaging: 5 classes × 2 days = 10 days;
 - Topic 3 - Green Finance & Digital Cost Management: 5 classes × 2 days = 10 days;
- Training delivered at commune/ward level or other appropriate locations within the SPRINT target areas; covering the former districts of Mù Cang Chải, Văn Chấn, Trạm Tấu, Văn Yên, Lục Yên and Yên Bái City (former Yen Bai Province). Specific training locations will be confirmed at a later stage.
- In-person training period: October–November 2026 (tentative).
- Practical and participatory methodology, with emphasis on applying knowledge and tools to participants' own businesses and products.
- At least 15 online mentoring sessions were implemented from October to December 2026.

The final allocation of classes across the three topics will be determined in consultation with SPRINT.

3.4. Specific Tasks and Deliverables

No	Specific Task	Detailed Description	Deliverable (s) in both English and Vietnamese	Indicative Level of Efforts
1	Inception	Review relevant SPRINT documents and have a meeting with SPRINT team capacity gaps and learning needs of target MSMEs and cooperatives.	• Inception report/workplan; • Summary of key findings from the review of grantees'	2 days ⁷

		Review the grantees' current digital and market channels, including relevant social media and e-commerce platforms; Identify potential real business cases and examples to be used in the training. Develop the training implementation plan and proposed allocation of classes across the three topics.	existing digital and market practices; Proposed case studies/examples and training approach	
2	Development of Training Programme and Materials	Develop a coherent training package covering the three thematic areas. Each thematic area should include a practical two-day training programme using participatory and application-oriented methods.	- Training curriculum for each thematic area; - Detailed 2-day session plans; - Presentation slides/handouts; - Trainer/facilitator notes; - Participant handouts; - Practical exercises and case studies; - Pre- and post-training assessment tools.	2 days
3	Delivery of Face-to-Face Training	Deliver approximately 15 face-to-face training classes, each lasting two days. Each class will focus on one thematic topic. The consultant(s) shall: deliver the training according to the agreed workplan;	- At least 15 completed training classes; - Completed pre- and post-training assessment; - Attendance records; - Training documentation;	30 days 8

		• use relevant examples from real SPRINT grantees and adapt cases to the relevant value chains and participant profiles; • facilitate practical exercises and discussions; • provide hands-on guidance on relevant digital tools; • provide practical feedback to participants; and • document key training results and participant outputs.	• Participant outputs/practical exercises; • Daily training records;	
4	Online Coaching / Post-Training Support	• Provide follow-up online coaching to selected EMW-focused MSMEs/cooperatives participating in the face-to-face training. (The number of MSMEs/cooperatives/producer groups engaged in follow-up online coaching will be determined based on their identified needs) • The coaching aims to reinforce learning, increase participants' confidence in applying the knowledge and tools gained, and support the practical application of recommended business and financial management practices. • The Consultant(s) shall conduct at least 15 online coaching sessions, with at least one session linked to	• At least 15 online coaching sessions completed. The online coaching session should be implemented from October 2026 to December 2026); • Mentoring updates/track records including date, participants, key issues discussed, support provided and agreed follow-up actions; • 1 consolidated final report on mentoring sessions summarizing key issues, progress, challenges, participant feedback and achievement	4 – 14 days, depend on needs; 9

		each training class, prioritising MSMEs/cooperatives that identify specific business challenges or follow-up needs. Each session shall last approximately 60 minutes and may focus on participants' questions, review of practical outputs, challenges encountered in applying the training, and agreed follow-up actions.	against PMF Indicators and recommendations for further support.	
5	Report	Analyze pre-/post-training results and participant feedback for each class; assess achievement of learning objectives; consolidate lessons learned and recommendations; prepare final consultancy report.	- Training evaluation results for each class; - Final training materials and supporting documents/handouts. 01 final report for all activities and accompanying documents.	2 days
Total indicative level of effort: 40 working days for the whole consultancy package. The final level of effort may be adjusted within an indicative range of 40–50 working days, depending on the agreed scope of work, the number of topics covered, the number of online coaching implemented, and actual implementation needs.				

Note: Gender and Inclusion considerations

Gender and inclusion considerations should be appropriately integrated throughout the assignment, including attention to:

- different levels of education and digital literacy;
- language and communication needs;
- cultural sensitivity;
- geographical distance and mobility constraints; and
- the specific participation and learning needs of ethnic minority women.

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The training approach should be practical, inclusive and respectful of participants' different levels of experience and confidence.

4. Expected Results

By the end of the consultancy:

1. Approximately 15 practical two-day training classes and 15 online coaching are delivered to eligible MSMEs and cooperatives in SPRINT target areas.
2. At least 70% of participants report to improve their ability to identify and adopt appropriate market information and digital market-analysis tools.
3. At least 70% of participants report confidence in their capacity to identify potential customers, buyers and business partners and develop new B2B networks.
4. At least 70% of participants improved their understanding and application of product standardization, labelling, packaging and traceability requirements.
5. At least 70% of participants gain practical skill(s) in using appropriate digital tools for financial, cost and cash-flow management.
6. At least 70% of participants produce practical outputs, tools or action points that can be applied to their own businesses and products after training and online coaching note limited new labelling products, action plan to improve their social media, etc
7. SPRINT receives a consolidated set of training materials, participant outputs, product/business improvement examples, evaluation results, lessons learned and recommendations for future capacity-building support.

5. Consultant Qualifications

Criteria	Required
Education	• Advanced university degree in business administration, economics, agribusiness, marketing, management, digital transformation or a relevant field; • Master's degree is an advantage.
Experience	• At least 7 years of relevant professional experience. • Proven experience designing and delivering practical training/coaching for MSMEs, cooperatives or similar businesses. • Demonstrated experience in the three thematic areas: market access and B2B networking; product standardization, packaging and traceability; digital financial/business management.

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	• Experience working with agricultural value chains, ethnic minority women, women-led enterprises or cooperatives is an advantage.
Technical Skills	• Strong training, facilitation and coaching skills, with the ability to develop practical and learner-centred training materials. Practical knowledge of digital tools for market analysis, business management and/or financial management relevant to MSMEs and cooperatives. • Knowledge of agricultural product packaging, labelling, traceability and quality requirements is an advantage. • Understanding of adult learning principles and participatory training approaches.
Language	• Fluency in Vietnamese is required. • Working proficiency in English is preferred, particularly for reporting and documentation.

6. Application Process

Competitive tendering will be applied. Interested consultant(s) or consulting firms are invited to submit the following in both English and Vietnamese to with an email title [Application for consultancy _ Activity 1113.4 – Name of consultants] **by 17.00 pm on 11 October 2026.**

- Letter of interest;
- Consultant CVs;
- Technical proposal and financial proposal;
- Examples of previous similar work (optional but recommended).

Note: The financial proposal shall be prepared in VND, based on the scope of work and requirements specified in this TOR and shall include all applicable taxes. The proposed level of effort should be aligned with the indicative 40 working-days. Costs for travel and accommodation required for field implementation, if applicable, shall be presented separately and will be handled in accordance with SPRINT's applicable procedures. We thank all applicants for their interest. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

Cowater is committed to providing equal opportunities for all applicants. Women, people with disability, and people from minority groups are strongly encouraged to apply. We thank you for your interest in building a better tomorrow with Cowater International.

