

Terms of Reference (ToR)

For Engaging an External Agency or Consultant to Undertake Detailed Needs Assessment and Market Study for Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)

Locations: Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh and Kolar, Karnataka

About S M Sehgal Foundation

S M Sehgal Foundation (SMSF) is a rural, grassroots implementing organization working to achieve positive social, economic, and environmental change across rural India. The foundation operates in over 13 states. SMSF's key program areas include Agricultural Development, Water Management, Local Participation and Sustainability, and Transform Lives – One School at a Time.

Through these programs, SMSF collaborates with rural communities to improve water management, increase agricultural productivity, build strong local institutions, and strengthen governance systems. The organization places a strong focus on empowering women and youth as key change agents for sustainable development.

Background and Rationale

Organizing small and marginal farmers into Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) has emerged as an effective strategy for enhancing agricultural competitiveness, market access, and sustainability. FPOs enable farmers to collectively negotiate better prices, reduce input costs, and access credit, technology, and information.

Despite growing institutional support, many FPOs face persistent challenges related to business planning, governance, access to markets, and financial sustainability. Additionally, women producers often have limited participation due to social and cultural barriers.

Building on previous project phases implemented in Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh) and Kolar (Karnataka), SMSF is going to undertake a two-year project (Aug 2025–July 2027) aimed at strengthening and scaling up FPO capacities. This includes supporting 14 new FPOs and revisiting 11 existing FPOs to understand their current status, challenges, and emerging opportunities.

To inform the project design and interventions, SMSF proposes to commission a comprehensive Baseline Study and a Detailed Needs Assessment and Market Study through an external research agency.

Objectives of the Study

To assess the baseline conditions, institutional capacities, needs, and market potential of the 25 FPOs (14 new and 11 existing) across Prayagraj and Kolar districts to inform project design and implementation.

1. Baseline Study (14 New FPOs):
 - Establish socio-economic, demographic, and institutional baselines of FPO members.

- Map agricultural patterns, value chains, and production systems.
 - Assess the governance structures, legal compliance, and current business operations of FPOs.
2. Needs Assessment and Revisit status of existing FPO's (11 existing FPOs):
- Identify key needs and capacity gaps of FPOs for institutional strengthening, business development, and value addition.
 - Assess market opportunities for key crops/products, including backward and forward linkages.
 - Evaluate financial and digital inclusion levels and identify potential for ICT-based interventions.
 - Recommend strategies for enhancing women's participation and leadership in FPOs.
 - Propose actionable business and market development plans for each FPO.

Scope of Work

The selected agency or consultant will be responsible for:

- Conducting scoping, mapping, and grading of the selected 14 new and 11 existing FPOs.
- Attend brainstorming and review meetings to discuss methodology and sampling design with team members of SMSF.
- Designing and implementing data collection tools for baseline and market assessment.
- Collecting quantitative and qualitative data from FPOs, members, key stakeholders, input suppliers, buyers, and market actors.
- Conducting focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs), and value chain mapping for major commodities.
- Identifying potential business models, value chains, and product diversification opportunities.
- Developing FPO-specific recommendations and an aggregated summary report for each district.
- Submitting raw data, transcripts, and visual documentation (photos, audio/video).
- Participating in review meetings with the SMSF team to present progress and findings.

Expected Deliverables

1. Inception Report: Detailing methodology, tools, sampling, and work plan.
2. Baseline Report: With key socio-economic, institutional, and market indicators.
3. Needs Assessment and Market Study Report: Including detailed findings and recommendations for each FPO.
4. Consolidated Analytical Report: Synthesizing overall trends, challenges, and opportunities across the project regions.
5. Presentation of Findings.
6. Submission of Clean datasets, transcripts, and visual evidence.

Duration

Three-months from the date of signing the agreement

Budget and Payment Terms

The financial proposal should be reasonable, allocable, and necessary, covering all costs (personnel, travel, data collection, analysis, and reporting). Payment milestones will be linked to deliverables as per agreement.

The agency/consultant should have relevant thematic experience of working in the social sector (at least 5-6 years), specifically on Agricultural Marketing and Farmer Producer Organisations. Experience of working with non-profit organisations, international donors is desirable.

Submission Requirements

Interested agencies or consultant are invited to submit:

- Technical Proposal: Detailed proposal including, methodology, timeline, team credentials
- Financial Proposal: With a detailed cost breakdown.
- Organizational Credentials: Includes relevant past assignments.

Proposals should be submitted via email to r.saxena@smsfoundation.org by November 21, 2025.