



**Gender-Responsive Equitable Agriculture and Tourism Program**  
**Terms of Reference**  
**Assessment and Development of a Framework on Value for Money (VfM)**

**Maximum Budget: AUD 80,000 including taxes.**

**Tentative working duration: November 2021 to January 2022**

## **I. Background**

With more than 35 years of experience, Cowater International is Canada's global leader in management consulting services specialising in international development. We have managed the implementation of over 800 projects in more than 80 countries around the globe for clients such as DFAT Australia, FCDO the World Bank and Global Affairs Canada. We work with governments, partner organisations, communities and civil society to design and implement sustainable solutions that generate lasting social, economic and environmental impacts. Our adaptive approach to management has led to our award-winning work and recognition as one of Canada's Best Managed Companies in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

The GREAT Program is a flagship initiative of the Australian Aid program in Vietnam – it commenced in November 2017 and will run for five years until June 2022. The Program seeks to promote women's economic empowerment (WEE) in the ethnically diverse north-west region of Vietnam. The primary beneficiaries are women living in the provinces of Son La and Lao Cai with a focus on the economic inclusion of women from ethnic minority communities. The objectives of the Aus4Equality|GREAT Program are:

- Objective 1 – Empowering local women: Women living in local communities have increased capacity, space and choices to beneficially engage with agriculture and tourism businesses.
- Objective 2 – Inclusive business partnerships: Selected private sector actors within the agriculture and tourism sectors innovate to profitably and sustainably trade with more women entrepreneurs and operate in gender-sensitive ways.
- Objective 3 – Improving sector governance and policy: Government agencies reinforce policies, and enact plans, regulations, and services that enable more inclusive socio-economic development.

The goal of the Program is to improve the livelihoods of the adult female population in Son La and Lao Cai, including increasing the income for 17,000 women across the two provinces.

GREAT partners with private and public sector entities to reach the Program objectives through 57 investments ("projects") in the tourism and agriculture sectors, targeting rural households, particularly ethnic minority women. Through these investments, the Program aims to facilitate a range of systemic changes to support women's economic empowerment in both sectors and also the broader enabling environment.

A Management Information System (MIS) has been established and operated to collect data on implementation progress of these investments on a quarterly basis. A midline longitudinal study was also conducted in July-August 2020 to capture changes in WEE and a Systemic Market Changes Assessment finalised in August 2021 identified that most of the created changes are in the Adoption and Adaption Stages of the Adoption-Adaption-Response-Expand Framework.

The project-level midline assessments for 34 projects were conducted in January 2021 and identified that 9,082 households with 15,414 women gained profit from GREAT-supported products and services in 2020. In total, GREAT-supported products in 2020 generated an accounting profit of AUD 16,715,850. In 2019 and 2020, GREAT's investments contributed to the creation of around VND 850 billion of total revenue (approximately AUD 48 million).

The recent DFAT-commissioned Mid-Term Review recommended to “develop criteria to define what good value for money looks like for Phase 2, and how the Program will be assessed against these criteria. (NB. DFAT's new Performance Assessment tool provides useful guidance).”

Achieving Value for Money (VfM) is an important priority of both DFAT and the GREAT Program. DFAT is currently leading a Design Update for a potential Phase II of the Program which would run for five years and is due to start in July 2022. It is important that GREAT understands how its current practice contributes to VfM and how it can be improved for Phase II.

## II. Purpose and Assessment Questions

The GREAT Program is seeking proposals from suitably qualified institutions to conduct a VfM assessment and the development of a Framework on VfM with the following purpose and key assessment questions:

### 1. Purpose

The Assessment will:

- 1) Review the GREAT Program's current systems, tools and practices to provide an understanding of how the Program is tracking against value for money criteria and opportunities for improvement; and
- 2) Develop a Framework and Operational Guide, including Procedures and Analysis Tools for the Program to apply to ensure value for money at the Program, sector and sub-sector levels aligned with DFAT's VfM principles<sup>1</sup>.

### 2. Assessment Questions

The Assessment should answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the estimated value for money of the Program, supported sectors, and selected cases?
- 2) What mechanisms, processes and practices have been applied that enhance or reduce value for money?
- 3) What criteria for value for money at the Program, sector, sub-sector and project level can GREAT and partners use?
- 4) How will the Program apply these criteria at each stage of the program management cycle? What frameworks, procedures and tools should GREAT and its partners use to assess value for money at the program, sector, sub-sector and project level?
- 5) What independent mechanisms should be in place to ensure the implementation of these practices?

## III. Methodologies and Key Activities

The Assessment is divided into three Stages:

### 1. Stage 1A: Inception

There will be the following indicative activities:

- 1) Kick-off meeting to discuss the overall context and expectations for the assignment, as well as the proposed implementation plan. This meeting will also be used to agree on coordination mechanisms

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dfat.gov.au/aid/who-we-work-with/value-for-money-principles/Pages/value-for-money-principles>

and stakeholder consultations including DFAT and PMUs.

- 2) Scanning information and desk review:
  - a. The scanning will use a combination of (1) internet searches and (2) relevant pieces of academic literature, documentation around existing VfM frameworks and approaches, including DFAT's VfM principles, VfM-focused studies on other DFAT-funded projects (and projects funded by other donors) and VfM-relevant data which is currently being captured and stored by GREAT.
  - b. A desk review of the various sources of information, including documents and data provided by GREAT.
- 3) Adjust the initial approach and steps included in the proposal and present key initial observations to GREAT based on the information scanning and desk review.

The main output of Stage 1A is an Inception Report that includes (1) initial observations or take-aways, including linkages to DFAT and Cowater International policies as relevant, based on information scanning, desk reviews, initial discussions with GREAT and DFAT, and (2) adjusted approach, methodology and steps from what was proposed in the original proposal.

## **2. Stage 1B: Development of a Framework, Guideline, Procedures and Tools**

Indicative activities include:

- 1) Develop the Framework, operational guideline, procedures, methodologies, and tools. At minimum, the Framework should include:
  - Definitions of VfM and related concepts
  - A set of practical steps and questions to enable the GREAT team, PMUs and partners to apply the Framework
  - The scope of the Framework, in terms of when it should and should not be applied
  - Data requirements, including what data is currently collected/stored by GREAT
  - A list of relevant sources of additional information
- 2) Present the draft Framework, operational guidelines, procedures, tools and methodologies for VfM estimation to GREAT Program
- 3) Revise the draft Framework, operational guidelines, including procedures and tools based on feedback from GREAT
- 4) Select cases for Stage 2 based on the Framework (especially the data requirements and the scope):
  - The assessment team will work with GREAT to identify relevant cases on which the framework can be applied
  - The selected cases should cover:
    - Both agriculture and tourism sectors
    - Different levels of performance (Excellent, Average and Poor)
    - Different types of organisations (International and Local NGOs, Government, Large business, Small business)
    - Potentially different level of VfM, based on indicative value of dollar per household or beneficiary
- 5) Propose an Implementation Plan for Stage 2 integrating comments and feedback from the GREAT Program

The main outputs of Stage 1B are (1) GREAT Value for Money Framework, Operational Guidelines, Procedures, Methodologies and Tools and (2) Implementation Plan for Stage 2.

### **3. Stage 2: Application of GREAT VfM Framework on Selected Cases and Cross-Cases to generate a Complete Report to respond to all assessment questions**

Overall, the assessment team will use the outputs from Stage 1B to carry out VfM assessments on selected cases, prepare summary reports of the assessment on VfM for each case, as well as a synthesised case analysis to respond to all assessment questions.

Indicative activities will include:

- 1) For each case, the assessment team will collect and/or review information/data and conduct analysis. Stakeholder interviews may be carried out as required.
- 2) Prepare a summary of the assessment results of each case, including the comments and recommendations for necessary adjustments of the application of the VfM framework, guidelines, procedures, tools and methodologies for each case.
- 3) Synthesise the case analyses and prepare a report to answer all assessment questions of the TOR, including recommendations on:
  - The adjusted and final VfM Framework, operational guidelines, procedures, tools and methodologies
  - Recommendations to improve VfM for GREAT programming

The main outputs of Stage 2 are: (1) Summary reports on VfM analysis of each selected case; (2) Synthesis report to respond to all assessment questions of the TOR; 3) Finalized VfM Framework, operational guidelines, procedures, tools and methodologies.

## **IV. Implementation Arrangements**

A service agreement between GREAT and the selected institution (defined as an organisation with suitable expertise to carry out this assignment) will be established to execute this TOR.

### **1. GREAT**

The implementation of this assessment requires proactive management and engagement from the Aus4Equality|GREAT team, including the Team Leader, Deputy Team Leader, MERL Manager and the Operations Manager, on an ongoing basis, particularly for oversight, quality assurance and strategic advice of the assessment at the critical stages and of the outputs to be prepared. Specific roles of the GREAT team are:

- Manage and oversee the implementation and progress of the service agreement;
- Collaborate closely with the selected institution in the assessment process to carry out quality assurance of the assessment plan, protocol, tools and interim outputs;
- Provide strategic advice to the assessment team at critical stages;
- Provide available routine M&E and finance data and supporting information on a timely basis;
- Provide support to connect with and obtain guidance from DFAT and relevant entities such as the Program Management Units (PMUs) and partners;
- Possibly engage the selected institution in relevant knowledge dissemination activities and/or the production of knowledge products using findings and recommendations from the assessment;
- Carry out necessary quality assurance measurements and activities;
- Provide clearance to assessment deliverables that meet quality standards; and
- Have the primary responsibility for communication and publication of the assessment findings.

### **2. Institution**

The selected institution has a lead role in designing and implementing the assessment. The institution has a primary accountability to the GREAT team for the identified deliverables. In collaboration and coordination with GREAT, it will:

- Develop the assessment design, tools, and research plan, including a plan for dealing with any ethical issues (e.g. prior informed consent) that may arise from the assessment;
- Carry out and organise assessment activities according to the approved plan, ensuring high quality and efficiency;
- Alert GREAT team immediately about any cases of undesirable impacts such as gender-based violence and child labour;
- Conduct data analysis and prepare the required deliverables;
- Share and report assessment findings as needed; and
- Participate in the preparation of joint publications, if the program decides to do so.<sup>2</sup>

Depending on technical, organisational and financial justifications, an institution may propose (not required) partnering with a local institution to implement the assessment to support cost-effectiveness whilst ensuring a quality.

## V. Contract duration, Specific Tasks and Deliverables

### 1. Contract duration

- **Stage 1A: Inception:** November 2021 – January 2022 for developing an Inception Report
- **Stage 1B: Development of a Framework, Guideline, Procedures and Tools:** November - December 2021
- **Stage 2: Application of GREAT VfM Framework on Selected Cases and Cross-case Analysis:** December 2021 – January 2022

### 2. Timeline and Deliverables

Timeline	Activity	Deliverables
	<b>Stage 1A. Inception</b>	
15 – 17 November 2021	Kick off Meeting with GREAT	
18 – 26 November 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and data scan</li> <li>• Desk Review</li> <li>• Discussions with DFAT, GREAT</li> <li>• Prepare Inception Report</li> </ul>	1) An Inception Report that includes a) initial observations or take-aways, including linkages to DFAT and Cowater International policies as relevant, based on information scanning, desk reviews, initial discussion with GREAT and DFAT, and b) adjusted approach, methodology and steps compared to the original proposal.
	<b>Stage 1B. Development of Framework, Procedures and Tools</b>	
29 November – 19 December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present the draft Framework, operational guidelines, procedures, tools and methodologies for VfM estimation to GREAT</li> <li>• Revise the draft Framework, operational guidelines, including procedures and tools based on any feedback</li> </ul>	2) GREAT Value for Money Framework, Operational Guideline, Procedure, Methodologies and Tools; and 3) Final Implementation Plan for Stage-2

<sup>2</sup> Publications and intellectual ownership of the assessment products will follow the Program's standard contractual protocols.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Select cases for Stage 2</li> <li>Propose and finalize an Implementation Plan for Stage 2</li> </ul>	
	<b>Stage 2. Application of GREAT VfM Framework on Selected Cases and Cross-Cases to generate a Complete Report to respond to all research questions</b>	
20 – 30 December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect and/or review information/data and conduct analysis of selected cases.</li> <li>Carry out stakeholder interviews as required.</li> </ul>	4) Collected data (raw, coded, transcribed, and tables of analyzed data)
3 – 7 January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summary of the assessment results of each case, including comments and recommendations for necessary adjustments of the application of the VfM Framework, guidelines, procedures, tools and methodologies for each case</li> </ul>	5) Summary reports on VfM analysis of each selected case
10-28 January 2022	<p>Synthesize the case analyses and prepare a report to answer all assessment questions of the TOR, including recommendations on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The adjusted and final VfM Framework, operational guidelines, procedures, tools and methodologies; and</li> <li>Recommendations to improve VfM on GREAT Program</li> </ul>	<p>6) Synthesis report to respond to all assessment questions of the TOR; and</p> <p>7) Finalized VfM Framework, operational guidelines, procedures, tools and methodologies</p>

## VI. Team Composition and Application Process

### 1. Team composition

The tendering institution can propose a structure that will work effectively to execute this TOR. Key positions can include:

- **Principal investigator:** A principal investigator should be at the senior level and is required to have at least 15 years relevant experience with at least a Masters Degree, and preferably PhD, in a relevant area. As the leader of the assessment team, the position will hold a primary responsibility for the technical quality, progress and deliverables of the assessment. The position needs to have excellent research, coordination and English language skills. Knowledge of the operating context of GREAT target locations is an advantage.
- **Analyst:** Mid-level analyst should have similar qualifications as the principal investigator but fewer years of experiences (at least seven). They should have practical experience in guiding and leading implementation of VfM assessment activities. The position requires excellent proficiency in English.
- **Financial Analyst / Economist:** The mid-level financial analyst/economist should have financial analysis background and relevant skills to conduct VfM analyses. Experience in grant management is considered an asset.
- **Market System Development and/or Women’s Economic Empowerment expert.**

As a requirement for all applications from local institutions, the team composition must include an international expert who will, at a minimum, be involved in designing the assessment and tools, data analyses and report writing. If an international institution applies, it must also include local expertise in the proposal to design and implement the assessment, taking into account it will be unlikely that international experts will be able to enter Vietnam for the foreseeable future due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

## 2. Application Process

### 1) Technical – *All proposals must be submitted in English*

- (i) **Standard requirements** that include:
  - a. Commitment letter signed by the authorised representative of the institution, confirming the Applicant's intention to provide the services in accordance with the provisions of this TOR;
  - b. Business registration and profile of the institution (in Vietnamese language is acceptable); and
  - c. Copies of two similar contracts implemented in the last five years.
- (ii) **Technical Proposal** that includes:
  - a. A **standardised research protocol** (10 pages), showing the assessment purpose, conceptual framework, approaches, indicative methodologies, indicative types of required data and information, and implementation plan. The applicant should elaborate how to roll out the assessment and analysis to seek answers to the assessment questions.
  - b. The **assessment organisation plan** (3 pages): The Applicant should set out its approach to organise the implementation of the assessment with:
    - **A skill matrix** that identifies the skills required by the assessment team, and the personnel that bring those skills considered necessary to achieve the envisaged project result.
    - **Inputs schedule**: A schedule that lists activities against team resources/inputs required and timeframes. It should include all inputs required to deliver the services in terms of expert time, working tools, working locations etc. to implement the project.
    - **The time schedule** envisaged by the Applicant with specific reference to submission of reports and documents, specific meetings, etc.,
  - c. **Personnel**: (2 pages) The tenderer should present their key personnel and team and articulate why they are well suited to their role on the assessment team. Experts proposed for the application must be available for the duration of the contract, in case of force majeure, the modification of experts must get prior approval from GREAT and have equivalent qualifications and profile. Please include CVs of no more than 3 pages (per individual) of all senior personnel nominated, including statement of availability signed by each expert.
  - d. **Experience**: (2 pages) The tenderer should present their experience as well as the experience of partners (e.g. local research institutions, associates, etc), and specify why that experience is relevant for this assessment.
- (iii) **Financial Proposal** in AUD, can either be input or output based with total proposed budget not exceeding AUD 50,000 including taxes.
  - Input-based financial proposals should identify the daily rates and number of days for each team member against key activities; reimbursable expenses (such as per diems, travel, etc) and the management fees. A summary table should be provided.Or
  - Output-based proposals should identify the cost for each key deliverable substantiated with a breakdown of number of working days for each expert per deliverable/implementation step and unit cost, plus estimated costs such as per diems, as well as a management fee. Key deliverables can be selected from the list above and/or modified for the purposes of the financial proposal.

**Important Note: Financial proposals that exceed the maximum budget will not be considered.**

## 2) Eligibility

Eligible applicants must:

- Be an institution with relevant expertise to the proposed assessment;
- Have been the lead contractor for two similar contracts implemented in the last five year; and
- Meet the requirements of the team composition that consists of international and national experts as detailed above.

## 3) Evaluation Process

### **Step One: Compliance check:**

The Evaluation Committee will carry out an examination of the administrative compliance of the Technical proposal.

### **Step Two: Technical assessment:**

The Committee will evaluate the Technical proposals in accordance with criteria provided in Section 6.2.1.(ii).

The Technical proposal points break down as follows:

- Research protocol = 30 points
  - Assessment organisation plan = 15 points
  - Personnel = 15 points
  - Relevant experience = 10 points
- Total = 70 points

The Aus4equality|GREAT Program may choose to interview representatives of short-listed applicants and the key experts proposed in finalising the technical evaluation.

### **Step Three: Financial Assessment:**

Financial proposals will be evaluated on a maximum financial score of 100. The lowest financial proposal receives a financial score of 100. Other proposals are allotted financial scores as follows:

$$\text{Financial score} = (\text{lowest Financial Proposal} / \text{Financial Proposal being evaluated}) \times 100$$

### **Step Four: Overall Assessment**

A maximum of 100 points composed of:

- Technical Proposal: 70 points
- Financial Proposal: 30 points

The technical acceptability threshold for the proposals is set to minimum 70 out of 100 points. Only proposals that have reached this technical acceptability threshold will be considered for the financial evaluation. Of these proposals, the best technical proposal receives a technical score of 100. Other proposals are allotted technical scores calculated as follows

$$\text{Technical score} = (\text{technical points of the Evaluated Proposal} / \text{technical points of the best Proposal}) \times 100$$

Financial proposals will be evaluated on a maximum financial score of 100. The lowest financial proposal receives a financial score of 100. Other proposals are allotted financial scores as follows:

$$\text{Financial score} = (\text{lowest Financial Proposal} / \text{Financial Proposal being evaluated}) \times 100$$

### **Conditions**

- No costs incurred by the Applicant in preparing, submitting the proposal and attending the interview (if requested) shall be reimbursable. All such costs shall be borne by the Applicant.
- The Aus4Equality|GREAT Program retains ownership of all proposals received under this call. Applicants have no right to have their tenders returned to them.

#### 4) How to Apply

Proposals need to be sent to [aus4equalityrecruitment@gmail.com](mailto:aus4equalityrecruitment@gmail.com) before 5pm Hanoi time Monday 1 November 2021 with the subject line “**Assessment and Development of a Framework on Value for Money (VfM)– GREAT**”. Late applications will be not considered.

The following documents will be provided upon request by email to [aus4equalityrecruitment@gmail.com](mailto:aus4equalityrecruitment@gmail.com), under condition that they are treated as commercial-in-confidence and are only used for the purpose of preparing for this call and are not be shared with other parties.

- GREAT's design document
- GREAT's MERL, MSD and WEE Framework
- GREAT's Provincial Engagement Strategies
- Relevant DFAT documents
- Summary table of partnership funding (name of project, type of partner, amount, location, sector, key products and number of targeted beneficiaries)

The successful applicant will need to sign a contract that is compliant with Cowater International's Head Contract with the Australian Government including the full copywrite ownership of all deliverables from this assignment.

A one-hour information session will be organised at **9am Hanoi time Friday 22 October 2021**. Please email [aus4equalityrecruitment@gmail.com](mailto:aus4equalityrecruitment@gmail.com) to register for the session. Relevant documents will be provided upon request from interested applicants.