

Bid no. RFP/NSDC/Outcome Based Financing/2026/64 for “Selection of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Partner for the Skills Outcomes Fund (SOF) Programme”.				
S. No	RFP Reference	Pre-Bid Query	RFP Clause	NSDC Response
1	–	Rule 173(i) of the General Financial Rules, 2017 permits a procuring entity to relax the conditions of prior turnover and prior experience for a startup recognised by DPIIT. We would be grateful to know NSDC's position on whether that relaxation is available under this RFP, and if it is, the form it takes and the documents required to claim it.	–	The eligibility criteria and requirements under Section II of the RFP shall remain unchanged. Bidders are requested to submit proposals in accordance with the provisions of the RFP. No change in RFP conditions.
2	Clause 1.4	Clause 1.4 defines "Bidder" to include "any consortium or joint venture (if allowed under RFP)", and Clause 19.3 and Form 1 both contain conditional provisions for a joint venture submission. We could not locate any provision confirming whether consortia or joint ventures are in fact permitted under this RFP. Kindly confirm whether a consortium or joint venture bid is permitted.	–	Clause 1 contains definitions, Clause 19.3 does not permit Joint Venture/Consortium participation, and Form 1 is a standard form that contains language applicable where Joint Ventures/Consortiums are allowed. No provision in the RFP permits submission of bids through a Joint Venture or Consortium. Accordingly, bidders shall submit proposals as a single legal entity meeting the eligibility criteria specified in the RFP. No change in RFP conditions.
3	Clause 1.4	Kindly confirm whether every member in the joint venture must be an entity incorporated or registered in India with PAN and GST registration under S. No. 1 of the Mandatory Criteria in Section II, or whether it is sufficient that the lead member satisfies this requirement while other members are foreign-incorporated entities.	–	Not applicable. Joint Ventures/Consortiums are not permitted under this RFP.
4	SECTION II: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	If permitted, kindly confirm whether turnover, net worth and past experience under S.No. 2, 3 and 4 of the Mandatory Criteria may be aggregated across members	–	Not applicable. Joint Ventures/Consortiums are not permitted under this RFP.
5	SECTION II: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	Under S.No. 4 of the Mandatory Criteria, kindly confirm whether contracts of not less than ₹1 crore executed outside India — for foreign governments, multilateral organisations or development partners — qualify as similar	–	Similar contracts executed outside India may be considered, provided they meet the nature and scope of work specified under Eligibility Criteria and are supported by the documentary evidence prescribed in the

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		contracts, and the exchange rate basis on which the ₹1 crore threshold should be demonstrated		RFP. Bidders shall be responsible for demonstrating project value and relevance through the documents submitted.
6	SECTION II: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	S.No. 2 and 3 of the Mandatory Criteria require a CA certificate with UDIN, while Form 6 provides for signature by "CA with UDIN / Statutory Auditors". Kindly confirm whether a foreign-incorporated bidder's own statutory auditor may certify turnover and net worth, or whether certification by a practising Indian Chartered Accountant with UDIN is mandatory. Kindly also confirm what documentation is acceptable in place of the IT Returns Certificate required under Form 6 where the bidder is not an Indian tax assessee, and whether audited financial statements prepared under a non-Indian accounting standard and on a financial year other than April–March will be accepted.		As specified under Eligibility Criteria No. 2 and No. 3 of the RFP, submission of a CA Certificate with valid UDIN is mandatory. Bidders are required to submit the documents prescribed in the RFP to demonstrate compliance with the turnover and net worth requirements.
7	SECTION II: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	S.No. 2 and 3 of the Mandatory Criteria require a CA certificate with UDIN, while Form 6 provides for signature by "CA with UDIN / Statutory Auditors". Kindly confirm whether a foreign-incorporated bidder's own statutory auditor may certify turnover and net worth, or whether certification by a practising Indian Chartered Accountant with UDIN is mandatory. Kindly also confirm what documentation is acceptable in place of the IT Returns Certificate required under Form 6 where the bidder is not an Indian tax assessee, and whether audited financial statements prepared under a non-Indian accounting		As specified under Eligibility Criteria No. 2 and No. 3 of the RFP, submission of a CA Certificate with valid UDIN is mandatory. Bidders are required to submit the documents prescribed in the RFP to demonstrate compliance with the turnover and net worth requirements.

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		standard and on a financial year other than April–March will be accepted.		
8	–	Please confirm (a) whether Joint Venture / consortium bids are permitted under this RFP, and if so, (b) whether the turnover and net worth eligibility criteria (Section II, criteria 2 & 3) must be met by the Lead Member alone, by each JV member individually, or on a combined/aggregate basis across all JV members. Please also confirm whether CA-certified turnover and net worth certificates are required from all JV members or only the Lead Member."	–	No provision in the RFP permits submission of bids through a Joint Venture or Consortium. Accordingly, bidders shall submit proposals as a single legal entity meeting the eligibility criteria specified in the RFP.
9	–	Section II eligibility criterion 2 asks for average annual turnover of ₹3 Cr+ (overall firm turnover), but Form 6's header asks for turnover "in similar services." Please confirm whether the turnover threshold applies to total firm turnover or turnover specifically from M&E/verification-type services.	–	Eligibility Criterion requires the bidder to have an average annual turnover of ₹3 crore or more during FY 2023-24, FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26. The criterion relates to the bidder's turnover and does not prescribe a separate turnover threshold for M&E, verification or similar services.
10	–	What are the specific Key Expert positions required (e.g., Team Lead, MEL Specialist, Data/Sampling Statistician, Field Operations Lead), along with minimum qualifications/experience for each? The RFP scores CVs (up to 10 marks) but doesn't define the required roles.	–	The RFP does not prescribe a fixed team structure or number of Key Experts. Based on their proposed technical approach and MEL methodology, bidders are expected to propose an appropriately qualified team, demonstrating relevant qualifications,

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				experience, sectoral expertise, seniority and suitability for undertaking the assignment.
11	–	Please confirm whether the 'Presentation' referred to in Section II (Technical Evaluation Criteria item 5) and Form 5 checklist is to be submitted as a document along with the Technical Proposal on the e-Proc portal by the bid due date, or whether NSDC will separately call shortlisted bidders for a live presentation before the Evaluation Committee.	–	The presentation referred to under the Technical Evaluation Criteria will be required separately from shortlisted bidders and shall not be submitted as part of the Technical Proposal. NSDC may, at its discretion, seek presentations, discussions, demonstrations or clarifications from bidders during the evaluation process. The Form 5 Checklist shall be submitted along with the Technical Proposal on the e-Procurement portal by the bid submission deadline. No change in RFP conditions.
12	Eligibility Question	The RFP states the eligibility clause as - The bidder should be a Company incorporated under the Companies Act, 2013/1956 or a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) registered under the LLP Act, 2008 or a Partnership Firm registered under the Partnership Act or a Proprietorship Firm having valid registration. Please confirm if Not for Profits and NGOs are also eligible to apply for this	–	Bidders are required to be a Company incorporated under the Companies Act, LLP registered under the LLP Act, Partnership Firm or Proprietorship Firm with valid registration, as specified in the RFP
13	Scope of Work	Could you clarify whether the study is expected to establish attribution/causal impact or assess programme outcomes and contribution?	–	Program attribution is assumed within the outcome definitions - the verification is only intended to confirm certification, placement and retention outcomes. The assignment is not designed as a counterfactual impact evaluation and does not envisage a control or comparison group. The MEL Partner is required to independently verify achievement of the payment-linked outcome milestones and to assess programme

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				performance, outcomes and contribution, including disaggregated and implementation learning as set out in Section V.
14	Scope of Work	What beneficiary-level MIS, baseline, monitoring and historical programme data will be available to the evaluation team? This will help us determine the sampling frame, feasibility of baseline–endline or longitudinal analysis, and the extent of primary data collection required.	–	The SOF PMU will collect demographic data, course enrolment and completion status and achievement data as candidates reach each milestone, supplemented by documentary evidence as mandated by the programme. The MEL partner is required to verify these details. The exact list of indicators can be discussed and agreed on between the PMU and the MEL partner prior to program operations beginning on the ground.
15	Scope of Work	Are findings expected to be representative at the overall programme level or separately by geography, intervention/component or key beneficiary groups?	–	As specified in the RFP, table 5, the proposed methodology should consider dimensions such as sex, training model, delivery mechanism, sector/job role, vulnerability categories and geography, as relevant to the approach adopted, to ensure adequate representation and/or analysis of outcome achievement. The detailed representativeness, stratification and reporting requirements will be finalized during development of the MEL framework and verification plan in consultation with the selected MEL Partner. Bidders should

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				propose their approach as part of the technical proposal.
16	Scope of Work	Are there substantial differences in programme design or implementation across locations/cohorts that the evaluation is expected to assess separately?	–	The programme may involve variations across geographies, sectors, delivery models, learner segments, and cohorts. Bidders are expected to propose a methodology that adequately accounts for such variations and enables appropriate disaggregated analysis where relevant. Separate evaluations for individual locations or cohorts are not envisaged under the current scope.
17	Scope of Work	Are there specific priority outcomes or programme KPIs that the evaluation must measure, beyond those mentioned in the ToR?	–	There are no additional priority outcomes or programme KPIs beyond those specified in the ToR. Bidders are expected to design the evaluation framework and methodology to assess the defined outcomes and associated indicators. However, bidders may propose supplementary metrics or analytical dimensions that strengthen programme learning and evidence generation.
18	Section V, Table 5 - MEL and Outcome Verification Framework / Design and Methodology	Could NSDC please share the latest programme architecture, including the expected number of Training Providers, their indicative allocation by sector and geography, and the likely range of cohort or batch sizes? This information would help us design a verification model and field structure that are	–	The Skills Outcomes Fund is currently in the partner selection phase; therefore, the final programme architecture, including the number of Training Providers, sectoral and geographic distribution, and cohort sizes, is yet to be finalized. Bidders are requested to base their proposals on the indicative scope outlined in the RFP and propose a scalable

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		proportionate to the programme’s actual operating footprint.		verification approach. Detailed programme parameters will be shared with the selected MEL Partner during the inception phase.
19	Section V, Table 5 - Outcome definitions and indicators; Programme Design Parameters - Outcomes tracking	Could NSDC please confirm whether a detailed indicator reference sheet will be issued for certification, placement and three-month retention, covering the numerator, denominator, eligibility rules, cut-off dates, permitted exclusions and treatment of reassessment cases? A common reference sheet would enable us to build unambiguous verification rules and minimise inconsistent interpretation across Training Providers.	–	The detailed indicator reference sheet will be jointly developed by NSDC and the selected MEL Partner as part of the finalization of the MEL design. This will include outcome definitions, eligibility criteria, verification protocols, and related business rules for certification, placement, and retention outcomes. Bidders may propose any additional rules, definitions, or treatment protocols they consider necessary to strengthen the robustness and consistency of the verification framework.
20	Section V - Outcomes tracking and Table 5: Skills Outcomes Fund Training Timelines	For the placement outcome, may NSDC please clarify how “placement in the Sector of Training” will be determined where job titles are cross-sectoral, the employer uses a different occupational classification, or a candidate is placed abroad? Clarity on the applicable matching rule and acceptable evidence would help us specify consistent validation checks.	–	As stated in the EoI Scope of Work (pg 34), placement refers to candidates getting placed in a job and successfully joining an employer in the sector of training post-certification. Placements in jobs abroad are permissible under the programme. Given the range of sectors, job roles and employment models that may be covered under SOF, the detailed validation criteria, evidence requirements and treatment of specific placement scenarios will be finalized during development of the MEL framework and verification plan. Bidders may propose an appropriate approach for assessing the

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				alignment between training and placement outcomes as part of their technical proposal.
21	Section V - Outcomes tracking: Retention; Table 5: Retention timeline	Could NSDC please clarify the treatment of candidates who change employers, have more than one employment spell, undertake gig or contractual work, or experience a break within the permitted 30-day period? Confirming whether cumulative employment may count towards 90 days, and what evidence is acceptable in each case, would help us develop a defensible retention protocol.	–	Candidates are allowed to change jobs as needed, cumulative employment will be counted towards the 90 days. Relevant retention poofs will be required for each job demonstrating 90 days of employment.
22	Section V, Table 5 - MEL and Outcome Verification Framework: Additional learning indicators	The RFP refers to long-term retention as the percentage of candidates remaining in employment “for six months for at least one year.” Could NSDC please clarify the intended measurement points and precise definition of this indicator? This would help us distinguish the learning agenda from the payment-linked threemonth retention measure and estimate the follow-up effort correctly.	–	Six months retention is the retention of a candidate in a job for 6 out of 12 months. The MEL Partner is required to propose intended measurment points based on cost and time effeciency and feasibility.
23	Section V, Table 5 - Design and Methodology	Could NSDC please confirm the decision unit for verification and payment: individual candidate, training batch, Training Provider, programme year, or a combination of these? It would also be helpful to know whether sample findings are expected to be extrapolated to the	–	Outcome Payments are made to each training provider participating in the program for the number of individual candidates that they have certified, placed and retained in jobs. Sample findings are expected to be be representative at the

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		full claim and how verified achievement will translate into the payable outcome count. This will directly shape the sampling estimator and reporting format.		programme level and at the training provider level. Payments will be made basis the number of candidates certified, placed and retained by each provider as verified by the MEL partner.
24	Section V - Sampling methodology; Coordination with SOF Partners - Data reporting	Will the MEL Partner receive a complete, frozen and uniquely identified claim-level sampling frame for each verification cycle, including candidate contact details, milestone dates, TP and batch identifiers, stratification variables and links to supporting documents? Confirmation of the fields, format and date of availability would help us assess sample feasibility and turnaround time.	–	Yes - the MEL partner will receive a frozen and uniquely identified claim-level sampling frame for each verification cycle, including candidate contact details, milestone dates, TP and batch identifiers, stratification variables. Supporting documents will be available on SIDH. The exact list of indicators will be discussed and agreed on between NSDC and the MEL partner prior to program operations beginning on the ground.
25	Section V, Table 5 - Design and Methodology: Sampling-based verification	Does NSDC have minimum expectations for confidence level, margin of error, statistical power or minimum sample size at the Training Provider level? If the parameters are to be proposed by bidders, may different precision levels be used for payment assurance and subgroup learning? Clarification would help us balance statistical assurance, cost and timeliness.	–	Bidders are expected to propose a statistically robust and fit-for-purpose sampling and verification methodology, including the rationale for the proposed parameters. Distinct approaches may be proposed for payment assurance and programme learning, subject to the overall objective of ensuring credible, reliable, and auditable outcome verification.
26	Section V, Table 5 - Design and Methodology: Representation and stratification	The RFP lists sex, training model, delivery mechanism, sector/job role, vulnerability and geography as relevant dimensions. Could NSDC please indicate which of these require separately reportable estimates and which are intended primarily for stratification or analytical disaggregation? This distinction would help avoid an unnecessarily large sample while retaining the required analytical value.	–	As specified in the RFP, table 5, the proposed methodology should consider dimensions such as sex, training model, delivery mechanism, sector/job role, vulnerability categories and geography, as relevant to the approach adopted, to ensure adequate representation and/or analysis of outcome achievement. The detailed representativeness, stratification and reporting requirements will be finalized

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				during development of the MEL framework and verification plan in consultation with the selected MEL Partner. Bidders should propose their approach as part of the technical proposal.
27	Section V - Design and Methodology / Verification Cadence	Should successive verification rounds use independent samples, a panel or re-contact design, or may the bidder recommend the most suitable approach by outcome? Guidance on whether the same candidate may be contacted at certification, placement and retention stages would help us address respondent burden, recall bias and linkage across milestones.	—	The Bidder may recommend the most suitable approach, keeping in mind time and cost efficiency, along with respondent burden, recall bias and linkage across milestones.
28	Section V - Sampling methodology / Verification of Payment-linked Outcomes	Could NSDC please specify the minimum contact-attempt protocol and the expected treatment of nonresponse, unreachable candidates, refusals, invalid contact details and proxy responses? It would also help to know whether replacements will be permitted. These rules are necessary for consistent weighting, exception classification and payment recommendations.	—	Bidders are expected to propose a robust and auditable approach for sample management, non-response handling, exception classification, and any replacement methodology as part of their verification design. The final protocols will be agreed upon jointly between NSDC and the selected MEL Partner during the MEL design finalization phase.
29	Section V - Design and Methodology / Resolution of verification exceptions	Could NSDC please clarify the discrepancy thresholds and decision rules to be applied when the MEL Partner’s result differs from a TP claim, for example, the allowable error rate, escalation trigger, reverification requirement and basis for adjusting the verified claim? This would help us design the exception workflow and provide funders with a transparent payment recommendation.	—	Bidders are expected to propose a robust and transparent discrepancy management framework, including exception handling, escalation protocols, and approaches for determining verified outcomes and payment recommendations. The final decision rules and thresholds will be agreed upon jointly between NSDC and the selected MEL Partner during the MEL design finalization phase

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30	Section V - Indicative verification documents / Verification activities / SIDH	Could NSDC please provide the indicative list and hierarchy of acceptable evidence for each outcome, including certificates, assessment records, appointment letters, payroll or bank records, statutory records, employer confirmation and candidate confirmation? Clarity on mandatory versus corroborative evidence, and on how conflicting evidence should be resolved, would enable a consistent evidence matrix.	–	The indicative list of acceptable evidence, evidence hierarchy, treatment of corroborative evidence, and protocols for resolving conflicting evidence will be jointly developed by NSDC and the selected MEL Partner as part of the MEL design finalization process. Bidders are encouraged to propose an evidence framework and validation approach that they consider appropriate to ensure robust, consistent, and auditable verification of outcomes.
31	Section V - Alternative methodologies / Data quality assurance and unsupported claims	Is the MEL Partner expected to conduct specific fraud-risk checks such as duplicate beneficiary detection, repeated contact or document identifiers, employer or bank-account concentration, altered documents and unusual TP-level outcome patterns? If yes, could NSDC indicate the data fields and system access that will be available? This will help us build proportionate anomaly-detection and investigation procedures.	–	Yes, the MEL partner is expected to conduct such checks. The MEL Partner will have access to the tracking indicators collected by the PMU as noted in the RfP and all documentary evidence collected. Additional indicators can be discussed and agreed upon between NSDC and the MEL partner as part of the finalization of the MEL design.
32	Section V - SIDH platform review and technology-enabled verification	Could NSDC please share the current SIDH data dictionary, workflow, document-storage functionality, validation rules, user roles, API or export capability, audit trail and planned SOF customisations? It would also be helpful to clarify whether the MEL Partner is expected only to recommend enhancements or to configure or develop any technology. This will help us define the proposed system architecture and technology effort accurately.	–	The MEL Partner's scope in relation to SIDH is to review the proposed data collection, reporting and verification workflows and to recommend enhancements, and to design its methodology to leverage the platform. The MEL Partner is not required to configure or develop the platform; technology development for SOF is being procured separately.

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33	Section V - Verification Cadence / Outcome Verification Reports / Rolling enrolment model	Could NSDC please confirm the anticipated cut-off dates for TP claims, data freeze, sample draw, field verification, exception resolution, report approval and outcome payment within each quarterly or fourmonthly cycle? A cycle-level calendar would help us test whether the preferred cash-flow timetable is achievable and propose an appropriate surge-capacity model.	–	A cycle calendar setting out these dates will be agreed with the MEL Partner during Phase 1 and will align with the verification and outcome payment cadence set out in the RFP. It is not available at bid stage. Bidders should set out the cycle model and turnaround assumptions on which their proposal and pricing are based.
34	Section V - Comprehensive MEL Framework and Implementation Plan; MEL Penalty Item 1	The complete MEL Framework and Verification Plan is due within 30 days of onboarding. Could NSDC please confirm when the MEL Partner will receive programme documents, TP contracts, payment rules, SIDH access, reporting templates and stakeholder availability, and whether NSDC’s review and approval period falls within or outside the 30 days? This would help us submit a realistic inception plan and dependency schedule.	–	The 30-day timeline applies to the submission of the draft MEL Framework and Verification Plan by the MEL Partner. NSDC’s review and approval process shall be undertaken thereafter and will not form part of this period. Relevant programme documents, templates, and system access will be provided following onboarding, with detailed timelines and dependencies finalized during the inception phase.
35	Section V - Inception Workshop / Coordination with SOF Partners	Could NSDC please clarify the likely number and location of Training Providers, expected workshop format and duration, number of participants, languages, responsibility for logistics and whether repeat onboarding sessions will be required as new TPs join? This information would help us plan facilitation, materials and the associated level of effort.	–	The final locations and participant numbers are subject to the ongoing Training Provider selection process. Bidders are expected to propose the workshop format and duration. The selected MEL Partner will be responsible for developing and delivering the workshops, including preparation of materials and all related logistics, while NSDC will support scheduling and participant mobilisation. Repeat onboarding workshops may be required for new Training Providers joining the programme and may be conducted virtually.

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36	Section V - Phase 1 deliverables and commencement of Phase 2 verification	Will NSDC require a pilot or dry run of the verification methodology before it is approved for payment decisions? If so, could NSDC indicate the expected scale, outcomes to be tested, availability of historical or test data and whether the pilot period is included within the one-month inception stage? This would help us sequence tool testing and protocol refinement.	–	The first quarter or round of verification may be treated as a test cohort. A separate pilot may be recommended by the Bidder if needed.
37	Section V - Primary verification / Target candidate profile	Could NSDC please clarify the expected mix of telephonic, digital and in-person verification and any circumstances in which physical visits to candidates, employers or training centres will be mandatory? Guidance on language coverage, accessibility for persons with disabilities, consent and proxy interviews would help us design inclusive tools and an appropriate national field network.	–	The channel mix is not prescribed. Bidders should propose an appropriate combination of telephonic, digital and in-person verification, including the circumstances in which physical visits to candidates, employers or training centres would be undertaken, and should address language coverage, accessibility for persons with disabilities, consent and the treatment of proxy responses. The final approach will be settled in the approved MEL Framework.
38	Section V - Data Management and Compliance; Schedule VI - NDA and DPDPA obligations	Could NSDC please confirm the respective data-protection roles of NSDC, the Transaction Manager, Training Providers and the MEL Partner; the approved hosting location; encryption and access-control requirements; retention and deletion periods; breach-notification timeline; and whether sub-processors require prior approval? This would help us design a compliant data-governance and security plan from inception.	–	The Training Provider, MEL Partner, Transaction Manager are all data fiduciaries of the programme and are expected to set data protection protocols in alignment with the DPDP Act. The programme data protection policy will be aligned on between NSDC and the MEL partner at the time of contracting.

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39	Section V - Stakeholder Engagement and Reporting: Annual Impact Report	Could NSDC please clarify the intended analytical scope of the annual impact report. In particular, is it expected to report verified outcomes and descriptive subgroup analysis only, or also assess programme contribution, longer-term outcomes, employer perspectives and implementation learning? This would help us propose an appropriate evaluation design, additional indicators and data-collection schedule.	–	The Annual Impact Report will be based on the MEL Framework developed by the selected MEL Partner upon onboarding. It will cover the overall annual achievement against the payment-linked outcomes and longer-term retention outcomes, along with relevant descriptive subgroup analysis based on the outcomes collected. Any additional analysis beyond this if needed will be mutually decided with the partner at later stages
40	Section V - Beneficiary targets and Programme Design Parameters	Could NSDC please provide the best available year-wise forecast of claims by outcome, TP, sector, geography and quarter, rather than enrolment targets alone? Since certification, placement and retention occur at different times and may extend beyond the enrolment year, this forecast would help us estimate verification volumes, staffing, travel and the year-wise financial proposal more accurately.	–	A claim-level forecast is not available at bid stage. Bidders should size against the indicative programme volume stated in the RFP and should state the assumptions used, including the assumed lag between enrolment and the maturing of each milestone.
41	Section I 2.3 and 29 - Evolving/modified scope; Section V - MEL Penalties	As the verification scope may be revised after Programme Years 1 and 2 and the project order or resources may be increased or decreased, could NSDC please clarify the process for agreeing corresponding changes in methodology, timelines, staffing and fees? We also request confirmation that service-level penalties will not apply where delay or shortfall results from late, incomplete or inaccessible TP/NSDC data, system downtime, delayed approvals or other dependencies outside the MEL Partner’s control. This would help us price the four-year assignment responsibly and establish a fair dependency-management mechanism.	–	As mentioned in the RFP, there will be checkpoints at the end of Programme Year 1 and Programme Year 2. Based on developments in the technology-enabled verification system and the evolving requirements of the programme, the role and scope of the MEL Partner for the subsequent years will be decided by the program's governance committee. Any corresponding changes to the scope, timelines and resource requirements will be communicated and agreed as part of this process. Service-level penalties will be assessed against the agreed timelines, taking into account dependencies outside the MEL

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				Partner’s control, including availability of required data, system access/downtime and timely inputs or approvals from relevant stakeholders.
42	Technical Evaluation Criteria S No- 3 Bidder’s Experience (Similar Projects)	Its has been mentioned that minimum we need to give 3 projects. We would like to clarify that how many maximum no. of projects we need to give in the proposal to obtain maximum marks (Total Marks)?	—	As specified in the RFP, bidders are required to provide details of at least three (3) relevant projects meeting the eligibility criteria. For technical evaluation, bidders are encouraged to include all relevant assignments that demonstrate their experience and capabilities against the evaluation criteria. The maximum marks shall be awarded based on the quality, relevance, and alignment of the submitted experience with the RFP requirements, as per the evaluation framework.
43	Technical Evaluation Criteria S No- 4 Team Composition (CVs)	Kindly clarify the proposed team composition and specify the positions for which CVs are required to be submitted as part of the proposal. We would like to request for one-week extension on the proposal submission deadline.	—	The RFP does not prescribe a fixed team structure or number of Key Experts. Based on their proposed technical approach and solution, bidders are expected to propose an appropriately qualified team, demonstrating relevant qualifications, experience, sectoral expertise, seniority and suitability for undertaking the assignment. Currently, no extension to the proposal submission deadline is envisaged. Any

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				extension, if provided, will be notified through the NSDC Procurement website.
44	Page 8, Section 15.1	Given the scale of engagement necessary to run the MEL program, we request that we be allowed to engage a survey agency for supporting field/ data collection, while retaining overall responsibility with the lead bidder.	The bidder shall not subcontract whole, or any part of the services awarded to them against the RFP.	Clause 15.1 prohibits subcontracting of the assignment as a whole and of the core MEL functions, namely design of the methodology and sampling approach, exercise of verification judgement, resolution of exceptions, and preparation and sign-off of verification reports and payment recommendations. Engagement of a survey or data collection agency for the conduct of primary field and telephonic data collection is permitted with the prior written approval of NSDC in accordance with Clause 2.6.1 of the Draft Agreement, on the basis that the MEL Partner remains wholly and solely responsible to NSDC for the performance and quality of all such work. Bidders proposing such an arrangement must disclose it in the technical proposal.
45	Page 16-18, Eligibility/ Technical evaluation criteria	Please confirm if it will suffice for the bidder to show capacity to manage this kind of work, as large scale surveys are typically undertaken through survey agencies. We understand that against the maximum marks to be gained from this showing this capacity (15), 10 marks will be assigned based on submitted CVs, and remaining 5 are for	Should have adequate in-house technical capacity and field verification capability to undertake the scope of work outlined in this RFP	As clarified in the corrigendum, the total marks assigned to the criterion on technical capacity and field verification capability shall be 15 marks.

Bid no. RFP/NSDC/Outcome Based Financing/2026/64 for “Selection of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Partner for the Skills Outcomes Fund (SOF) Programme”.				
S. No	RFP Reference	Pre-Bid Query	RFP Clause	NSDC Response
		relevant project citations. Request you to please confirm.		
46	Page 37, MEL Penalty for Non-compliance	Given that beneficiary data will be generated and exchanged across multiple stakeholders including Training Providers, PMU, Transaction Manager, SIDH platform, NSDC, outcome funders and the MEL Partner, kindly clarify the data governance framework, allocation of DPDPA responsibilities, and liability regime applicable to each party. Specifically, please confirm that the MEL Partner's liability for data protection breaches shall be restricted to incidents arising from systems, processes, personnel and service providers under its direct control, and that the MEL Partner shall not be held liable for breaches originating from third-party platforms, Training Providers or other programme stakeholders beyond its reasonable control.	100% compliance with DPDPA and agreed data protection requirements; zero unauthorized data disclosure	The detailed data governance framework, including roles and responsibilities of programme stakeholders in relation to data collection, processing, sharing, storage, and protection, will be finalized during programme implementation and reflected in the relevant contractual arrangements. The MEL Partner shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with applicable data protection requirements for all systems, processes, personnel, and subcontractors under its direct control.
47	Page 37, MEL Penalty for Non-compliance	We understand that the MEL partner’s responsibility will be to ensure timely submission of verification reports, after the necessary submission has been made by the TPs. The MEL partner will not be held responsible for delays in submission of verification reports due to delays in data submission, or any other factors outside its control. Please confirm.	Signed-off verification reports submitted as per agreed verification cycle	The MEL Partner shall be responsible for submitting signed-off verification reports as per the agreed verification cycle. Applicable timelines shall take into account dependencies outside the MEL Partner’s control, including timely receipt of required data and submissions from Training Providers and other relevant stakeholders.

Bid no. RFP/NSDC/Outcome Based Financing/2026/64 for “Selection of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Partner for the Skills Outcomes Fund (SOF) Programme”.				
S. No	RFP Reference	Pre-Bid Query	RFP Clause	NSDC Response
48	Page 32-34, Coordination with SOF Partners	The RFP assigns process supervision and data compliance oversight to the PMU/ Performance Manager while assigning independent outcome verification to the MEL Partner. Kindly clarify the exact division of responsibilities between the PMU/Performance Manager and MEL Partner, particularly regarding data validation, exception management, fraud detection, beneficiary tracking, employer verification and approval of payment recommendations.	The following metrics will be tracked by the Performance Management unit (PMU) and TPs to monitor programme performance, progress, and impact Ensuring that data reported by training providers is in line with SOF requirements – role of Performance Manager	The PMU/Performance Manager will be responsible for ensuring that data reported by Training Providers is submitted in accordance with SOF requirements, including the required formats and processes. The MEL Partner will be responsible for independent verification of outcomes, including data validation, exception management, fraud detection, beneficiary and employer verification, as applicable under the agreed MEL methodology. Payment recommendations and related decisions will be governed through the SOF programme’s governance mechanism.

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S. No	RFP Reference	Pre-Bid Query	RFP Clause	NSDC Response
49	ITB 1.4; ITB 15.1; ITB 19.3; Draft Agreement Cl. 2.6	Kindly clarify: (a) Is Consortium/Joint Venture bidding permitted, and if so, how will eligibility criteria be evaluated — jointly or against the lead member? (b) Given the direct inconsistency between ITB 15.1 (no subcontracting) and Draft Agreement Cl. 2.6 (subcontracting allowed with approval), which provision governs? (c) Specifically, would engaging an empanelled field-survey/data-collection associate network — under the Bidder's full supervision and liability, for primary verification activities (telephonic/field surveys) across India — be permitted under Cl. 2.6, given the nationwide scale (2,00,000 beneficiaries) involved?	ITB 15.1 states the bidder "shall not subcontract whole, or any part of the services." However, Draft Agreement Clause 2.6.1 separately permits subcontracting "with prior written approval of NSDC," with the Service Provider remaining fully liable. ITB 1.4/19.3 also reference "consortium or joint venture (if allowed under RFP)" without Section II confirming whether this is permitted.	a) No provision in the RFP permits submission of bids through a Joint Venture or Consortium. b) Bidders may note that the draft agreement annexed to The RFP is a sample/indicative agreement. The terms of the final agreement shall be subject to mutual discussions and negotiations with the successful bidder selected pursuant to this RFP. c) Bidders are requested to submit proposals in accordance with the provisions of the RFP. The terms of the final agreement shall be subject to mutual discussions and negotiations with the successful bidder selected pursuant to this RFP.

Bid no. RFP/NSDC/Outcome Based Financing/2026/64 for “Selection of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Partner for the Skills Outcomes Fund (SOF) Programme”.				
S. No	RFP Reference	Pre-Bid Query	RFP Clause	NSDC Response
50	Section II, Mandatory / Technical Criteria #4	Would large-scale data-analytics, MIS/dashboard development, or programme-monitoring assignments for government clients (without a formal "evaluation/verification" title, but involving comparable data validation and outcome-tracking functions) qualify as "similar," or is the criterion strictly limited to assignments explicitly scoped as M&E/verification/impact assessment/research? Kindly consider the above as “similar”	Bidder must have "successfully executed at least three (3) similar contracts of not less than ₹1 Cr... involving monitoring, evaluation, verification, impact assessment, third-party evaluation, research, or similar assignments."	Assignments involving programme monitoring, data validation and outcome tracking may be considered as similar assignments, provided that the scope demonstrates relevant functions aligned with the requirements of this RFP, including monitoring, evaluation, verification, impact assessment, research or related outcome-verification activities. Bidders should clearly demonstrate the relevance of the cited assignments to the scope of work under this RFP.
51	Section II, Mandatory Criteria #4	Please confirm whether the ₹1 Cr threshold refers to the Total Contract Value (across the full assignment duration) or the Annual Contract Value, in the case of multi-year assignments.	"Not less than ₹1 Cr" contract value threshold for similar assignments, across a 4-year lookback window (FY 2022-23 to 2025-26).	The ₹1 crore threshold refers to the total contract value of the similar assignment over its full assignment duration,
52	Section II, Mandatory Criteria #2	Since FY 2025-26 is still the ongoing financial year at bid submission, please confirm whether provisional FY25-26 figures are mandatory for the average, or whether bidders may instead rely on the 3 immediately preceding completed financial years if FY25-26 figures are unavailable even provisionally.	Turnover computed over FY 2023-24 to FY 2025-26, with provisional CA-certified figures accepted for FY 2025-26 where statutory audit is not yet complete.	The turnover criterion shall be evaluated in accordance with the RFP. Bidders are required to submit the financial information for FY 2021-22 to FY 2025-26, with Provisional CA-certified financial statements (with UDIN) for FY 2025-26 where statutory audit is not yet complete, as specified in the RFP.

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S. No	RFP Reference	Pre-Bid Query	RFP Clause	NSDC Response
53	Section V, Design and Methodology	Is there any minimum acceptable confidence level/margin of error that NSDC expects for a sampling-based approach, or is this entirely open to the Bidder's proposed methodology and technical justification?	Bidders may propose sampling-based, census-based, technology-enabled, or alternative verification methodologies, with no prescribed sample size, confidence level, or margin of error.	The RFP does not prescribe any minimum confidence level, margin of error, or other statistical parameters for a sampling-based approach. Bidders are expected to propose a statistically robust and fit-for-purpose methodology, supported by appropriate technical justification. The proposed approach will be evaluated on its ability to ensure credible, reliable, and auditable outcome verification.
54	Section V, Verification of Payment-linked Outcomes	Kindly clarify whether beneficiary contact information will be provided via the SIDH platform/API, or routed through Training Providers directly, and the expected format and update frequency for MEL verification planning.	The MEL Partner is expected to conduct primary verification (surveys, telephonic interviews, digital tools) of candidates, but the RFP does not specify how beneficiary contact details will be made available to the MEL Partner.	The process and flow for sharing beneficiary details, as per agreed verification methodology, will be finalised with the selected MEL Partner after onboarding
55	Section V, MEL and Outcome Verification Framework	Would NSDC be able to provide a demo, sandbox access, or API/data-dictionary documentation for the SIDH platform prior to bid submission, so bidders can meaningfully assess integration feasibility and cost it into their technical and financial proposals?	The MEL Partner is required to "review the proposed data collection, reporting, and verification workflows within the SIDH platform" and design its methodology to leverage SIDH.	The RFP requires bidders to review the proposed data collection, reporting and verification workflows within the SIDH platform and provide feedback on its suitability and any required enhancements as part of the assignment. No separate demo, sandbox access, API documentation or data dictionary is envisaged prior to bid submission. Bidders should develop their proposals based on the information provided in the RFP. Additional details, as required,

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S. No	RFP Reference	Pre-Bid Query	RFP Clause	NSDC Response
				will be shared with the selected MEL Partner during programme inception.
56	Section V, Programme Design Parameters – Geography & Scale	Kindly share an indicative geographic distribution (state/UT-wise) of expected Training Providers and candidate volumes, since this materially affects field-verification logistics, travel costs, and resourcing in the Financial Proposal.	"Interventions may be implemented across India," with no state/UT-wise indicative breakup of Training Providers or candidate concentration provided.	The geographic distribution of Training Providers and candidate volumes is subject to the ongoing Training Provider selection process and is therefore not available at this stage. Bidders are requested to base their proposals on the indicative programme scope set out in the RFP and propose a scalable delivery model capable of supporting implementation across multiple geographies. Detailed location and beneficiary information will be shared with the selected MEL Partner as the programme implementation architecture is finalized.
57	Section V, Target candidate profile / Outcomes tracking	Please confirm whether documentary evidence for salary/minimum-wage verification (e.g., payslips, bank credit confirmation) is expected to be collected by Training Providers and shared with the MEL Partner, or independently sourced by the MEL Partner during verification.	At least 50% women participation is required at every stage; salary must be verified as equal to or above the applicable state minimum wage.	The specific evidence and verification modalities will be determined as part of the MEL methodology. Training Providers will be responsible for providing the required supporting information and documentation in accordance with the agreed verification requirements, while the MEL Partner will undertake independent validation of the reported outcomes, including validation against relevant external sources, as applicable.

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58	Form 4, Financial Proposal Submission Form	Since outcome verification reports are required on a quarterly (or agreed) cadence, will quarterly/periodic invoicing within each Programme Year be permitted against the annual lump sum, or is payment strictly annual?	Financial Proposal requires a single lump-sum "Cost of Project" figure for each of Year 1 to Year 4.	Bidders are required to submit their financial proposal in accordance with the prescribed format in the RFP, including the unit cost and year-wise lump-sum Cost of Project for Years 1 to 4, along with a detailed component-wise budget break-up covering the full scope of work. Payment and invoicing shall be as per the agreed contractual terms.
59	Draft Agreement, Clause 9.1	Please confirm there is no separate Bid Security / Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) required at the proposal-submission stage — only the post-award Performance Bank Guarantee.	Performance Bank Guarantee of 5% of Agreement Value, payable within 10 working days of execution.	Bidders may note that the draft agreement annexed to The RFP is a sample/indicative agreement. The terms of the final agreement shall be subject to mutual discussions and negotiations with the successful bidder selected pursuant to this RFP.
60	ITB Clause 6.1–6.2	Please confirm the Year 1 Purchase Order value will be based on the bidder's quoted Year 1 cost in Form 4, and that Year 2–4 costs quoted at bid stage are binding (i.e., not subject to re-negotiation each year absent a scope change under Clause 2.2/29).	4-year assignment, with performance reviewed annually and subsequent Purchase Orders released year-on-year based on satisfactory performance.	The RFP requires bidders to submit year-wise financial proposals for the four-year assignment in the format prescribed under Form 4. The performance of the selected bidder will be reviewed at the end of each year and subsequent Purchase Orders for the following year(s) will be released based on satisfactory performance, as determined by NSDC. The terms of the final agreement shall be subject to mutual discussions and negotiations with the successful bidder selected pursuant to this RFP.

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S. No	RFP Reference	Pre-Bid Query	RFP Clause	NSDC Response
61	Draft Agreement, Clause 12.2 & 12.6	Kindly confirm the process for a Bidder to formally list/schedule its pre-existing proprietary survey tools, CAPI/data-collection platforms, or analytics frameworks proposed to be used (not newly created) in this engagement, so their ownership is clearly ring-fenced under Clause 12.6 and not inadvertently captured under Clause 12.2.	Clause 12.2 states that all data, information, and even "formats prepared" by the Service Provider are the "sole and absolute property" of NSDC; Clause 12.6 separately excludes the Service Provider's pre-existing IP, tools and frameworks from this.	Bidders may note that the draft agreement annexed to The RFP is a sample/indicative agreement. The terms of the final agreement shall be subject to mutual discussions and negotiations with the successful bidder selected pursuant to this RFP.
62	Draft Agreement, Clause 10.6(iii)	Since neither the RFP nor Schedule IV of the Draft Agreement specifies the required Key Expert positions or work location, kindly share: (a) the specific Key Expert roles/positions for which CVs must be submitted, and (b) the expected work location(s) — NSDC's office, the Bidder's own office, or field locations.	Key Experts must be full-time "at the location mentioned... as per the terms and conditions of the Agreement," non-negotiable.	Bidders may note that the draft agreement annexed to The RFP is a sample/indicative agreement. The terms of the final agreement shall be subject to mutual discussions and negotiations with the successful bidder selected pursuant to this RFP.
63	Section V, Data Management and Compliance	For primary verification activities involving direct beneficiary contact (telephonic/field surveys), please confirm whether beneficiary consent for such contact is obtained by the Training Provider at the time of enrolment (and passed on), or must be independently obtained by the MEL Partner at the point of verification.	Compliance with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDPA) is required for all verification data collected.	Beneficiary consent for any verification activities, as per agreed methodology, involving direct beneficiary contact shall be collected by the Training Providers at the time of enrolment, in accordance with applicable requirements.

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S. No	RFP Reference	Pre-Bid Query	RFP Clause	NSDC Response
64	Section V, MEL Penalty for Non-compliance table	Kindly confirm whether a row/KPI has been inadvertently omitted from the Penalty table, and issue a corrigendum if so.	Penalty table rows are numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 — serial number "5" is missing.	The omission of Serial No. 5 in the MEL Penalty for Non-compliance table is a numbering error only. There is no missing KPI or penalty provision associated with Serial No. 5.
65	Universe of states/districts	Could NSDC share the anticipated geographic universe (list of states/districts, and/or expected number and spread of Training Providers) where the programme will be implemented, to help size the field verification effort?	—	The geographic footprint of the programme, including the states, districts, number of Training Providers, and beneficiary volumes, is subject to the ongoing Training Provider selection process and is therefore not available at this stage. Bidders are requested to base their proposals on the indicative programme scope outlined in the RFP and propose a scalable verification approach capable of operating across multiple geographies. Detailed implementation information will be shared with the selected MEL Partner as the programme rollout is finalized.
66	Number of Training Partners per state	Could NSDC share the anticipated number of Training Providers to be empanelled per state and average number of students under each training partner? These are essential for an efficient costing.	—	The number of Training Providers to be engaged are subject to the ongoing Training Provider selection process and are therefore not available at this stage. Bidders are requested to base their proposals on the indicative programme scope outlined in the RFP and propose a scalable delivery and verification model. Detailed programme parameters will be shared with the selected MEL Partner as implementation planning progresses.
67	Team composition / Key Experts	Schedule IV ("Key Experts with Names") is provided as a blank template. Could NSDC share the expected key expert positions, minimum qualifications, and years of relevant experience required for each role, if any minimum team composition is prescribed?	—	The RFP does not prescribe a fixed team structure or number of Key Experts. Based on their proposed technical approach and solution, bidders are expected to propose an appropriately qualified team, demonstrating relevant qualifications, experience, sectoral

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S. No	RFP Reference	Pre-Bid Query	RFP Clause	NSDC Response
				expertise, seniority and suitability for undertaking the assignment.
68	Budget ceiling	Could NSDC indicate an indicative budget ceiling or estimated contract value for this 4-year assignment, to guide realistic cost proposals?	—	An indicative budget ceiling is not being disclosed. Selection is on a Quality and Cost Based Selection basis and bidders should quote the cost required to deliver the scope of work set out at Section V.
69	Clause 15.1, Page 8; Clause 2.6, Page 42; and Page 30 - MEL Framework and Implementation Plan	Clause 15.1 (Page 8) states that “The bidder shall not subcontract whole, or any part of the services awarded to them against the RFP.” However, Clause 2.6.1 of the Draft Agreement (Page 42) states that “The Service Provider shall not sub-contract without the prior written approval of NSDC.” Further, the Scope of Work (Page 30) requires bidders to describe the proposed approach for engagement of sub-contractors, if applicable. Kindly clarify whether sub-contracting is permitted for specific activities such as field data collection, beneficiary surveys, telephonic verification, employer verification, or document validation, subject to prior written approval of NSDC, or declaration in the technical proposal, while the MEL Partner retains overall responsibility for satisfactory performance of the services.	Section I: Instructions to Bidders and Section VII: Draft Agreement	Clause 15.1 prohibits subcontracting of the assignment as a whole and of the core MEL functions, namely design of the methodology and sampling approach, exercise of verification judgement, resolution of exceptions, and preparation and sign-off of verification reports and payment recommendations. Engagement of a survey or data collection agency for the conduct of primary field and telephonic data collection is permitted with the prior written approval of NSDC in accordance with Clause 2.6.1 of the Draft Agreement, on the basis that the MEL Partner remains wholly and solely responsible to NSDC for the performance and quality of all such work. Bidders proposing such an arrangement must disclose it in the technical proposal.

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S. No	RFP Reference	Pre-Bid Query	RFP Clause	NSDC Response
70	Pages 32-36	The RFP states that the programme may be implemented across India and will engage multiple Training Providers delivering interventions across sectors, geographies, and training models. To facilitate estimation of the field verification effort, resource deployment, timelines, and associated costs, kindly provide any indicative details available regarding: (i) expected geographic distribution of beneficiaries and Training Providers; (ii) anticipated number of Training Providers and Training Centres; (iii) expected concentration of beneficiaries across states or regions; and (iv) indicative range of beneficiary volumes per Training Provider, programme cohort, or training batch.	Programme Design Parameters for the Skills Outcomes Fund	The programme implementation footprint, including the geographic distribution of beneficiaries and Training Providers, the number of Training Providers and Training Centres, and beneficiary volumes, is subject to the ongoing Training Provider selection process and is therefore not available at this stage. Bidders are requested to base their proposals on the indicative programme scope outlined in the RFP and propose a scalable delivery and verification model. Detailed implementation parameters will be shared with the selected MEL Partner once the programme architecture is finalized.
71	Page 30 - Inception Workshop	The MEL Partner is required to design and lead an inception workshop for all Training Providers prior to commencement of enrolment. Kindly clarify whether the inception workshop may be conducted through virtual mode and/or a combination of virtual and in-person sessions. Further, kindly confirm whether joint workshops covering multiple Training Providers will be acceptable, or whether separate workshops are envisaged for individual Training Providers.	Section V: Scope of Work	The inception workshop may be conducted through virtual, in-person, or hybrid formats, as proposed by the MEL Partner and agreed with NSDC. Joint workshops covering multiple Training Providers will be acceptable and are encouraged where operationally efficient. Separate onboarding sessions may be conducted where required, including for new Training Providers joining the programme at a later stage.
72	Pages 34-36	The RFP indicates that programme data and reporting will be maintained through the Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH) platform. Kindly clarify the mechanism through which the MEL Partner will be provided access to programme data and supporting documents. Specifically, please indicate whether access will be provided directly through the platform, via APIs or	Programme Design Parameters for the Skills Outcomes Fund	The mechanism for providing the MEL Partner access to programme data and supporting documentation will be finalized during implementation. Access may be provided through SIDH, periodic data extracts, reports, or other appropriate means as determined by NSDC. The selected MEL Partner will be provided with the data and system access necessary to discharge its

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S. No	RFP Reference	Pre-Bid Query	RFP Clause	NSDC Response
		system integrations, through periodic data extracts, or through any other defined process.		responsibilities and design its verification methodology to effectively leverage the platform.
73	Page 30 - Designing a Comprehensive MEL Framework and Implementation Plan	The RFP indicates that bidders may propose beneficiary surveys, telephonic interviews, digital tools, and other verification methods as part of the outcome verification approach. Kindly confirm whether the MEL Partner may adopt a hybrid verification methodology combining multiple verification channels, such as telephonic surveys, beneficiary interviews, document verification, digital validation tools, employer verification, and other appropriate methods, simultaneously, subject to the proposed methodology and approval of NSDC.	Section V: Scope of Work	Yes. Bidders may propose a combination of telephonic surveys, beneficiary interviews, document verification, digital validation tools, employer verification and other appropriate methods, subject to the methodology being described and justified in the technical proposal and approved by NSDC as part of the MEL Framework.
74	Page 16- S.no. 4	We understand that ongoing projects with a minimum contract value of INR 1 Crore executed during the last four (4) financial years would be considered for evaluation under this eligibility criterion. Kindly confirm whether this understanding is correct.	Section II: Eligibility Criteria : The bidder should have successfully executed at least three (3) similar contracts of not less than 1 Cr during the last four (4) FY (2022-23 to 2025-26)	Bidders are required to have successfully executed at least three (3) similar contracts with a minimum value of ₹1 crore each during the last four financial years (FY 2022-23 to FY 2025-26). Bidders are encouraged to submit completed assignments demonstrating successful execution of similar work. Where a project is ongoing, the bidder may submit evidence of satisfactory performance in accordance with the requirements specified in the RFP. Evaluation will be based on the relevance, scale, complexity, and supporting documentary evidence submitted by the bidder.

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S. No	RFP Reference	Pre-Bid Query	RFP Clause	NSDC Response
75	Page 16- S.no. 4	We understand that projects implemented outside India would also be considered. Kindly confirm whether this understanding is correct.	Section II: Eligibility Criteria : The bidder should have successfully executed at least three (3) similar contracts of not less than 1 Cr during the last four (4) FY (2022-23 to 2025-26) involving monitoring, evaluation, verification, impact assessment, third-party evaluation, research, or similar assignments for Government, multilateral organizations, development partners, CSR/philanthropic organizations, or other large-scale programmes.	Contracts executed outside India for foreign governments, multilateral organisations or development partners will be considered, provided the assignment is of the nature described at S.No 4 of the Mandatory Criteria and meets the value threshold. For the purpose of demonstrating the INR 1 Cr threshold, the contract value shall be converted at the RBI reference rate prevailing on the date of the work order or contract signature, and the bidder is urged to state that rate and date in its submission.

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S. No	RFP Reference	Pre-Bid Query	RFP Clause	NSDC Response
76	Page 16, S.no. 5	Under the "Documents Required" section, it is stated that the Technical Proposal must be submitted as a separate document. Kindly provide clarity on the documents required to be submitted as part of the Technical Proposal, along with any prescribed formats, if applicable.	Section II: Eligibility Criteria : Should have adequate in-house technical capacity and field verification capability to undertake the scope of work outlined in this RFP	The Technical Proposal comprises the forms prescribed at Section IV and the items listed in the checklist at Form 5, together with the bidder's approach and methodology, workplan, team composition and CVs, and evidence of experience.
77	Page 1	Considering the scope and complexity of the assignment, we request NSDC to kindly consider extending the bid submission deadline by two (2) weeks from the date of issuance of the pre-bid meeting minutes to enable bidders to appropriately incorporate the clarifications received and prepare their proposals.	Last Date & Time of Submission	Bidders are requested to submit their proposals in accordance with the timelines specified in the RFP.
78	Page 17, S.no. 2	We understand that the positive net worth is required for FY 2023-24, FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26. Request you to please confirm the same.	Section II: Technical Evaluation Criteria: The bidder should have a positive net worth as on 31 March 2026. Marks allocation: Demonstrating a positive net worth for all three (3) consecutive financial years= 5 Marks	The mandatory requirement is a positive net worth as on 31 March 2026. Under the Technical Evaluation Criteria, 5 marks are awarded where a positive net worth is demonstrated for all three consecutive financial years, namely FY 2023-24, FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26.

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S. No	RFP Reference	Pre-Bid Query	RFP Clause	NSDC Response
79	Page 17, S.no. 3	We understand that submission of the relevant Work Order/Contract Agreement along with a self-certification from the Authorized Signatory confirming the completion or ongoing status of the assignment would suffice for demonstrating compliance with the experience criteria. Kindly confirm whether our understanding is correct.	Section II: Technical Evaluation Criteria : The bidder should have successfully executed at least three (3) similar contracts during the last four (4) years, involving monitoring, evaluation, verification, impact assessment, third-party evaluation, research, or similar assignments for Government, multilateral organizations, development partners, CSR/philanthropic organizations, or other large-scale programmes	The RFP requires submission of Work Orders/Agreements along with Completion Certificates, Client Certificates, or proof of ongoing satisfactory performance, as applicable. A self-certification by the bidder alone shall not be considered a substitute for the documentary evidence specified in the RFP. Bidders are required to submit supporting documents demonstrating the scope, value, timelines and status of the assignment

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80	Page 17, S.no. 3	We request you to please define or elaborate - demonstrating experience in verification of large-scale programmes, preferably in the skilling / livelihoods space and preferably with the government shall be awarded up to 35 Marks, based on the scale, complexity, and relevance of the assignments undertaken	Section II: Technical Evaluation Criteria : Marks Allocation: Demonstrating experience in verification of large-scale programmes, preferably in the skilling / livelihoods space and preferably with the government shall be awarded up to 35 Marks, based on the scale, complexity, and relevance of the assignments undertaken	Bidders should cite a minimum of three and may cite up to six assignments. Marks will be awarded on the scale, complexity and relevance of the assignments cited, up to the stated maximum, and citing additional assignments does not attract additional marks.

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S. No	RFP Reference	Pre-Bid Query	RFP Clause	NSDC Response
81	Page 18	Total Marks as per the first column is 15 while in the marks allocation section, it is written 10 Marks. We request you to please clarify the same.	Section II: Technical Evaluation Criteria: Should have adequate in-house technical capacity and field verification capability to undertake the scope of work outlined in this RFP Marks allocation: Marks shall be awarded based on the qualifications, relevant experience, sectoral expertise, seniority, and suitability of the proposed key personnel for undertaking the assignment, subject to a maximum of 10 Marks.	The total marks assigned to the criterion on technical capacity and field verification capability shall be 15 marks as stated in the evaluation criteria table. Bidders are encouraged to look at Evaluation Parameters only.

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82	Page 18	Marks allocation section highlights that the marks would be awarded based on the qualifications, relevant experience, sectoral expertise, seniority, and suitability of the proposed key personnel for undertaking the assignment. However, the documents required section asks about the Documentary evidence of relevant experience that show end-to-end management of required functions (e.g., work orders, completion certificates, client certificates, or equivalent). We request you to please clarify about the marks allocation and the required documents for the same. subject to a maximum of 10 Marks.	Section II: Technical Evaluation Criteria: Should have adequate in-house technical capacity and field verification capability to undertake the scope of work outlined in this RFP Marks allocation: Marks shall be awarded based on the qualifications, relevant experience, sectoral expertise, seniority, and suitability of the proposed key personnel for undertaking the assignment,	The total marks assigned to the criterion on technical capacity and field verification capability shall be 15 marks as stated in the evaluation criteria table. Bidders are encouraged to look at Evaluation Parameters only.
83	Pages 27-32	The RFP outlines a comprehensive scope of work covering MEL framework design, outcome verification, training provider engagement, beneficiary verification, data quality assurance, reporting, and ongoing programme support. However, the RFP does not specify any minimum staffing requirements, key expert positions, or resource deployment expectations for execution of the assignment. Kindly clarify whether NSDC envisages any minimum team composition, key expert roles, resource categories, qualification	Section V: Scope of Work : Resource Deployment and Key Experts Requirements	The RFP does not prescribe a mandatory team composition. Bidders are required to propose a team appropriate to the scope of work set out at Section V, and to submit CVs for the key personnel proposed. Marks under Technical Evaluation Criterion 4 will be awarded on the qualifications, relevant experience, sectoral expertise, seniority and suitability of the proposed personnel for this assignment.

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		requirements, or level of effort expectations that bidders should consider while designing the proposed implementation approach and preparing the financial proposal.		
84	Page 12	Considering that the Skills Outcomes Fund (SOF) is an outcome-based financing programme where robust monitoring, evaluation, and outcome verification are critical to ensuring the integrity and credibility of outcome payments, we request NSDC to kindly consider revising the QCBS weightage from 70:30 to 80:20. This would place greater emphasis on technical expertise, methodological rigor, verification capabilities, and the overall quality of the proposed MEL approach, which are critical to the successful implementation of the assignment.	Section III: Evaluation Methodology : QCBS Weightage	The evaluation methodology specified in the RFP shall remain unchanged. Technical and Financial Proposals will be evaluated using the Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) methodology with a weightage of 70% for the Technical Proposal and 30% for the Financial Proposal, as specified in the RFP.
85	Page 37	Considering the nature and scale of the assignment, as well as the multiple external dependencies involved in programme implementation and outcome verification, we request NSDC to kindly consider capping the aggregate penalties applicable to the MEL Partner at 5% of the total contract value. This would ensure that the penalty framework remains proportionate while adequately safeguarding the interests of the project.	Section V: Scope of Work : MEL Penalty for Non-compliance	The penalty framework specified in the RFP shall remain unchanged. No cap on aggregate penalties beyond the provisions already specified in the RFP is envisaged. The terms of the final agreement shall be subject to mutual discussions and negotiations with the successful bidder selected pursuant to this RFP.

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86	Page 37, point 6	The MEL Penalty Matrix prescribes penalties for non-compliance with the requirements relating to the DPDPA and data protection obligations. Kindly clarify the specific requirements, controls, obligations, and compliance parameters that would constitute 100% compliance under this provision, including the expectations from the MEL Partner with respect to data collection, storage, processing, access controls, data sharing, and reporting.	Section V: Scope of Work : MEL Penalty for Non-compliance (Data Security & Compliance) 100% compliance with DPDPA and agreed data protection requirements; zero unauthorized data disclosure	The MEL Partner shall be required to comply with the provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDPA) and other applicable data protection requirements, as specified in the RFP. The MEL Partner will be expected to establish and maintain appropriate processes and controls for secure collection, storage, access, processing, sharing and management of programme data and supporting documentation. Detailed operational requirements, protocols and data management procedures will be finalized during programme inception and implementation.
87	Page 37	The MEL Partner's ability to adhere to prescribed timelines may be dependent on timely availability of beneficiary data, supporting documentation, system access, and other inputs from Training Providers and programme stakeholders. We request NSDC to kindly clarify and request include the Scope of work that delays arising due to reasons beyond the control of the MEL Partner, including delays in data provision, document submission, or system updating by Training Providers or other stakeholders, will be excluded from the applicability of penalties under the MEL Penalty Matrix.	Section V: Scope of Work : MEL Penalty Matrix for Non-Compliance Clarification on applicability of Penalties for Delays Beyond the Control of the MEL Partner	Service level penalties will not be applied where the delay or shortfall is directly attributable to late, incomplete or inaccessible data or documents from NSDC, the Transaction Manager or Training Providers, to system unavailability, or to delays in NSDC's approvals, provided the MEL Partner has given prompt written notice of the dependency and its expected impact.
88	Additional Query	We request you to kindly clarify the indicative budget allocated for the entire assignment period. Given that the assignment spans four years, the budget may also account for inflation and the resulting escalation in costs over the contract duration.		An indicative budget ceiling is not being disclosed. Selection is on a Quality and Cost Based Selection basis and bidders should quote the cost required to deliver the scope of work set out at Section V.

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89	6.2, page 7	We understand that the scope requires agencies to review SIDH workflows. However, “Establishing technology enabled monitoring and data systems” is not mentioned in the deliverables for either Phase 1 or Phase 2. Please clarify.	The performance of the Service Provider will be reviewed by the client at the end of each year, taking into account programme needs and progress made in establishing technology enabled monitoring and data systems.	Clause 6.2 describes the basis on which NSDC will review performance at the end of each Programme Year in the context of overall programme progress. It does not create a technology development deliverable for the MEL Partner. The MEL Partner's scope in relation to SIDH is to review the proposed data collection, reporting and verification workflows and to recommend enhancements, and to design its methodology to leverage the platform. The MEL Partner is not required to configure or develop the platform; technology development for SOF is being procured separately.

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90	15.1, page 8 Clause 2.6 Subcontracting, Page 42	Please clarify whether NSDC would allow agencies to propose sub-contracting with proper prior written approval, solely for data collection in line with clause 2.6.1 of the RFP.	The bidder shall not subcontract whole, or any part of the services awarded to them against the RFP. 2.6.1 The Service Provider shall not subcontract without the prior written approval of NSDC. Provided that the Service Provider unequivocally agrees that any approved subcontractor will be required to execute a written agreement with the Service Provider which shall extend all relevant obligations of the Service Provider under this Agreement to the sub-contractor. However, at all times, the Service Provider shall also remain completely responsible for ensuring the satisfactory performance of all subcontracted services.	In accordance with Clause 2.6.1 of the RFP, the selected MEL Partner may engage subcontractors, subject to prior written approval from NSDC. Such subcontracting may be undertaken for specific activities, including data collection and fieldwork support. However, the MEL Partner shall remain solely responsible and accountable for the quality, integrity, timeliness, and overall delivery of all services and outputs under the contract. Bidders proposing such an arrangement must disclose it in the technical proposal.

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91	Technical Evaluation Criteria, page 17 & 18	Please clarify the marks allocation for line item 4, as the “Evaluation Criteria” column mentions Total Marks as 15, whereas the “Marks Allocation” column mentions a maximum of 10 marks.	The bidder should have adequate in-house technical capacity and field verification capability to undertake the scope of work outlined in this RFP.	The total marks assigned to the criterion on technical capacity and field verification capability shall be 15 marks as stated in the evaluation criteria table. Bidders are encouraged to look at Evaluation Parameters only.
92	Section V, Scope of Work, page 27	Please specify the roles and responsibilities of the MEL partner and the Transaction Manager pertaining to MEL activities.	Please note that the MEL Partner will report to the Transaction Manager of the Skills Outcomes Fund, who will be selected through a separate competitive RFP process.	The roles and responsibilities of the MEL Partner relevant to this assignment are described in Section V of the RFP, including design and implementation of the MEL framework, independent verification of outcomes, reporting, stakeholder engagement, data management, and programme learning activities. As stated, the Transaction Manager is responsible for transaction management for SOF, including coordination of outcome payment processes and contractual administration with programme partners. The MEL Partner is responsible for independent monitoring, evaluation, learning and outcome verification, and submits its verification reports and payment recommendations to the Transaction Manager. The detailed working arrangements, governance mechanisms and stakeholder responsibilities will be finalized during programme inception. No change in RFP conditions.

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93	Section V, Scope of Work, page 27	Please specify the roles and responsibilities of the MEL partner and the Transaction Manager pertaining to MEL activities.	Please note that the MEL Partner will report to the Transaction Manager of the Skills Outcomes Fund, who will be selected through a separate competitive RFP process.	The roles and responsibilities of the MEL Partner relevant to this assignment are described in Section V of the RFP, including design and implementation of the MEL framework, independent verification of outcomes, reporting, stakeholder engagement, data management, and programme learning activities. As stated, the Transaction Manager is responsible for transaction management for SOF, including coordination of outcome payment processes and contractual administration with programme partners. The MEL Partner is responsible for independent monitoring, evaluation, learning and outcome verification, and submits its verification reports and payment recommendations to the Transaction Manager. The detailed working arrangements, governance mechanisms and stakeholder responsibilities will be finalized during programme inception. No change in RFP conditions.
94	Table 5, page 27	Please clarify whether these indicators are expected to be entirely programmatic in nature, or whether physical indicators would also be considered.	Outcome definitions and indicators to be measured across the programme for payment linked outcomes	The outcome indicators referred to in the RFP are programme outcomes linked to the Skills Outcomes Fund, including the payment-linked outcomes of certification, placement and retention, along with additional learning indicators as described in Section V. Bidders may propose appropriate indicators, measures and verification approaches as part of the MEL framework and technical proposal, consistent with the programme objectives and requirements set out in the RFP.

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95	Table 5, page 28	The different forms of verification mentioned here have significant implications on resources, timelines, and budgets, as well as the quality of data. This is not only from a sample-size standpoint, but also on the level of effort required to operationalize and implement each verification methodology. In this respect, please clarify the whether NSDC has a minimum % of sample size (considering 2,00,000 as N) and preferred methodologies to be used.	A sampling-based verification approach is indicated as one possible methodology, wherein a statistically determined sample of participants and reported outcomes may be independently verified through appropriate primary and secondary sources, including participant surveys, documentary evidence and other relevant data sources. Bidders may propose this or an alternative methodology, including census-based, technology-enabled or other verification approaches, provided that the proposed approach demonstrates the ability to generate sufficiently reliable and credible evidence of outcome achievement for payment decisions	No minimum confidence level, margin of error, statistical power or sample size is prescribed. Bidders may propose a sampling-based, census-based, technology-enabled or alternative verification methodology, provided the proposed approach demonstrates the ability to generate sufficiently reliable and credible evidence of outcome achievement for payment decisions. Different precision levels may be proposed for payment assurance and for subgroup learning analysis, with justification. The methodology will be finalised and approved as part of the Phase 1 MEL Framework.
96	Table 6, page 28	Please clarify when Year 1 of the programme is.		Year 1 of the programme shall commence from the effective date of programme implementation, tentatively planned in November 2026

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97	Key programme deliverables for Phase 1, page 30	Please specify whether this training workshop is expected to be conducted virtually or in person, and whether only one workshop is expected or multiple workshops.	Design and lead an inception workshop with all Training Providers prior to commencement of enrolment	The training workshop may be conducted in virtual, in-person, or hybrid mode. Bidders are expected to propose an appropriate format based on the objectives and scope of the engagement. While joint workshops covering multiple Training Providers are permissible and encouraged where operationally efficient, multiple workshops may be required, including for Training Providers onboarding at different stages of the programme. The final approach will be agreed upon with the selected MEL Partner during implementation.
98	Phase 2: Verification of outcomes after finalization of the framework, page 30	Reference to Table 1 is not found.	Verify the three payment-linked outcome milestones as per the proposed verification plan against which outcome payments will be made to Training Providers, as defined in Table 1	The reference to "Table 1" should be read as a reference to the payment-linked outcome milestones defined under the RFP, namely Certification, Placement and Retention. The omission of the table reference numbering is a drafting error and does not affect the scope of work or outcome definitions set out in the RFP.
99	Phase 2: Verification of outcomes after finalization of the framework, page 30	Please clarify how verification is envisaged for the final year beneficiaries for the retention milestones.	General	The retention milestone for candidates enrolled towards the end of the programme matures after their enrolment year. the bidder is expected to account for verification.

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100	Phase 2: Verification of outcomes after finalization of the framework, page 30	Please specify whether beneficiary verification is required prior to enrolment.		No. The MEL Partner's verification is directed at the payment-linked outcome milestones. Candidate eligibility and enrolment records are the responsibility of Training Providers and are overseen by the Performance Management Unit, and are subject to the MEL Partner's data quality assurance checks as part of its verification of claims.
101	Outcomes Tracking, page 34	For each of the stages, what is expected to form the base upon which percentages for certification, placement, and retention are determined? How are attendance and attrition expected to influence the outcome numbers?	Payments to training providers under SOF will be linked to the following outcome milestones	The three payment-linked stages are certification, placement and three-month retention. For monitoring purposes, each rate is computed for a defined enrolment window against the candidates in that window whose milestone has matured as at the cut-off date, and is reported alongside the corresponding rate against total enrolment in the window. Attrition does not affect outcome computation of outcomes. Candidates who do not progress to a milestone generate no outcome payment for that milestone; there is no separate attrition adjustment, minimum conversion threshold. Attendance is not a separate SOF outcome condition and does not adjust the payable count; eligibility for assessment remains governed by the applicable scheme and Qualification Pack requirements. Enrolment, attendance and progression data will be maintained by the Performance Management Unit and made available to the MEL Partner. The detailed indicator reference sheet, including the definition of enrolment, deduplication rules, milestone maturity dates and treatment of

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				reassessment cases, forms part of the Phase 1 MEL Framework.
102	Deliverables	Are the deliverables expected to be placed in public domain or shared with any other party?		All deliverables prepared under the Agreement are the property of NSDC in accordance with Clause 12.2. NSDC may share them with MSDE, outcome funders and other programme stakeholders, and may publish them in whole or in part. The MEL Partner cannot publish or disclose any deliverable or programme data without NSDC's prior written approval.
103	Form 4, page 23	We understand that the detailed financial proposal can be developed by agency in their own format. Please confirm. Also, confirm if the financial proposal is required to be password protected.	Financial Proposal Submission Form	Bidders are required to submit the Financial Proposal as a separate document from the Technical Proposal, in accordance with the instructions provided in Form 4 of the RFP. The Financial Proposal should be submitted as a password-protected document, separate from the Technical Proposal. The password shall be shared only upon request by procurement during the financial evaluation stage.

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104	Last Date & Time of Submission	We request if the submission deadline could be extended by a week.	21st Sep 2026 and 1800 hrs	Currently, no extension to the proposal submission deadline is envisaged. Any extension, if provided, will be notified through the NSDC Procurement website.
105	Engagement of Technology Partners	With reference to the no-subcontracting provision under Clause 15.1, please clarify whether the selected MEL Partner would be permitted to engage a specialised technology partner/vendor, for specific technology-related components, given that the scope of the engagement envisages significant use of technology-enabled monitoring, digital data collection, document validation, integration with SIDH, and potentially alternative/census-based verification approaches.		In accordance with Clause 15.1 of the RFP, the selected MEL Partner may engage specialized technology vendors or service providers for specific technology-enabled activities, subject to prior written approval from NSDC and compliance with the conditions specified in the RFP. However, the MEL Partner shall remain solely responsible and accountable for all deliverables, data quality, verification outcomes, confidentiality, and contractual obligations under the engagement. Any such arrangement shall not dilute the MEL Partner's overall responsibility for delivery of the scope of work. Bidders proposing such an arrangement must disclose it in the technical proposal.