

ARIAS SOCIETY

Assam Rural Infrastructure and Agricultural Services Society

(An Autonomous Body under Govt. of Assam)

Project Coordination Unit (PCU)

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Draft Terms of Reference (ToR) for Financial Inclusion Specialist under World Bank financed Assam Agribusiness and Rural Transformation Project (APART)

(A) BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

1. The Government of Assam (GoA) through Government of India (GoI) has received a loan from the World Bank for implementation of Assam Agribusiness and Rural Transformation Project (APART). Assam Rural Infrastructure and Agricultural Services (ARIAS) Society is the apex coordinating and monitoring agency for the project. The project is being implemented by eight line departments of GoA including their Directorates/Agencies/Commissionerates. The project interventions would be taken up in 24 prioritized districts of Assam i.e. Kokrajhar, Barpeta, Nalbari, Darrang, Sonitpur, Biswanath, Goalpara, Nagaon, Hojai, Cachar, Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong, Golaghat, Dhubri, South Salmara, Morigaon, Kamrup, Kamrup Metro Jorhat, Majuli, Sivasagar, Charaideo, Hailakandi and Lakhimpur. Now, the Assam Rural Infrastructure and Agricultural Services (ARIAS) Society now intends to apply a portion of this loan for engagement of one Financial Inclusion Specialist (FIS) on contractual basis.
2. The **Project Development Objective (PDO)** of APART is to “add value and improve resilience of selected agri value chains, focusing on smallholder farmers and agro-entrepreneurs in targeted districts of Assam”.
3. There are four components of APART. **The first component-A is Enabling Agri Enterprise Development**, with sub components being (i) Enhancing state capacity to attract private investments, (ii) Setting up an Agribusiness Enterprise Development and Promotion Facility (EDPF) (iii) Agribusiness Investment Fund (AIF) support (iv) Establishing sector stewardship councils. **The second component-B is Facilitating Agro Cluster Development** with subcomponents being- (i) Support establishment of cluster level Industry Associations (IAs), (ii) Supply chain support. **The third component-C is Fostering Market Led Production and Resilience Enhancement** with sub components being (i) Promoting climate resilient technologies and their adoption (ii) Facilitating market linkages through market intelligence and product aggregation (iii) Facilitating access to and responsible use of financial services. **The fourth component-D is project Management, Monitoring and Learning.**
4. APART will achieve the PDO by: (i) promoting investments in agri-enterprises, reducing business and transaction costs, facilitating access to finance for agribusiness entrepreneurs & where appropriate, push for process, regulatory and/or policy change; (ii) supporting the development of a modern agri supply chain; improved information communication technologies based farm information & intelligence services, and alternative marketing channels; and (iii) improving producers’ access to knowledge, technologies & infrastructure so that they are better able to respond to market opportunities & climate variability.
5. **Subcomponent C3 "Facilitating access to and responsible use of financial services"** is broadly funding three activities: (i) data collection and diagnostics on demand and supply of financial services to farmers and the enabling environment for these services; (ii) support innovations that can help deliver financial services at scale; and (iii) financial education and counseling. These activities together are expected to facilitate access to and responsible use of financial services for the producers and thereby help them better manage their cash flows, make productivity enhancing investments, and better manage the business and non-business risks they face.

¹ Nagaon, Sonitpur, Barpeta, Karbi Anglong, Kamrup, Dhubri, Golaghat, Kokrajhar, Lakhimpur, Darrang, Cachar, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Goalpara, Morigaon and Nalbari

The subcomponent supports the use of innovative approaches to deliver financial services at scale to farmers targeted by the project. This will be done through **(i) Financial Education & Counseling**; this assignment aims to deliver the 2,50,000 project beneficiaries with financial education and counseling using Information Communication Technology (ICT) based solutions across the APART value chains. And **(ii) Assam Challenge Fund now coined as Assam Agrifin "Xamahar"** that aims to address one or more constraints identified through the data and diagnostics activity in one or more value chains supported by the project. These constraints could include limited outreach, inadequate domain knowledge, lack of products that meet the needs of the producers, limited access to financial infrastructure such as collateral registries and credit bureaus, and appropriate tools to assess credit risks.

6. The Assam Agrifin "Xamahar" provides a comprehensive look at the methods, tools, and approaches used by industry leaders in all parts of the nation to improve Assam Value Chain Finance. The underlying aim of the agriculture fund is to facilitate access to finance as well as responsible use of the financial services provided. It envisages acting as a catalyst, which will enable high-impact investment in agriculture in Assam, while encouraging innovation that meets the requirements of all stakeholders in agriculture value chains.

The Project is going to competitively select 10nos of sub projects (for detailed information on "Xamahar" kindly visit <https://assam-agrifin.in/>) to partially cover the cost of developing, testing and/or scaling up innovations in products or process that improve access to finance for agriculture value chains in Assam.

The Sub – Projects will be implemented or scaled up in one or more of the 23 priority districts and aims to directly benefit 125,000 producers over the fund life including 30% women beneficiaries.

(B) OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSIGNMENT & SCOPE OF POSITION

7. The **Financial Inclusion Specialist (FIS)** under the guidance of Financial Services Specialist will provide inter *alia* support in the implementation of sub-projects selected under the Challenge fund that aims to increase access to financial services for farmers and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) underserved with financial services and also support in the implementation of Financial Education & Counseling under the Project.
8. *Key job responsibilities of the FIS include:*
 - a. The FIS will contribute to the development, planning and implementation of a district level financial inclusion strategy consisting of access to finance and financial inclusion solutions for small and marginal farmers underserved with financial services.
 - b. Building partnerships for the promotion of access to finance and collaboration with financial institutions like banks, MFIs, NBFC's, NGO's and other service providers that seek to deliver appropriate and affordable non-financial or financial services, particularly at the district level.
 - c. The FIS will study the existing financial service providers in the project districts and judge the gaps in the existing financial offerings and devise suitable strategies to plug in those gaps. FIS will also study adaptation of existing financial products to suit the needs of target farmers and other actors in the value chain.
 - d. FIS will be involved in the improving and vetting content of the financial education and counseling campaigns and customizing it to different groups of agri commodity value chain stakeholders.
 - e. FIS will develop and contribute to the capacity building plan, financial literacy modules and methodological approaches to ensure project interventions achieve or surpass established objectives
 - f. Monitor implementation progress of sub-projects against agreed KPIs
 - g. Manage, monitor and review the fund utilization by the sub-projects and ensure that sub-projects are compliant with policies and procedures prescribed in the operational manual. Specific tasks include:
 - Monitor sub-projects and grant utilization, and ensure appropriate and timely utilization of grants
 - Link sub-projects with other APART project activities and stakeholders as required
 - Report and take necessary measures to reduce and manage risk or deviation by the sub-projects

- Provide regular feedback to sub-projects to ensure issues raised have been addressed by the sub-projects.
- h. Undertake regular assessment of sub-projects if specific problem statements existing in the APART value chains are being addressed for which solutions are being sought through the challenge fund.
- i. Contribute to roll out implementation of the sub-projects and ensure performance of sub-projects
- j. Monitor and report to ARIAS on the progress of product/ services deployment and scaling up to be carried out by the selected sub-projects
- k. Act as the first touch point for the sub-projects for all communication to/ from APART
- l. The FIS will identify best practices and trends, innovative approaches such as financial services business models in various sectors such as savings, lending, FPO financing, agri finance, digital payments etc.
- m. Any other related task assigned by the State Project Director (SPD), ARIAS Society
- n. **Travel Requirements:** The FIS will be required to undertake field-visits and tours as per the project requirements, with prior approval of the SPD.

(C) QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE, AGE ETC.

9. **Educational Qualification:** The Financial Inclusion Specialist must possess a full time Post-Graduate/Master's degree in Finance, Business Administration, Micro-finance, Banking, Rural Economics, Development Economics, Rural Management, Development Studies or a closely related field.
10. **Working Experience:** The Financial Inclusion Specialist must have **at least 5 years** of professional experience in **Banking, Financial services and Insurance (BFSI)** domain, development sector with hands on experience on financial inclusion/micro-finance/ rural banking/rural finance development. The candidate should have adequate understanding of the financial sector /enterprise/ rural financing and should have experience of handling such projects of scale and scope earlier. **Preference would be given to candidates who have prior experience of working in Assam.**
11. **Computer Skills:** The Financial Inclusion Specialist must have experience of using Internet based applications, including MS Word, MS Excel and MS PowerPoint and other related applications.
12. **Language:** High level of fluency in English and Hindi
13. **Desirable Qualifications, Experience, Skills etc:**
 - a. Experience of working in medium/large size project(s) assisted/funded by any international/national organization and/or any international/national NGO institution and/or experience in working in reputed microfinance companies and NBFC's
 - b. Member of the team that has demonstrated experience in developing financial inclusion projects, implementing financial education/ literacy programs, provisioning of financial services in rural/ remote and underserved areas
 - c. Knowledge of current practices in developing rural financial markets, particularly in financing agricultural value chain development
 - d. An understanding and experience in the use of technology to drive the development of alternative delivery channels for financial institutions
 - e. Knowledge of Assamese and other Indian languages, though not essential, will be desirable.
 - f. Good social, analytical and planning skills; the candidate must show initiative, synthesis, organization and personal dynamism, be self-motivated and have the ability to work independently as well as in teams.
 - g. Experience of working in complex, multi stakeholder, fast moving environment and ability to work under pressure, respect strict deadlines and multi-tasking
14. Age: Age of the candidate should not be more than **45 years as on 1st January, 2020.**

(D) DURATION OF CONTRACT, NOTICE PERIOD ETC.

15. The contract period of the **FIS** is intended for the entire duration of the project i.e. upto 2024. However, continuity of the **FIS** beyond one (1) year will depend upon his/her performance. The **FIS** will have to serve the ARIAS Society on a full time basis reporting to Financial Services Specialist and under the overall command of the State Project Director, ARIAS Society.

16. The contract with **FIS** may be terminated by either side at any point of time during the contractual period by serving a 30 days' notice without assigning any reason and without thereby incurring any liability to the Govt. of Assam/ PCU/ ARIAS Society. The assignment is purely contractual in nature and shall not, under any circumstance, be extended beyond the APART's closing date. The ARIAS Society or the Government of Assam shall not undertake any responsibility for subsequent deployment of the **FIS**.
17. The **FIS** shall not assign or sub-contract, in whole or in part, his obligations to perform under this Contract, except with the SPD's prior written consent. The **FISs** will have to serve the project on full time basis under overall command of State Project Director, ARIAS Society and **will be placed in the Office of Director of Agriculture, Guwahati** with a provision of transfer to any other District. The resignation/termination shall be as per HR Policy of the ARIAS Society.

(E) REMUNERATION, PAYMENT TERMS & LEAVE

18. Depending on the qualifications, experience, competency, and also the remuneration/pay package of the last assignment, the consolidated fixed monthly remuneration of the FIS will be determined and mutually agreed, which could be in the range between **Rs. 6.60 lakh to Rs. 19.20 lakh per year**. This annual rate shall be inclusive of all taxes, health/service related insurance, all allowances, cost of accommodation and food at place of posting, conveyance to attend the office, etc. The remuneration may be enhanced on an Annual Basis, based on the HR Policy of the ARIAS Society

Note: In case sufficient candidates meeting the experience criteria cited above are not available, Postgraduates/Master's degree holders in the relevant fields as mentioned above, with over **03** years of related professional experience, may be considered for interview/tests but they will be offered a proportionately lower remuneration.

19. Travelling, Boarding & Lodging expenses for approved official tours outside headquarter will be reimbursed as per HR Policy of ARIAS Society.
20. The remuneration will be given in equal monthly installments and the performance-linked-incentive will be given quarterly based on the performance and achievement against the mutually agreed deliverables by the **FIS**. Taxes as applicable shall be dealt with as per applicable laws.
21. The FIS will be eligible for annual paid Leave of 12 (twelve) working days, excluding 2 (two) days of restricted holidays. Leave of absence for more than 14 (fourteen) working days in a year will be treated as leave without pay. Nevertheless, casual leave of more than 5 working days at a stretch will not be granted to consultants/staff. However, under exceptional circumstances, SPD may relax this condition.
22. No house rent allowance or any other allowance shall be paid by the PCU. No other payment whatsoever (except reimbursement of official traveling expenses) shall be paid, except as agreed with the **HRS** by the SPD, ARIAS Society.

(F) REPORTING AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW

23. The FIS will report to the Financial Services Specialist under overall command of State Project Director (SPD), ARIAS Society. The quality of service and performance of the FIS will be reviewed by the SPD on a quarterly basis and the annual performance review will be done as per the HR Policy of the ARIAS Society.

(G) FACILITIES TO BE PROVIDED TO THE FIS:

24. Access to the required documents, correspondence, contact details and any other information associated with the project and as deemed necessary. The **FIS** will be provided with one office cubicle/workstation/ shared office space along with computer, printer, computer stationery/office consumables, and internet access.

Note: This is a draft ToR and SPD, ARIAS Society reserves the right to change, update or modify this ToR at any stage till recruitment process is completed.