



सत्यमेव जयते

NITI Aayog



Selection of Technical Consultant

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Evaluation Study of Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Protsahan (PM-USP) Scheme

File No. I- 19014/23/2025

September 2025

Government of India

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No. I-19014/23/2025-DMEO
Government of India
NITI Aayog
Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office
Sansad Marg, New Delhi -110001

Invitation for Proposals

Date: 09/09/2025

Subject: Request for Proposal (RFP) for Evaluation of Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Protsahan (PM-USP) Scheme 2025-26.

The Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO), National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, Government of India, intends to engage a Technical Consultant to support the **Evaluation of Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Protsahan (PM-USP) Scheme 2025-26** details of which have been provided in the RFP document.

DMEO, NITI Aayog invites proposals for this assignment, from national/international firms/organisations/institutions, which have requisite experience in this field as detailed in the RFP. The salient features of the study, eligibility criteria and instructions on how to bid and other details are available in the RFP document uploaded on the DMEO website (<https://dmeo.gov.in/tenders>) and Government e-Marketplace (<https://gem.gov.in/>). Important information & tentative dates are given in section 1 of the RFP.

Interested applicants are requested to log into Government e-Marketplace (GeM) and submit their RFP response online, on or before **October 7, 2025 (Tuesday)**, time 17:00 hours (**5:00 PM**). Applicants can also refer to resources available on GeM (<https://gem.gov.in/support/sellers/?lang=english>) for further queries.

Shri Ashish Diwan
Development Monitoring & Evaluation Office
(DMEO) Room No-431, NITI Aayog, Sansad Marg
New Delhi, 110001
Email: dmeoeval-niti@gov.in

Disclaimer

- i. The information contained in this Request for Proposals document (“RFP”) or subsequently provided to Applicants, whether verbally or in documentary or any other form by or on behalf of the Authority or any of its employees or advisers, is provided to Applicants on the terms and conditions set out in this RFP and such other terms and conditions subject to which such information is provided.
- ii. This RFP is neither an agreement nor an offer by the Authority to the prospective Applicants or any other person. The purpose of this RFP is to provide interested parties with information that may be useful to them in the formulation of their Proposals pursuant to this RFP. This RFP includes statements, which reflect various assumptions and assessments arrived at by the Authority in relation to the Consultancy. Such assumptions, assessments and statements do not purport to contain all the information that each Applicant may require. The assumptions, assessments, statements and information contained in this RFP, may not be complete, accurate, adequate or correct. Each Applicant should, therefore, conduct its own investigations and analysis and should check the accuracy, adequacy, correctness, reliability and completeness of the assumptions, assessments, statements or information contained in this RFP and obtain independent advice from appropriate sources.
- iii. Information provided in this RFP to the Applicants is on a wide range of matters, some of which depends upon interpretation of law. The information given is not an exhaustive account of statutory requirements and should not be regarded as a complete or authoritative statement of law. The Authority accepts no responsibility for the accuracy or otherwise for any interpretation or opinion on the law expressed herein.
- iv. Applicants are advised that selection shall be based on their meeting various criteria enumerated in the different clauses of the RFP. Applicants shall be deemed to have understood and agreed that the Authority shall not be required to provide any explanation or justification in respect of any aspect of the selection process or selection.
- v. The Authority, its employees and advisers make no representation or warranty and shall have no liability to any person including any Applicant under any law, statute, rules or regulations or tort, principles of restitution or unjust enrichment or otherwise for any loss, damages, cost or expense which may arise from or be incurred or suffered on account of anything contained in this RFP or otherwise, including the accuracy, adequacy, correctness, reliability or completeness of the RFP and any assessment, assumption, statement or information contained therein or deemed to form part of this RFP or arising in any way in this Selection Process.
- vi. The Authority may in its absolute discretion, but without being under any obligation to do so, update, amend or supplement the information, statements, assessment or assumption contained in this RFP.
- vii. The issue of this RFP does not imply that the Authority is bound to select an Applicant or to appoint the Selected Applicant, as the case may be, for the Consultancy and the Authority reserves the right to reject all or any of the Proposals without assigning any reasons whatsoever.
- viii. The selection Process shall be governed by the dispute settlement mechanisms (DSM) (Manual for Procurement of Consultancy and Other Services, June 2022).
- ix. Any information contained in the Proposal shall not in any way be construed as binding on the Authority, its agents, successors or assigns, but shall be binding against the Applicant if the Consultancy is subsequently awarded to it.

Acronyms

B.E.	Budget Estimates
CAPI	Computer Aided Personal Interviews
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DMEO	Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GeM	Government e-Marketplace
KII	Key Informant Interview
NGOs	Non-Government Organization
R.E.	Revised Estimates
RFP	Request for Proposal
TIS	Tender Information Summary

Glossary for RFP

Applicant	As defined in RFP Clause 1.2.1
Authorized Representative	As defined in RFP Clause 1.12.2(d)
Authority	As defined in RFP Clause 1.1
Bid Security	As defined in RFP Clause 1.16
Conditions of Eligibility	As defined in RFP Clause 1.4
Conflict of Interest	As defined in RFP Clause 1.5
Consultancy Team	As defined in RFP Clause 1.3
Consultant	As defined in RFP Clause 1.1(b)
Eligible Assignments	As defined in RFP Clause 4.2
Financial Proposal	As defined in RFP Clause 1.14
Key Personnel	As defined in RFP Clause 1.3
Lead Member	As defined in RFP Clause 1.2.1
Legal entity	As defined in RFP Clause 1.4.2 (A)
LOA	Letter of Award as specified in RFP Clause 3.4
Professional Personnel	As defined in RFP Clause 1.13.6
Proposal	As defined in RFP Clause 1.2
Proposal Due Date or PDD	As defined in Tender Information Summary
Selected Applicant	As defined in RFP Clause 4.5.2
Selection Process	As defined in RFP Clause 1.2.2
Sole Firm	As defined in RFP Clause 1.2.1
Support Personnel	As defined in RFP Clause 1.13.6
Team Leader	As defined in RFP Annexure A
Technical Proposal	As defined in RFP Clause 1.13

Glossary for Schedules

Form of Agreement	Form of Agreement as in Schedule-2
Agreement	As defined in Schedule-2 Clause 1.1.1(a)
Agreement Value	As defined in Schedule-2 Clause 6.1.2
Applicable Laws	As defined in Schedule-2 Clause 1.1.1(c)
Associate	As defined in Schedule-3 Clause 9(f)

Deliverables	As defined in Schedule-1 Clause 5
Effective Date	As defined in Schedule-2 Clause 1.1.1(g)
Final Evaluation Report	As specified in Schedule-1 Clause 8
Inception Report	As specified in Schedule-1 Clause 5
Member	As defined in Schedule-2 Clause 1.1.1(j)
Personnel	As defined in Schedule-2 Clause 1.1.1(l)
M&E Specialist	As defined in Schedule-2 Clause 4
Services	As defined in Schedule-2 Clause 1.1.1(n)
TOR	As defined in Schedule-1

Tender Information Summary (TIS)

1.0 Basic Tender Details		
1.1.	Tender Title/ Name of Assignment	RFP for Evaluation Study of Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Protsahan (PM-USP) Scheme of Selection of Technical Consultant”
1.2.	File Number	DO No. I- 19014/23/2025
1.3.	Tender Type	RFP-Open Tendering
1.4.	Tender Category	Services
1.5.	Proposal Submission	Two Separate Proposals viz Technical & Financial be submitted on GeM Portal
1.6.	Product Category	Consultancy
1.7.	Selection Method	Quality & Cost Based Selection (QCBS) in 70:30 Ratio
1.8.	Appointing Arbitration	Head of the Procuring Organization
1.9.	Language for all types of Communication	English only
1.10	Form of Contract	Lumpsum
1.11	Organization:	NITI Aayog
1.12	The Procuring Entity:	DMEO- NITI Aayog
1.13	Mode of Procurement	Online- through GeM Portal
1.14	Tender Inviting Authority (TIA)	DG DMEO- NITI Aayog
1.15	Office Address & Communication for Correspondence	Shri Ashish Diwan Development Monitoring & Evaluation Office (DMEO) Room No-431, NITI Aayog, Sansad Marg New Delhi, 110001 Email: dmeoeval-niti@gov.in
2.0. Critical Dates		
2.1.	Publication on RFP on GeM Portal	Tuesday, 9 th September 2025
2.2.	Pre-Proposal Queries	Yes
2.3.	Last date for receiving queries /clarification	Wednesday, 24 th September 2025
2.4.	i.Mode & Address for submission of Pre-Proposal Conference ii. Pre-Proposal Conference Link	i.Email: dmeoeval-niti@gov.in ii. https://forms.gle/VbwtMmGwT9VsE9b48
2.5.	Pre-Proposal Conference, Date, Time & Venue	Wednesday, 24 th September 2025 Link https://dmeo.webex.com/dmeo/j.php?MTID=m4a86e134cfaa391dbf94530c5f0d22d6 Venue: R.N.514 (Kaziranga), NITI Aayog
2.6.	Authority response to Queries	Wednesday, 26 th September 2025

2.7.	Proposal Due Date (PDD)/Last date ¹	Tuesday, 7 th October 2025
2.8.	Opening of Technical Proposals date & Time	Wednesday, 8 th October 2025
2.9.	Proposal Validity (Days from the date of Proposal Opening)	90 Days
3.0 Terms of Reference		
3.1	Period of Contract	5 Months
3.2.	Service Details:	As per Terms of Reference / Scope of Work.
4.0 Documents relating to Bid Security and Performance Security		
4.1.	Bid Security (EMD) Amount in INR:	Rs. 4,50,000
4.2.	Is Bid Securing Declaration permitted in lieu of Bid Security?	Only for educational institutions as per RFP Clause 1.16.2
4.3.	Performance Security	Yes, 3% of the awarded value
4.4.	Bid/ Performance Security to be addressed/ in favor of:	PAO, NITI Aayog
4.5.	Form of Bid/ Performance Security	Refer Checklist of documents
4.6.	Payment Schedule	Inception report = 20% Mid-term report =30% Draft report = 30% Final report =20%
5.0 Critical URL Links		
[All Documents pertaining to tendering (Word and PDF format) can be accessed at: https://dmeo.gov.in/tenders]		
A	<u>Appendix I (Technical Proposal)</u>	
5.1	Letter of Proposal	<i>Form-1</i>
5.2.	Particulars of Applicant	<i>Form-2</i>
5.3	Statement of Legal Capacity	<i>Form-3</i>
5.4	Power of Attorney	<i>Form-4</i>
5.5.	Financial Capacity of the Applicant	<i>Form-5</i>
5.6	Particulars of Key Personnel	<i>Form-6</i>
5.7	Proposed Methodology & Work Plan	<i>Form-7</i>
5.8	Eligible Assignments of the applicant	<i>Form-8</i>
5.9	Deployment of professional Personnel	<i>Form-9</i>
5.10	Support Personnel	<i>Form-10</i>
5.11	(a) Bid Security Declaration Form (b) MSME Udyam Certificate	(a)Appendix-I Form-11 (for government owned universities/academic institutions only) (b) MSME applicants
5.12	Letter of Intent for Technical Collaboration	<i>Form-12</i>
B	<u>Appendix II (Financial Proposal)</u>	
5.13	Covering Letter	Form-1
5.14	Financial Proposal	Form-2
5.15	Estimated Personnel Cost	Form-3

¹ \$ While extending the Proposal Due Date on account of an addendum, the Authority shall have due regard for the time required by Applicants to address the amendments specified therein. In the case of significant amendments, at least 15 (fifteen) days shall be provided between the date of amendment and the Proposal Due Date, and in the case of minor amendments, at least 7 (seven) days shall be provided.

C.	Documents of LOA	
5.16	Form of Agreement	Schedule-2 (https://dmeo.gov.in/sites/default/files/2025-08/Schedule-2-Agreement-and-All-its-Annexes.docx)
5.17	Terms of Reference	<i>Schedule 1 of the RFP</i>
5.18	Deployment of Personnel	<i>Appendix I Form 9</i>
5.19	Estimated Personnel Cost	<i>Appendix II Form 3</i>
5.20	Financial Proposal	<i>Appendix II Form 2</i>
5.21	Payment Schedule	<i>Schedule 2 Annex 5</i>
5.23	Bank Guarantee for Performance Security	<i>Schedule 2 Annex 6</i>
5.24	Judicial Stamp Paper	<i>To be appended with Form of Agreement</i>
5.25	Guidance Note on Conflict of Interest	Schedule-3

Checklist of documents

01. Documents to be uploaded on GeM Portal online on or before PDD:		
1.1.	Technical Proposal	As per Appendix-I, Form 1-12 (available on DMEO website)
1.2.	Financial Proposal	As per Appendix-II, Form 1-3 (available on DMEO website)
02. Documents to be submitted offline:		
2.1.	Bid Security [Insurance Surety Bonds, Account Payee Demand Draft, Fixed Deposit Receipt, Banker's Cheque (only for EMD), Bank Guarantee]	To be submitted up to 5 days after PDD.
2.2.	Power of Attorney	To be submitted before the award of Contract (Appendix-I Form-4 as available on DMEO website)
03. Documents to be submitted offline on signing of Contract:		
3.1.	Performance Security [Insurance Surety Bonds, Account Payee Demand Draft, Fixed Deposit Receipt, Banker's Cheque (only for EMD), Bank Guarantee]	Bank Guarantee to be submitted as per Schedule 2, Annexure-6. (available on DMEO Website)
3.2.	Form of Agreement	Schedule-2 (as available on DMEO website)
3.3.	Judicial Stamp Paper (To be appended with Agreement)	On Rs 200 Stamp Paper

1. Introduction and Instructions to Applicants

1.1. Background

- (a) The Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO) (**“the Authority”**) is an attached office of NITI Aayog. Constituted in September 2015 by merging the erstwhile Program Evaluation Office (PEO) and the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), DMEO works to fulfil the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mandate and to build the M&E ecosystem in India. DMEO has been mandated to actively monitor and evaluate the implementation of schemes, programs and Initiatives of the Government of India (GoI) to strengthen their implementation and scope of delivery on an ongoing basis. Further, evidence-based policymaking should be integral to the overall governance structure in the country.

(b) **Request for Proposal**

The Authority invites proposals (**the “Proposals”**) for selection of a Technical Consultant (**the “Consultant”**) who shall conduct an evaluation study of the Scheme, in accordance with the TOR (**collectively the “Consultancy”**).

1.2. Scope of Proposal

- 1.2.1 Detailed description of the objectives, scope of services, deliverables and other requirements relating to this Consultancy are specified in this RFP. In case an applicant possesses the requisite experience and capabilities required for undertaking the Consultancy, it may participate in the Selection Process either individually (the **“Sole Firm”**) or as lead member of a Consortium of firms (the **“Lead Member”**) in response to this invitation. The term applicant (**the “Applicant”**) means the Sole Firm (in case of firms) or the Lead Member of a Consortium or Universities or Academic Institutions, as the case may be. The manner in which the Proposal is required to be submitted, evaluated and accepted is explained in this RFP.
- 1.2.2. The Authority has adopted a two-stage selection process (**collectively the “Selection Process”**) for evaluating the Proposals comprising technical and financial bids. In the first stage, a technical evaluation will be carried out. Based on this technical evaluation, a list of short-listed applicants shall be prepared. In the second stage, a financial evaluation will be carried out. Proposals will finally be ranked according to their combined technical and financial scores. The first-ranked Applicant shall be selected for negotiation (**the “Selected Applicant”**).
- 1.2.3. The Applicant shall submit its proposal (Both Technical & Financial) on the GeM Portal. The Technical Proposal shall be submitted in the form as per Appendix I (as available on the DMEO website), and the Financial Proposal to be submitted in the form as per Appendix II (as available on the DMEO website). The Forms to be uploaded on GeM can be accessed on DMEO Website (<https://dmeo.gov.in/>). Upon selection, the Applicant shall be required to enter into an agreement with the Authority in the form specified as per Schedule-2 (as available on the DMEO website). The responsibility for the completion of study in terms of submission of deliverables and achievements of milestones, as prescribed in Terms of Reference, lies with the Applicant.
- 1.2.4. Sub-Contracting by the applicant is not permitted. However, for conducting field surveys, the

applicant may engage field investigators or field survey firms. The responsibility to maintain the highest quality of data collected from this study lies with the applicant. The applicant shall submit the credentials of the survey firms proposed for conducting the field survey in the inception reports.

1.3. Key Personnel

The Consultant shall form a multi-disciplinary team (the “**Consultancy Team**”) for undertaking this assignment. The Consultancy Team shall consist of the key personnel (the “**Key Personnel**”) who shall discharge their respective responsibilities as specified below, as per Annexure A of RFP:

1.4. Conditions of Minimum Eligibility of Applicants

1.4.1 Applicants must read carefully the minimum conditions of eligibility (the “**Conditions of Eligibility**”) provided herein. Proposals of only those Applicants who satisfy the Conditions of Eligibility will be considered for evaluation. The Minimum Conditions of Eligibility as specified in the RFP may be relaxed for a particular Applicant, if applicable, subject to the furnishing of relevant and valid documents or certificates, supporting such relaxations or exemptions under Applicable Laws.

1.4.2. To be eligible for evaluation of its Proposal, the Applicant shall fulfil the following

- (A) **General Eligibility of the Applicant:** The Applicant must be a **legal entity** as per Applicable Laws. The '**legal entity**' denotes an organization that is recognized as a distinct entity under law. It can be an incorporated Company or LLP under Indian Laws or university, academic institution and research & development organization. The Applicant should not have been debarred or blacklisted on the date of application by the Central Government, any State Government, any Statutory Authority of the Government, or a Public-Sector Undertaking, from participating in any consulting assignment.
- (B) **Technical Capacity:** The Applicant should have, **over the past 8 (Eight) financial years** preceding the PDD, undertaken a **minimum of 2 (two) Eligible Assignments** as specified in Clause 4.2
- (C) **Financial Capacity:** The Applicant should have a minimum annual total revenue/turnover of ₹ 3 crore preceding 3 (three) financial years from the date of the application.
- (D) **Availability of Key Personnel:** The Applicant should offer and make available all Key Personnel meeting the requirements specified in Annexure A of RFP.
- (E) **Age limit of Key Personnel:** All Key Personnel must below the age of 60 Years and fulfill the Minimum Conditions of Eligibility specified in Annexure A of RFP:

1.4.3. The Applicant should enclose with its Proposal, certificate(s) from its Statutory Auditors²

² Please do not attach complete printed annual financial statements. In case relevant extracts of duly audited annual financial statements containing the requisite details are provided, duly countersigned by the authorized signatory, a separate certification by statutory auditors would not be necessary.

stating its Annual Turnover/Total Revenue³ for the preceding 3 (three) financial years from the date of application. In the event that the Applicant does not have a statutory auditor, it should provide the requisite certificate(s) from the firm of Chartered Accountants that ordinarily audits the annual accounts of the Applicant.

- 1.4.4. The Applicant should submit a Power of Attorney (POA) as per the format of Appendix-1, Form-4 (as provided on the DMEO website). However, such a Power of Attorney would not be required if the Application is signed by a partner in case the Applicant is a partnership firm or limited liability partnership.

In the case of government-owned academic institutions in lieu of POA, a letter of authorization duly signed by the competent authority, such as the Head of the Department, Dean, Registrar, Director etc., should be submitted.

- 1.4.5 An Applicant should, during the last three years, neither have failed to perform on any agreement, as evidenced by imposition of a penalty by an arbitral or judicial authority or a judicial pronouncement or arbitration award against the Applicant, nor have been expelled from any project or agreement nor have had any agreement terminated for breach by such Applicant.
- 1.4.6 While submitting a Proposal, the Applicant should attach clearly marked and referenced continuation sheets in the event that the space provided in the specified forms in the Appendices is insufficient.

1.5. Conflict of Interest

- 1.5.1 An Applicant shall not have a conflict of interest as per Schedule 3 (as available on the DMEO website) that may affect the Selection Process or the Consultancy. Any Applicant found to have a Conflict of Interest shall be disqualified. In the event of disqualification, the Authority reserves the right to take action as per the Bid Security or Bid Security Declaration for, inter alia, the time, cost and effort of the Authority, including consideration of such Applicant's Proposal, without prejudice to any other right or remedy that may be available to the Authority hereunder or otherwise.
- 1.5.2 It is expected that the Consultant shall provide professional, objective, and impartial advice and at all times, hold the Authority's interests paramount, avoid conflicts with other assignments or its own interests, and act without any consideration for future work. The Consultant should not accept or engage in any assignment that would be in conflict with its prior or current obligations to other clients, or that may place it in a position of not being able to carry out the assignment in the best interests of the Authority.
- 1.5.3 Some guiding principles for identifying and addressing Conflicts of Interest have been illustrated in the Guidance Note on conflicts of interest at Schedule 3 (as available on DMEO website).

1.6. Number of Proposals

No Applicant or its Associate should submit more than one Application for the Consultancy. An Applicant applying individually or as an Associate shall not be entitled to submit another

³ Turnover of university means Revenue from all sources + Grant in Aid

application either individually or as a member of any consortium, as the case may be. If any Applicant or its Associate is found to submit more than one application, either individually or as a member of any consortium, all of their applications shall be rejected.

1.7. Cost of Proposal

The Applicants shall be responsible for all of the costs associated with the preparation of their Proposals and their participation in the Selection Process including subsequent negotiation, visits to the Authority etc. The Authority will not be responsible or in any way liable for such costs, regardless of the conduct or outcome of the Selection Process.

1.8. Verification of information

Applicants are encouraged to submit their respective Proposals after verification of the documents, reference materials, etc. within the purview of this RFP and the Applicable Laws and regulations or any other matter considered relevant by them.

1.9. Right to reject any or all Proposals

1.9.1 Notwithstanding anything contained in this RFP, the Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any Proposal and to annul the Selection Process and reject all Proposals, at any time without any liability or any obligation for such acceptance, rejection or annulment, and without assigning any reasons thereof.

1.9.2 Without prejudice to the generality of Clause 1.9.1, the Authority reserves the right to reject any Proposal if:

(a) at any time, a material misrepresentation on the part of the applicant is made or discovered, or

(b) The Applicant does not provide, within the time specified by the Authority, the supplemental information sought by the Authority for evaluation of the Proposal.

Misrepresentation/ improper response by the Applicant may lead to the disqualification of the Applicant. If the Applicant is the Lead Member of a consortium, then the entire consortium may be disqualified/rejected. If such disqualification/rejection occurs after the Proposals have been opened and the highest-ranking Applicant gets disqualified/rejected, the Authority reserves the right to annul the Selection Process.

1.10. Clarifications

1.10.1 Applicants should seek clarifications, if any, on the RFP either through GeM portal (<https://gem.gov.in/>) by logging in through their registered ID or by sending an email to dmeo.eval@gmail.com before the date mentioned in the TIS (Critical Dates) .

The Authority shall endeavor to respond to the queries within the period specified therein but not later than 7 (seven) days prior to the Proposal Due Date. The Authority shall post the reply to all such queries on the Official Website/GeM portal without identifying the source of queries.

- 1.10.2. The Authority reserves the right not to respond to any questions or provide any clarifications, in its sole discretion, and nothing in this Clause 1.10 shall be construed as obliging the Authority to respond to any question or to provide any clarification.

1.11. Amendment of RFP

- 1.11.1. At any time prior to the Proposal Due Date, the Authority may, for any reason, modify the RFP document by the issuance of an Amendment and posting it on the Official Website at <https://dmeo.gov.in/>
- 1.11.2. All such amendments shall be posted on the GeM portal <https://gem.gov.in/> along with the revised RFP containing the amendments and will be binding on all Applicants.
- 1.11.3. In order to afford the Applicants a reasonable time for taking an amendment into account, or for any other reason, the Authority may, in its sole discretion, extend the Proposal Due Date.

Preparation and Submission of Proposal

1.12. Format and signing of Proposal

- 1.12.1. The Applicant shall provide all the information sought under this RFP. The Authority will evaluate only those Proposals that are received in the specified forms and complete in all respects.
- 1.12.2. Bids along with all the scanned copies of the document should be submitted in the electronic form only through the GeM e-tendering system before the PDD. Before the bid documents are uploaded, all attached documents should be signed using digital signatures of any of the following:

- (a) by the proprietor, in case of a proprietary firm; or
- (b) by a partner, in case of a partnership firm and/or a limited liability partnership; or
- (c) by a duly authorised person holding the Notarised Power of Attorney, in case of a Limited Company or a corporation; or
- (d) by the Authorized Representative of the Lead Member holding the notarised Power of Attorney, in case of a consortium.
- (e) by the Competent Authority from the Educational Institution

A Notarised copy of the Power of Attorney certified under the hands of a partner or director of the Applicant and notarised by a notary public in the form specified in Appendix I (Form 4) (as provided on the DMEO website) shall be uploaded along with the Proposal.

- 1.12.3. The documents mentioned below shall be sent separately to the Authority in original through Speed Post/Registered Post or delivered by hand to the person specified in **‘Tender Information Summary (TIS)’ (page no. 8 of this RFP)**.

- a) Notarised Power of Attorney as required under Clause 1.4.4 prior to the award of contract, and
- b) Insurance Surety Bond/Demand Draft/Account Payee/ Fixed deposit/ Receipt/ Banker’s Cheque /Bank Guarantee (including e-Bank Guarantee) towards Bid Security or Bid Security Declaration, as required under Clause 1.16. A scanned copy of the same shall be

uploaded on the GeM portal. Hard copy of the same will have to be submitted directly to the Authority not later than 5 (five) working days after the bid opening (Opening of Technical Proposal date & time).

Kindly note that the proposal shall be rejected if a hard copy of the Bid security or Bid Security Declaration is not submitted not later than 5 (five) working days after the bid opening. However, the hard copy of the Power of Attorney shall be submitted prior to the award of the contract.

The envelope should be sealed and shall clearly scribe the following:

RFP for “Evaluation Study of Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Protsahan (PM-USP) Scheme 2025-26”

- 1.12.4. Applicants should note the Proposal Due Date, as specified in TIS, for submission of Proposals. Except as specifically provided in this RFP, no supplementary material will be entertained by the Authority, and that evaluation will be carried out only on the basis of the Documents uploaded on the GeM portal by the closing time of the Proposal Due Date as specified in the TIS. Applicants will ordinarily not be asked to provide additional material information or documents subsequent to the date of submission, and unsolicited material if submitted will be summarily rejected.
- 1.12.5. The Authority is neither a party nor a principal in the relationship between the Applicant and the organisation hosting the e-procurement portal (hereinafter called the GeM Portal). Applicants must comply with the rules, regulations, procedures, and implied conditions/agreements of the GeM portal, including registration, a compatible Digital Signature Certificate (DSC), etc. Consultants shall settle clarifications and disputes, if any, regarding the Portal directly with them. The Consultant is advised to go through the terms and conditions of the GeM Portal carefully before applying.

1.13. Technical Proposal

- 1.13.1. Applicants should submit the technical proposal online on GeM Portal in the prescribed formats available at Appendix I (the “**Technical Proposal**”) (as provided on the DMEO website).
- 1.13.2. While submitting the Technical Proposal, the Applicant shall, in particular, ensure that:
 - a. The Bid Security or Bid Security Declaration is provided.
 - b. All scanned copies of the forms are submitted in the prescribed formats and signed by the authorised signatories.
 - c. Power of Attorney, if applicable, is executed as per Applicable Laws;
 - d. CVs of all Key Personnel and other professional personnel are duly signed
 - e. Key Personnel and other professional meet the Minimum Conditions of Eligibility laid down at Annexure-A of the RFP.
 - f. Only one CV for each Key Personnel position has been furnished and no alternates are given.
 - g. The latest CVs are signed and dated in blue ink or digitally signed by the respective Personnel, and digitally countersigned by the authorized signatory. Only a copy of the CV signed by respective Key Personnel, duly digitally countersigned by the authorised

signatory, shall be accepted. If 50% of the submitted CVs, are not signed by the key personnel, the evaluation of the technical bid shall be carried without considering these unsigned CVs and if this Consultant is finally selected, the signed CVs shall be submitted by the Selected Consultant before signing of the LoA. The replacement of such key personnel would not be allowed during the evaluation of bids. If 75% of the submitted CVs are not signed by the respective proposed key personnel, the proposal shall be treated as non-responsive and rejected at the technical evaluation stage.

- h. The CVs contain an undertaking from the respective Key Personnel about his/her availability for the duration specified in the RFP;
- i. Professional Personnel proposed should have a good working knowledge of English language.
- j. All Key Personnel will be available for the period indicated in the TOR.
- k. The proposal is responsive in terms of Clause 2.1.3.

1.13.3. Failure to comply with the requirements spelt out in this Clause 1.13 shall make the Proposal liable to be rejected.

1.13.4. If it is found by the Authority at any stage that an applicant or individual Key Personnel has made a false averment regarding his qualification, experience or any other particulars, or his commitment regarding availability for the Project is not fulfilled, the Applicant, Individual Person or both shall be liable under breach of Code of Integrity for Public Procurement and shall be debarred for any future assignment of the Authority for a period not exceeding 2 (two) year as per GFR Rule 151. The award of this Consultancy to the Applicant may also be liable to **be cancelled** in such an event. In such an event, the Authority also reserves the right to forfeit bid security and/or debar the Applicant, without prejudice to any other right or remedy that may be available to the Authority.

1.13.5. The Technical Proposal should not include the financial proposal or any information relating to the Financial Proposal. In the event of the financial proposal being included in the technical proposal the bid will be treated as non-responsive and rejected at technical evaluation stage.

1.13.6. The proposed team should be composed of experts and specialists (the “**Professional Personnel**”) in their respective areas of expertise and managerial/support staff (the “**Support Personnel**”) such that the Consultant should be able to complete the Consultancy within the specified time schedule. The Key Personnel specified in Annexure-A of RFP shall be included in the proposed team of Professional Personnel. The CV of each such Professional Personnel, if any, should also be submitted in the format at Form-6 of Appendix-I.

1.13.7. The Authority reserves the right to verify all statements, information and documents, submitted by the Applicant in response to the RFP. Any such verification or the lack of such verification by the Authority to undertake such verification shall not relieve the Applicant of its obligations or liabilities hereunder nor will it affect any rights of the Authority thereunder.

1.14. Financial Proposal

1.14.1. Applicants should submit online the financial proposal in the Prescribed Formats available at Appendix-II (the “Financial Proposal”), clearly indicating the total cost of the Consultancy (Form-2 of Appendix-II, as provided on DMEO website) in both figures and words, in Indian Rupees (INR or ₹), and signed by the Applicant’s authorized signatories as mentioned in Clause 1.12.2. In the event of any difference between figures and words, the amount indicated in words shall prevail. In

the event of a difference between the arithmetic total and the total shown in the Financial Proposal, the lower of the two shall prevail. In the event of a difference between the figures shown in the Financial Proposal Form-2 and the GeM Portal, the amount encrypted & submitted through GeM portal shall prevail

1.14.2. While submitting the Financial Proposal, the Applicant should ensure the following:

- (i) All the costs associated with the assignment shall be included in the Financial Proposal. These shall cover remuneration for all the Personnel (Resident, in the field, office etc.), accommodation, airfare, equipment, printing of documents, surveys, geo-technical investigations, etc. The total amount indicated in the Financial Proposal should be without any condition attached or subject to any assumption and shall be final and binding. In case any assumption or condition is indicated in the Financial Proposal, it shall be considered non-responsive and liable to be rejected.
- (ii) The Financial Proposal should be exclusive of any tax liabilities.
- (iii) The consultant is liable to pay all the taxes as applicable for this consultancy. Also, all payments by the Authority shall be subject to the deduction of taxes at source as per Applicable Laws.
- (iv) Costs (including breakdown of costs) shall be expressed in INR exclusive of tax liabilities.

1.15. Submission of Proposal/e-Bid

1.15.1 The Applicants should submit the Proposal in the prescribed formats provided in the respective links as per TIS of this RFP on GeM Portal with all pages numbered serially and by giving an index of submissions. Each page of the submission shall be digitally signed by the Applicant's authorized signatories as mentioned in Clause 1.12.2. In case the proposal is submitted on the document downloaded from the Official Website, the Applicant shall be responsible for its accuracy and correctness as per the version uploaded by the Authority and shall ensure that there are no changes caused in the content/format of the downloaded document. In case of any discrepancy between the downloaded or photocopied version of the RFP and the original RFP issued by the Authority, the latter shall prevail.

1.15.2 The proposal should be submitted online on the GeM Portal only; manual/offline bids shall not be accepted under any circumstances. Also, the applicant will have to send the original hard copy of Bid Security or Bid Security Declaration and Notarized Power of Attorney separately as specified in Clause 1.12.3(b).

1.15.3 The Technical and Financial bids must be submitted separately on GeM Portal in their respective folders/options, one clearly marked **"Technical Proposal"** and the other clearly marked **"Financial Proposal"**. If financial proposal is included in the *folder/option* of technical proposal, the bid will be summarily rejected. The folder marked —Technical Proposal shall contain:

- (i) Application in the prescribed format (Form-1 of Appendix-I) along with Forms 2 to 12 of Appendix-I and supporting documents; and
- (ii) Scanned copy of Bid security Declaration or Bid Security Declaration as specified in Clause 1.12.3(b).

The folder marked —Financial Proposal shall contain the Financial Proposal in the prescribed format (Forms 1, 2 & 3 of Appendix-II).

1.15.4. The complete Proposal must be submitted online on or before 17:00 hours on the Proposal

Due Date as specified in TIS. Proposals submitted by post, fax, telex, telegram, in-person or e-mail shall not be entertained.

- 1.15.6 The Proposal should be made in the Forms specified in this RFP at Appendix I and Appendix-II. All such forms are also available on DMEO <https://dmeo.gov.in>. Any attachment to such Forms must be provided on separate pages, and only information that is directly relevant should be uploaded. This may include scanned photocopies of the relevant pages of printed documents. No separate documents like printed annual statements, company brochures, etc., will be considered.
- 1.15.7 The rates quoted in the financial proposal should be firm throughout the period of performance of the assignment up to and including acceptance of the final report by the Authority and discharge of all obligations of the Consultant under the Agreement.

1.16 Bid Security

- 1.16.1 The Applicant should furnish as part of its Proposal, a bid security of ₹ 4,50,000 in the form of Insurance Surety Bonds/Demand Draft/ Account Payee/ Fixed Deposit/ Receipt/ Banker's Cheque /Bank Guarantee (including e-Bank Guarantee) issued by one of the Nationalized/ Scheduled Banks in India in favor of PAO, NITI Aayog payable at New Delhi, except Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) who are registered on the Udyam Portal of Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) (subject to compulsory submission of Udyam Certification) ([Udyam Portal](#)).
- 1.16.2 Bid securities of the unsuccessful bidders during the first stage i.e. technical evaluation, would be returned within 30 days of declaration of results of the technical evaluation, except the two highest ranked applicants. In the event that the first ranked Applicant commences the assignment as required in Clause 3.5, the second ranked Applicant, who has been kept in reserve, shall be returned its Bid Security forthwith, but in no case later than 120 (one hundred and twenty) days from PDD. After the award of the contract, the Selected Applicant's Bid Security shall be returned within 30 (thirty) days on receipt of the performance security in accordance with the provisions thereof. In case of government owned universities/academic institutions, the Applicant shall furnish, as part of its Proposal, a Bid Security Declaration (instead of bid security) as per format specified in Appendix-I Form-11. Universities/academic institutions (hereunder referred to as universities/institutions)/ should be recognized by University Grant Commission or any State or the Central Government Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).
- 1.16.3 Any Bid not accompanied by the Bid Security or Bid Security Declaration, as the case may be, shall be rejected by the Authority as non-responsive
- 1.16.4 The authority shall not be liable to pay any interest on the Bid Security and the same shall be interest free.
- 1.16.5 The Applicant, by submitting its Application pursuant to this RFP, shall be deemed to have acknowledged that without prejudice to the Authority's any other right or remedy hereunder or in law or otherwise, the Authority reserves the right to forfeit the bid security or take action as per the Bid Security Declaration for, inter alia, the time, cost and effort of the Authority in regard to the RFP including the consideration and evaluation of the Proposal under the following conditions:
- If an Applicant submits a non-responsive Proposal;
 - If an Applicant engages in any of the Prohibited Practices specified in Section 5 of this

RFP

- c. If an Applicant withdraws its Proposal during the period of its validity as specified in this RFP and as extended by the Authority from time to time;
- d. In the case of the Selected Applicant, if the Applicant fails to reconfirm its commitments during negotiations as required vide Clause 3.1;
- e. In the case of a Selected Applicant, if the Applicant fails to sign the Agreement or commence the assignment as specified in Clauses 3.5 and 3.6 respectively; or
- f. If the Applicant is found to have a Conflict of Interest as specified in Clause 1.5.

1.17 Performance Security

- 1.17.1 The Applicant, by submitting its Application pursuant to this RFP, shall be deemed to have acknowledged that without prejudice to the Authority's any other right or remedy hereunder or in law or otherwise, its Performance Security shall be forfeited and appropriated by the Authority under the circumstances specified in this Clause 1.17.4.
- 1.17.2 An amount equal to 3% (three per cent) of the Agreement Value shall be deemed to be the Performance Security. Performance Security may be furnished in the form of Insurance Surety Bond/Bank Guarantee (including e-Bank Guarantee), Account Payee Demand Draft, or Fixed Deposit receipt issued by one of the Nationalised/Scheduled Banks in India.
- 1.17.3 Bid security shall be refunded to the successful bidder on receipt of Performance Security.
- 1.17.4 The Performance Security may be forfeited and appropriated by the Authority if the work submitted by the Consultant is felt to be substandard by the Authority and non-compliant with the scope of the study.

2. Evaluation Process

2.1. Evaluation of Proposals

- 2.1.1. The Authority shall open the Proposals at 17:00 hours on the next working day after the Proposal Due Date via online bid opening. The folder of the Technical Proposal shall be opened first. The folder of the Financial Proposal shall be kept locked for opening at a later date.
- 2.1.2. Proposals withdrawn prior to the Proposal Due Date shall not be considered for evaluation.
- 2.1.3. Test of Responsiveness: Prior to evaluation of Proposals, the Authority will determine whether each Proposal is responsive to the requirements of the RFP. The Authority may, in its sole discretion, reject any Proposal that is not responsive hereunder. A Proposal shall be considered responsive if:
 - a. The Technical Proposal is received in the forms specified at Appendix-I; (All forms to be scanned and uploaded in pdf form on GeM Portal duly signed by the authorized signatory, statutory auditor and/or key personnel, as applicable)
 - b. It is received by the Proposal Due Date including any extension thereof pursuant to Clause 1.2;
 - c. It is accompanied by the Bid Security or Bid Security Declaration Form as specified

in Clause 1.16 or Appendix-I Form-11 (as available on DMEO website) .

- d. It is digitally signed, numbered and submitted as stipulated in Clauses 1.15.
 - e. It is accompanied by the Power of Attorney as specified in Clause 1.12.3 and Appendix-I Form 4(as available on DMEO website) ;
 - f. It contains all the information (complete in all respects) as requested in the prescribed formats as per TIS of the RFP.
 - g. It does not contain any condition or qualification; and
 - h. It does not contain the financial proposal or any information regarding the financial proposal.
 - i. It is not non-responsive in terms hereof.
- 2.1.4. The Authority reserves the right to reject any Proposal which is non-responsive and no request for alteration, modification, substitution, or withdrawal shall be entertained by the Authority in respect of such Proposals.
- 2.1.5. The Authority shall subsequently examine and evaluate Proposals in accordance with the criteria set out in Section 4 of this RFP (Criteria for Evaluation).
- 2.1.6. After the technical evaluation, the Authority shall prepare a list of pre-qualified and shortlisted Applicants in terms of Clause 4.4 for opening of their Financial Proposals. A date, time and venue will be notified to all Applicants for announcing the result of evaluation and opening of Financial Proposals. Before opening of the Financial Proposals, the list of pre-qualified and shortlisted Applicants along with their Technical Score will be read out. The opening of Financial Proposals shall be done in presence of respective representatives of Applicants who choose to be present. The Authority will not entertain any query or clarification from Applicants who fail to qualify at any stage of the Selection Process. The financial evaluation and final ranking of the Proposals shall be carried out in terms of Clauses 4.4 and 4.5.

2.2. Confidentiality

Information relating to the examination, clarification, evaluation, and recommendation for the selection of Applicants shall not be disclosed to any person who is not officially concerned with the process or is not a retained professional adviser advising the Authority in relation to matters arising out of or concerning the Selection Process. The Authority shall treat all information, submitted as part of the Proposal in confidence and shall require all those who have access to such material to treat the same in confidence. The Authority may not divulge any such information unless it is directed to do so by any statutory entity that has the power under law to require its disclosure or is to enforce or assert any right or privilege of the statutory entity and/or the Authority or as may be required by law or in connection with any legal process.

2.3. Clarification

- 2.3.1 To facilitate evaluation of Proposals, the Authority may, at its sole discretion, seek clarifications from any Applicant regarding its Proposal. Such clarification(s) shall be provided within the time specified by the Authority for this purpose. Any request for

clarification(s) and all clarification(s) in response thereto shall be in writing.

- 2.3.2 If an Applicant does not provide clarifications sought under Clause 2.3.1 above within the specified time, the Authority may proceed to evaluate the Proposal by construing the particulars requiring clarification to the best of its understanding. The Applicant shall be barred from subsequently questioning such interpretation of the Authority.

3. Appointment of Consultant

3.1. Negotiations

- 3.1.1 The Selected Applicant may be invited for negotiations, if necessary. The negotiations shall generally be for reconfirming the obligations of the Consultant under this RFP. Issues such as deployment of Key Personnel, understanding of the RFP, methodology and quality of the work plan shall be discussed during negotiations. There shall be no change in the scope of the work/services during negotiation. **Up to two Key Personnel** who is/are not eligible as required in Annexure-A of RFP be replaced by the Applicant with better candidate (s) as per Clause 3.1.2. In case the Selected Applicant fails to reconfirm its commitment, the Authority reserves the right to forfeit the bid security or initiate debarment of the firm as per the Bid security declaration of the Applicant in accordance with the provisions of Clause 1.16. Notwithstanding the above, the substitution of Key Personnel at the negotiations may be considered if due solely to circumstances outside the reasonable control of and not foreseeable by the applicant, including but not limited to resignation, death or medical incapacity. In such a case, the Selected Applicant shall offer a substitute Key Personnel within the period specified in the invitation letter to negotiate the Contract, who shall have equivalent or better qualifications and experience than the original candidate.
- 3.1.2 The Authority will examine the CVs of all other Professional Personnel and those not found suitable shall be replaced by the Applicant to the satisfaction of the Authority.
- 3.1.3 Before issuing a Letter of Award (LoA) to the successful Applicant, the Authority may, at its discretion, ask the selected Applicant to submit self-attested copies of **relevant certificates for minimum educational qualifications and proof of relevant experiences, given in the CVs in the proposal, of the Key Personnel for verification**. If so decided, the photocopies of such self-certified documents shall be verified and signed by the authorized signatories and kept in the records as part of the contract agreement. If the consultant fails to provide such originals or in case of substantive discrepancies in such documents, the proposal will be considered as non- responsive and rejected thereon. In such cases, the Authority may forfeit the Bid Security or/and initiate suitable action as per the provision of Bid Security Declaration.
- 3.1.4 The negotiations shall be concluded with a review of the finalized draft Contract, which shall be initiated by the Authority and the Applicant's authorized representative. If the negotiations fail, the Authority shall inform the Applicant in writing of all pending issues and disagreements and provide a final opportunity for the Applicant to respond. If disagreement persists, the Authority shall declare the proposal non-responsive, informing the Applicant of the reasons for doing so. The Authority shall invite the next- ranked responsive Applicant to negotiate a Contract. Once the Authority commences negotiations with the next-ranked Applicant, the Authority shall not reopen the earlier negotiations. In case, the second ranked applicant is invited for negotiation, the lower cost, as per financial proposals, between the highest ranked applicant and the second highest ranked applicant shall be offered to the second

highest ranked applicant for the award of contract.

3.2. Substitution of Key Personnel (During the Subsistence of the Agreement)

- 3.2.1 The Authority will not normally consider any request of the Selected Applicant for substitution of Key Personnel as the ranking of the Applicant is based on the evaluation of Key Personnel and any change therein may upset the ranking. Substitution will, however, be considered only based on the Consultant's written request and due to compelling or unavoidable situations outside the reasonable control of the consultant, including but not limited to resignation, death or medical incapacity. The substitution shall be subject to the provision of equivalent or better qualified and experienced personnel being provided to the satisfaction of the Authority. Such substitution shall ordinarily be limited to one Key Personnel subject to equally or better qualified and experienced personnel being provided to the satisfaction of the Authority. As a condition to such substitution, a sum equal to 10% (ten per cent) of the remuneration specified for the original Key Personnel shall be deducted from the payments due to the Consultant from the date of replacement till the completion of contract. In the case of a second substitution hereunder, such deduction shall be 20% (twenty per cent) of the remuneration specified for the original Key Personnel shall be deducted from the payments due to the Consultant from the date of replacement till the completion of contract. Any further substitution may lead to disqualification of the Applicant or termination of the Agreement.
- 3.2.2 Substitution of the Team Leader will not normally be considered and may lead to disqualification of the Applicant or termination of the Agreement.
- 3.2.3 In case the Authority is not satisfied with the performance of any Key Personnel, the Authority may initiate a request for substitution of such Key Personnel.

3.3. Indemnity

The Consultant shall, subject to the provisions of the Agreement, is liable to indemnify the Authority for an amount of the contract value, for any loss or damage that is caused due to any deficiency in services.

3.4. Award of Consultancy/draft contract and cancellation

Letter of Award (the "LOA") shall be issued, in duplicate, by the Authority to the Selected Applicant and the Selected Applicant shall, within 7 (seven) days of the receipt of the LOA, sign and return the duplicate copy of the LOA in acknowledgement thereof. In the event the duplicate copy of the LOA duly signed by the Selected Applicant is not received within 7 days of receipt of the LOA, the Authority, unless it consents to extension of time for submission thereof, reserves the right to cancel the LOA and the application and forfeit the bid security.

3.5. Commencement of assignment

The agreement shall be signed between the authority and the selected applicant within 7 days of receipt of signed LOA. The date of agreement will be the date of commencement. If the Consultant fails to sign the Agreement, the Bid Security of the Consultant shall be forfeited or action shall be initiated by the Authority as per the Bid Security Declaration in accordance with the provisions of Clause 1.16.5. The Selected Applicant shall not be entitled to seek any deviation⁴ in the Agreement.

⁴ "Deviation" refers to any departure from the term and conditions specified in the RFP document.

3.6. Proprietary Data

All documents and other information provided by the Authority or submitted by an Applicant to the Authority shall remain or become the property of the Authority. Applicants and the Consultant, as the case may be, are to treat all information as strictly confidential. The Authority will not return any Proposal or any information related thereto. All information collected, analyzed, processed or in whatever manner provided by the Consultant to the Authority in relation to the Consultancy shall be the property of the Authority. The Consultant shall make suitable arrangements for the preservation of data collected during the study, such as filled in schedules, tabulation or working sheets, reports, photographs etc., relating to the Project in electronic form and this shall be shared with the Authority at the time of submission of Final report. The ownership of all such data shall remain with the Authority. All raw data compiled during the consultancy assignment shall be transferred to the authority. No data collected in context of the study may be destroyed or otherwise disposed of or given to any other organization/individual, unless so approved by the Authority.

4. Criteria for Evaluation

4.1. Evaluation of Technical Proposals

4.1.1. In the first stage, the Technical Proposal will be evaluated based on the eligibility criteria for the Applicant as laid down in Clause 1.4.2, their experience, understanding of the TOR, proposed methodology and Work Plan, and the qualifications and experience of the Key Personnel. Only those Applicants whose Technical Proposals get a score of 70 (seventy) marks or more out of 100 (one hundred) shall qualify for further consideration and shall be ranked from highest to the lowest based on their technical score.

4.1.2. Technical score (ST) is calculated by considering the highest Technical Proposal (TMax) and will be given a technical score (ST) of 100 points. The technical scores of other proposals will be computed as follows:

$$ST = 100 \times T / T_{Max}$$

(T = absolute score of Technical Proposal)

4.1.3. The scoring criteria to be used for evaluation shall be as follows.

S.No.	Parameter	Maximum Marks	Criteria
1.	Relevant Experience of the Applicant	30	<p>Maximum 10 assignments can be submitted by the applicant.⁵</p> <p>(a) Sample size of eligible assignments of the applicant (10 marks). The marks will be allocated based on the following: Each eligible assignment with survey sample size of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 800 to 1500 respondents: 0.5 mark >1500 to 2200 respondents: 0.7 mark >2200 respondents: 1 mark⁶ <p>(b) Average annual total revenue/turnover of the applicant (10 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ₹5 crore to ₹ 7 crores: 8 marks > ₹7 crore to ₹ 10 crores: 9 marks > ₹ 10 crores: 10 marks <p>(c) Value of Eligible Assignments (10 marks). The marks will be allocated based on the following: Each eligible assignment with value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ₹10 Lakhs to ₹50 Lakhs: 0.8 mark >₹50 Lakhs to ₹1 Crore: 0.9 mark >₹1 Crore: 1 mark
2.	Proposed Methodology and Work Plan	40	<p>Evaluation will be based on the quality of submissions, as per Appendix-I Form-7, & Form-12 and the presentation made by the Applicant⁷.</p> <p>Proposed Methodology and Work Plan (36 Marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of ToR Methodology and Work Plan Quality of PPT Response to Queries <p>Collaboration / consortium / partnership with academic institutions = 4 marks⁸</p>
3.	Experience of Proposed Key Personnel of the Applicant	30	<p>Marks shall be awarded for the relevant experience based on the years of relevant experience</p> <p>1. Team leader (Maximum Marks 8)</p> <p>5 to 7 years: 3 marks</p> <p>>7 to 9 years: 5 marks</p> <p>More than 9 years: 8 marks</p>

⁵ Only the 1st ten assignment submitted by the applicant will be considered for scoring

⁶ The presentation shall be made by all the proposed team members (key personnel) only for their respective part of the proposal (in-person or virtually). The Team Leader must present the majority of the proposal (approximately 50%) of the proposal. In case of absence of Team leader and M&E Specialist during presentation, the proposal may be rejected by the Authority.

⁷ The presentation shall be made by all the proposed team members (key personnel) only for their respective part of the proposal (in-person or virtually). The Team Leader must present the majority of the proposal (approximately 50%) of the proposal. In case of absence of Team leader and M&E Specialist during presentation, the proposal may be rejected by the Authority.

⁸ The Applicant will present how it plans to involve and collaborate with academic institutions while designing and delivering on the Project, if collaborating with such an institution as per Form-12.

S.No.	Parameter	Maximum Marks	Criteria
			<p>2. M&E Specialist (Maximum Marks 7) 4 years to 5 years: 3 marks >5 years to 7 years: 5 marks More than 7 years: 7 marks</p> <p>3. Education Sector Specialist (Maximum Marks 4) 3 years to 4 years: 2 marks >4 years to 5 years: 3 marks More than 5 years: 4 marks</p> <p>4. Banking for Education Sector Specialist (Maximum Marks 4) 3 years to 4 years: 2 marks >4 years to 5 years: 3 marks More than 5 years: 4 marks</p> <p>5. Data Analyst (Maximum Marks 5) 3 years to 4 years: 2 marks >4 years to 5 years: 3 marks More than 5 years: 5 marks</p> <p>6. Junior researcher (Maximum Marks 2) 2 year to 3 years: 1 mark More than 3 years: 2 marks</p>
Total		100	

4.2 Eligible Assignments

For the purposes of determining Conditions of Eligibility and for evaluating the Proposals under this RFP, advisory/ consultancy assignments, for the following projects shall be deemed as eligible assignments (the “**Eligible Assignments**”):

- In case the applicant submits more than ten assignments, only 1st ten assignments will be considered for evaluation
- Assessment/research/evaluation study in higher education sector conducted for Union/State Government/ regulatory commission/ tribunal/ bilateral agencies/ multilateral agencies/ statutory authorities/ public sector entities in India covering a minimum sample size of **800**.
- Provided that the Eligible Assignments have been completed in the 8 (eight) financial years preceding the PDD.
- Provided that the value of each eligible assignment submitted by the Applicant is at least ₹ 10 Lakhs.
- For the Eligible Assignments, the Applicant shall provide requisite supporting documents such as copies of contracts, agreements etc. The value for the assignment should be clearly mentioned in the supporting documents provided. In the absence of supporting documents with requisite details, the assignment will not be considered as an Eligible Assignment.

4.3 Shortlisting of Applicants

The technically qualified applicants shall be short-listed for financial evaluation in the second stage.

4.4 Evaluation of Financial Proposals

- 4.4.1 In the second stage, the financial evaluation will be carried out as per this Clause. The financial score (SF) for the applicant will be arrived at based on the formula given in Clause 4.4.3.
- 4.4.2 For financial evaluation, the total cost indicated in the Financial Proposal will be considered
- 4.4.3 The Authority will determine whether the Financial Proposals are complete, unqualified and unconditional. The cost indicated in the Financial Proposal shall be deemed as final and reflecting the total cost of services. Omissions, if any, in costing any item shall not entitle the firm to be compensated, and the liability to fulfil its obligations as per the TOR within the total quoted price shall be that of the Consultant. The lowest Financial Proposal (FMin) will be given a financial score (SF) of 100 points. The financial scores of other proposals will be computed as follows:

$$SF = 100 \times FMin/F$$

(F = amount of Financial Proposal)

4.5 Combined and Final Evaluation

- 4.5.1 Proposals will finally be ranked according to their combined technical (ST) and financial (SF) scores as follows:

$$S = ST \times Tw + SF \times Fw$$

Where, S is the combined score, and Tw and Fw are weights assigned to Technical Proposal and the Financial Proposal, which shall be 0.70 and 0.30, respectively.

- 4.5.2 The “Selected Applicant” shall be the first-ranked Applicant (having the highest combined score). The Authority reserves the right to take action as per the Bid Security Declaration in accordance with the provisions of Clause 1.16.5, in case the first-ranked Applicant withdraws, or fails to comply with the requirements specified in Clause 3 as the case may be.

5. Fraud and Corrupt Practices

- 5.1 The Applicants and their respective officers, employees, agents and advisers shall observe the highest standard of ethics during the Selection Process. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in this RFP, the Authority shall reject a proposal without being liable in any manner whatsoever to the Applicant, if it determines that the Applicant has, directly or indirectly or through an agent, engaged in corrupt practice, fraudulent practice, anti-competitive practice, coercive practice, conflict of interest, obstructive practice in the Selection Process or after the issue of the LOA or the execution of the Agreement. In such an event, the Authority shall, without prejudice to its any other rights or remedies, take action as per the Bid Security or Bid Security Declaration, or forfeit and appropriate the Bid Security or Performance Security, as the case may be. Further, such an Applicant or Consultant shall not be eligible to participate in any tender or RFP issued by the Authority during a period of 2 (two) years from the date of such an order.
- 5.2 For the purposes of this Section, the following terms shall have the meaning hereinafter respectively assigned to them:

- (a) **“Corrupt practice”** means making an offer, solicitation or acceptance of a bribe, reward, gift or any material benefit in exchange for an unfair advantage in the Procurement Process or to otherwise influence the Procurement Process
- (b) **“Fraudulent practice”** means any omission or misrepresentation that may mislead or attempt to mislead so that financial or other benefits may be obtained or an obligation avoided. Such practices include a false declaration or false information for participation in a Procurement Process or to secure a Contract, or in the execution of the agreement
- (c) **“Coercive practice”** means harming or threatening to harm persons or their property to influence their participation in the Procurement Process or affect the execution of the agreement
- (d) **“Anti-competitive practice”** means any collusion, Proposal-rigging or anti- competitive arrangement, or any other practice including cartels coming under the purview of the Competition Act, 2002, between two or more Applicants, with or without the knowledge of the Authority, that may impair the transparency, fairness, and the progress of the Procurement Process or to establish Proposal prices at artificial, non-competitive levels
- (e) **“Conflict of interest”** means participation by a bidding firm or any of its affiliates who are either involved in the Consultancy Contract to which this procurement is linked; if they are part of more than one Proposal in the procurement; or if their personnel have a relationship or financial or business transactions with any official of Authority who are directly or indirectly related to tender or execution process of contract; or improper use of information obtained by the (prospective) Applicant from the Authority with an intent to gain unfair advantage in the Procurement Process or for personal gain or in any other manner specified in Clause 3 Guidance Note on Conflict of Interest .
- (f) **“Obstructive practice”** means materially impeding Authority’s investigation into allegations of one or more of the above-mentioned prohibited practices either by deliberately destroying, falsifying, altering; or by concealing evidence material to the investigation; or by making false statements to investigators and/ or by threatening, harassing or intimidating any party threatening, harassing or intimidating any party to prevent it from disclosing its knowledge of matters relevant to the investigation or from pursuing the investigation, or by impeding the Authority’s rights of an audit or access to information.

Annexure A

Details of minimum Education qualification & Experience required from the Consultancy Team

S. No.	Key Personnel ⁹	Minimum Educational Qualification ¹⁰	Length of Professional Experience	Minimum Length of Relevant Experience
1.	Team Leader	Master's degree (or equivalent)	15 years	At least 5 years in last 10 years immediately preceding the date of submission ⁹ of application in handling evaluation/research projects.
2.	M&E Specialist	Master's degree (or equivalent)	10 years	At least 4 years of experience in handling evaluation/ research projects in Education sectors in last 8 years.
3.	Education Sector Specialist	Master's degree (or equivalent) or more in education or related fields.	8 years	At least 3 years of relevant work experience in Education or related sectors.
4.	Banking for Education Sector Specialist	Masters (or equivalent) in Direct Benefit Transfers, financial inclusion in education sector-or related fields.	8 years	At least 3 years of relevant work experience in fields of banking inclusion for Higher education or Direct benefits transfer or related sectors.
5.	Data Analyst	Postgraduate degree in Economics/Statistics, Econometrics or related fields.	7 years	At least 3 years of relevant experience in economic modeling/ analysis/ sampling methodology and use of statistical tools in projects
6.	Junior Researcher	Master's degree (or equivalent) or more in higher education or related fields.	5 years	At least 2 years of relevant work experience in Education or related sectors.

Details of Roles and responsibilities are as follows,

S. No.	Key Personnel	Roles and responsibilities
1	Team Leader	<p>S/He will lead, co-ordinate and supervise the multidisciplinary team for preparation of the Evaluation Study, and act as a focal point to the Authority throughout the duration of the Consultancy. S/He will be responsible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall execution of the consultancy assignment

⁹ The upper age limit of the proposed key personnel shall not exceed the age of 60 years.

¹⁰ For degrees obtained from the accredited foreign Boards/universities, the applicant shall furnish a self-declaration on the academic equivalence to the 'Minimum Educational Qualifications' as defined in Annexure-A.

S. No.	Key Personnel	Roles and responsibilities
		<p>with DMEO.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountable leadership providing guidance, problem solving support and leading discussions with senior stakeholders Ensure all deliverables and milestones are satisfactorily delivered Ensure high quality of data, analysis and report writing. Provide overall strategic input and guidance to the project. Drive discussions with senior officials in the Government at Centre and State levels, sector experts, key stakeholders, etc. to refine the investigative instruments and gain insights about the scheme. Act as the focal point of contact for the project-related activities and would be responsible for presenting the findings and recommendations of the evaluation study in the high-level meetings as per requirement. Sending periodic updates to DMEO, highlighting challenges and potential solutions in project execution. Coordinating with the core team, survey team and other stakeholders Ensuring content accuracy, creativity, consistency and innovation in the report. Project management as per agreed activities, timelines and deliverables Provide guidance on all the research activities including research tools, analysis plan and training. Perform other relevant duties as assigned by the authority. To brief authority weekly on the progress and challenges apart from specific deliverables mentioned in the ToR.
2	M&E Specialist	<p>S/He will assist the Team lead in leading, coordinating and supervising the multidisciplinary team for the evaluation Study. S/He will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring of the assignment as per agreed activities, timelines and deliverables Developing the evaluation matrix to address all the evaluation objectives. Detailed mapping of each evaluation objectives with the analysis plan. Designing the overall study approach to synthesize the analysis. Lead the research activities and development of research tools, analysis plan, and training of the survey team. Designing primary data collection tools like discussion guides for in-depth interviews, farmers/beneficiaries survey questionnaires, facility survey guides and preparing a data analysis plan. Drive discussions with senior officials in the Government at Centre and State levels as well as with the DMEO. Coordinating with the team and other stakeholders. Organizing and overseeing the use of qualitative and quantitative evaluation techniques. Designing a meta-analysis plan based on the secondary data. Organizing and overseeing the use of qualitative and quantitative evaluation techniques

S. No.	Key Personnel	Roles and responsibilities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designing a meta-analysis plan based on the secondary data. Facilitating the data flow from the states and managing all field surveyors/field managers. Monitoring the field survey. Ensuring data quality of the primary data collected and the use of latest analytical tools for qualitative and quantitative data analysis
3	Education Sector Specialist	<p>S/he will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have in-depth knowledge of Higher Education in India. Engage with various stakeholders, including, government officials, institutes, students and other key stakeholders to gather insights and feedback on the schemes. Designing questionnaires/survey tools for the evaluation study Ensure validation of data Conduct research on emerging trends, challenges, in Higher Education including GER in Higher Education and NEET. Preparation of research tools and conducting field surveys Analysis of data and preparation of reports
4	Banking for Education Sector Specialist	<p>S/He will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have in-depth knowledge of Higher Education and Education loans Engage with various stakeholders, including, banking officials, government officials, institutes, students and other key stakeholders to gather insights and feedback on the schemes. Designing questionnaires/survey tools for the evaluation study especially leading the stakeholder meets with banking officials Ensure validation of data Conduct research on emerging trends, challenges, in Higher Education including access to education loans for higher Education Preparation of research tools and conducting field surveys Analysis of data and preparation of reports
5	Data Analyst	<p>S/he will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing basic statistical rigor in developing methodology, including sampling, questionnaires, data analysis from primary and secondary sources. Finalizing primary data collection tools like discussion guides for focus group discussions, agenda for in depth interviews and survey questionnaires and preparing a data analysis plan. To oversee field surveys to identify and resolve any issue pertaining to the data collection Ensuring data quality of the primary data collected and the use of the latest analytical tools for qualitative and quantitative data analysis Conduct statistical analysis of data Assisting in cleaning primary data, storage, analysis and management. Conducting meta-analysis and secondary research from different sources for the study.

S. No.	Key Personnel	Roles and responsibilities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Produce a report based on detailed analysis of all the primary and secondary data sets. ● Preparation of reports
6	Junior Researcher	<p>S/He will be responsible for ensuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accompanying the field team for data collection in selected sites ● Conducting meta-analysis and secondary research from different sources for the study ● Data collection from both primary and secondary sources ● Producing reports based on detailed analysis of all the secondary data sets ● Assisting in data cleaning, storage, analysis and management ● Conducting data analysis and assisting in report writing.

Schedule 1
TERMS OF REFERENCE

FOR

**“Evaluation Study of Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Protsahan
(PM-USP) Scheme”**

1. Background

The Ministry of Education (MoE), Government of India, as part of its strategic efforts to promote inclusive growth, human capital development, and financial empowerment through education, has implemented the **Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Protsahan (PM-USP) Yojana**, an umbrella scheme consolidating key central sector interventions that target meritorious and economically weaker students.

As part of a strategic effort to streamline and consolidate student-centric support mechanisms, the following four major Central Sector Sub-Schemes were brought under the umbrella of PM-USP:

1. Central Sector Scheme of Scholarship for College and University Students (CSSS) 2008
2. Special Scholarship Scheme for Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh (SSSJ&KL) 2011
3. Central Sector Interest Subsidy Scheme (CSIS) 2009
4. Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Education Loan (CGFSEL) 2015

The above schemes were launched to cater to the needs of students from economically weaker sections and marginalised communities to pursue higher education.

A. Central Sector Scheme of Scholarship for College and University Students (CSSS)

Under the scheme, a maximum of 82,000 fresh scholarships are awarded annually, with 50% slots earmarked for girl students. Students who are above 80th percentile of successful candidates in the relevant stream from the respective Board of Examination in Class XII of 10+2 pattern or equivalent are eligible to apply. These scholarships are distributed among State Education Boards based on their share of the country's population, after setting aside quotas for CBSE and ICSE, based on the number of pass-outs from various boards within the country. Within each State Board's allocation, scholarships are further divided among streams in the ratio of 3:3:1 for Humanities, Science, and Commerce, respectively. To ensure optimal utilization, from academic year 2022-23 onwards, unused scholarship slots can be interchanged across categories (General, OBC, SC, ST) and State quotas. Essential parameters are listed out:

- **Age Group & Income Cap-** No explicit age limit & Annual family income up to ₹4.5 lakh
- **Academic Level-** Graduate & Postgraduate only
- **Courses Eligible-** Regular degree courses and professional courses. No correspondence, distance & diploma courses.

- **Institutes Participating-** Colleges/ Institutions recognized by the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), University Grants Commission (UGC) and respective regulatory bodies concerned
- **Implementing Agency/Platform & mode of benefit-** Department of Higher Education, and the benefit is received via DBT to the student's Aadhar-seeded bank account.
- **Quantum of Financial Assistance-** The rate of scholarship is Rs. 12,000/- per annum at the Graduation level for the first three years of College and University courses and Rs. 20,000/- per annum at the post-graduation level. Students pursuing professional courses of five-year duration or integrated courses are paid Rs. 20,000/- per annum in the 4th and 5th year. Students pursuing B. Tech/ BE would get a scholarship for 4 years only, i.e. Rs. 12000 per annum for the first three years and Rs. 20,000 per annum in the 4th year.

B. Special Scholarship Scheme for Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh (SSSJ&KL)

SSSJ&KL encourages students from Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh to study in institutions outside the UTs, promoting mainstream integration. The scheme offers 5,000 fresh scholarships annually, covering academic fees and a fixed maintenance allowance.

- **Age Group & Income Cap** - No specific age limit & annual family income of 8 lakhs or less
- **Academic Level** - Graduate only
- **Students Eligibility** - Passed Class XII from JKBOSE or CBSE schools in J&K and Ladakh. For lateral entry, a diploma in engineering from a DTE-recognized polytechnic in J&K or Ladakh is required. Admission is subject to seat availability from the previous year and must be in the relevant engineering stream and in the relevant stream only.
- **Courses Eligible-** General, professional & medical courses only
- **Implementing Agency/ Platform & mode of benefit-** AICTE & Facilitation Centers & academic fee to institute & maintenance to students via DBT
- **Institutes Participating-** Students must take admission (via AICTE portal or directly) in institutions meeting **any one** of the following: Institutes' List
- **Quantum of Financial Assistance-**
 - General Degree courses-2070 scholarships & Academic fee up to ₹30.000/-
 - Professional courses/ Engineering Courses- 2830 scholarships & Academic fee up to ₹1.25 lakh
 - Medical Courses- 100 scholarships & Academic fee up to ₹3 lakh

- Maintenance charges (fixed)- ₹1lakh (Not exceeding Rs. 1 Lakh per annum -Ten equal instalments to meet hostel, mess, books, stationery & other incidentals)

C. Central Sector Interest Subsidy Scheme (CSIS)

This sub-scheme aims to provide a 100% interest subsidy during the moratorium period (course duration plus one year) on education loans up to ₹10 lakh. No collateral security or 3rd party guarantee is required for loans up to 7.5 lakhs. The loanee bank is to ensure that this part of the loan is covered for guarantee under the Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Education Loan (CGFSEL). The loan should be availed under the “*IBA¹¹ Model Education Loan Scheme*” from Scheduled Banks, including Co-operative and Regional Rural Banks. Essential parameters are listed out:

- **Age Group & Income Cap-** No explicit age limit & Annual family income up to ₹4.5 lakh
- **Academic Level-** Graduate, Postgraduate or integrated course (UG+PG) & PhD
- **Institutes Participating*-** Only students enrolled in *professional or technical courses* from the following are eligible:
 - NAAC-accredited institutions
 - NBA-accredited programmes
 - Institutions of National Importance
 - Centrally Funded Technical Institutions (CFTIs)

**For institutions or programmes not covered by NAAC or NBA, approval from the relevant regulatory body is mandatory.*

- **Implementing Agency/ Platform -** Canara Bank
- **Quantum of Financial Assistance-** 100% of interest during the moratorium is covered; the student bears interest only after repayment begins

D. Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Education Loan (CGFSEL)

Credit Guarantee Scheme for Education Loans (CGFSEL) is the Trust Fund set up by Government of India, managed by NCGTC as a Trustee, to guarantee payment against default in Education Loans, extended by the Member Lending Institution(s) (MLIs) to the eligible borrowers up to ₹ 7.5 lakh without any collateral security and third-party guarantee. Also, NCGTC reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal referred to by the lending institution which otherwise satisfies the norms of the scheme.

- **Age Group-** No explicit age limit

¹¹ Indian Banks' Association

- **Academic Level-** Graduate, Postgraduate & PhD
- **Courses Eligible-** Banks will decide on the courses for which they will be giving student loans based on employability and consequent ability to repay the loan.
- **Eligible Borrower-** Meeting eligibility criteria prescribed under *IBA*
- **Implementing Agency-** NCGTC
- **Quantum of Financial Assistance-** The government guarantees 75% of the defaulted amount.

Budgetary Allocations

The following table presents the year-wise budgetary allocation and expenditure trends under the PM-USP scheme over the last five financial years.

Table 1: Budget allocation for PM-USP¹²

FY	2021-22 (AE)			2022-23 (AE)			2023-24 (AE)	2024-25 (RE)	2025-26 (BE)
Scheme	CSIS & CGFSEL	CSSS	SSSJKL	CSIS & CGFSEL	CSSS	SSSJKL	PM-USP	PM-USP	PM-USP
AE /BE/RE (In INR Cr.)	1385.21	192.23	184	873.49	229.28	200	1098.66	1000	1560

All the above 4 CS sub-schemes are to be comprehensively evaluated under the scope and purview of this study to ascertain whether they are effective in achieving the objectives of the Departments and their stated mission.

2. Objectives of the Evaluation Study

1. To assess the scheme's performance in terms of addressing the needs and coverage of intended beneficiaries – economically weaker and marginalized students.
2. To assess the scheme's impact on Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET) rates and Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education.
3. To assess the operational efficiency of the administrative processes, and the effectiveness of delivery mechanisms in terms of:

¹² India Budget | Ministry of Finance | Government of India

- a. Application processes: approval processes, renewal processes, verification processes etc.
 - b. Effectiveness of delivery mechanisms of benefits (such as PFMS for DBT, etc.)
 - c. Monitoring systems and grievance redressal.
4. To examine the institutional capacity for efficient implementation of the scheme and the role of key stakeholders such as banks, educational institutions, state boards & governments, etc.
 5. To assess the coherence of PM-USP with other similar government schemes for scholarships in education, skilling, and employment (e.g. other scholarship schemes namely, MoSJE, MoTA, UGC, AICTE, notable state government schemes, & DoHE (PM Vidyaxmi and employment schemes of MoSDE, MoMSME, etc.).
 6. Comparison of the scheme with international best practices in the scholarship domain for students entering higher education.
 7. To study the scheme's role in improving continued education, employability, gender parity, and representation of underprivileged groups in higher education.
 8. To examine indirect outcomes such as reduced financial stress, regional and social mobility, aspiration-building among disadvantaged youth, and inter-generational effects.
 9. To assess the impact of SSSJK&L in ensuring the social mobility of the youth of the UT through the scheme.
 10. To study the higher education scholarship ecosystem comprehensively in terms of identifying scholarship or student aid schemes (e.g. state scholarship programmes or international examples) contribution to improving the higher education outcomes.

3. Scope of Work

3.1. The reference period of the study is from 2022-23 to 2024-25 for primary data collection and since inception for the secondary analysis.

3.2. Broad responsibilities of the consultant:

- a. Conduct a thorough primary survey and research.
- b. Conduct a thorough literature review and secondary data analysis (including PMUSP and other relevant websites) to evaluate the performance of the PMUSP scheme.
- c. Finalize the approach, methodology, sampling design, tabulation and objective-wise analytical plan, with the approval of DMEO.
- d. Finalize field plan, survey tools and CAPI, CATI with the approval of DMEO.
- e. Conduct the pilot survey and revise the survey tools based on experience from the pilot.

- f. Plan for deployment of field personnel, including enumerators and supervisors.
- g. Comprehensive training of enumerators along with a training manual. The enumerators finally chosen for the survey work should pass a screening mechanism devised by the consultant.
- h. Conduct full fieldwork, consultations with the stakeholders, including FGDs, KIIs, and state-level qualitative notes.
- i. Submission of a data quality assurance plan that includes potential risk and ways to mitigate the same (such as physical back-checks, physical spot-checks, telephonic confirmation, etc.).
- j. Data Analysis, synthesis and Report writing.

4. Methodology & Framework

4.1. Approach

Given the diversity of scheme objectives and beneficiaries, a comprehensive evaluation framework is warranted that encompasses financial access, academic continuity, equity, institutional process efficacy, and system-level coordination. Evaluation of tangible & intangible outcomes (e.g., aspirations, intergenerational mobility), coverage analysis across states/ UTs and income categories, and operational and administrative efficiency will complement the analysis. The study is expected to incorporate the amendments being made to the respective sub-schemes and the engagement of students seen across the different iterations of the scheme.

4.2. The consultant may adopt the RCEESI+E evaluation framework for the purpose of this evaluation.

4.3. Methodology

The consultant may adopt a mixed-methods design, using both quantitative, qualitative, and desk-based research to benchmark and evaluate the sub-schemes. This is recommended to ensure triangulation of the findings in the field.

1. **Beneficiary Survey:** A sample of students in the indicative categories of students who are “currently enrolled (freshers and renewed)”, “dropped out”, “graduated” and “eligible candidates who applied and did not receive the scholarship” shall be conducted to assess the beneficiary perspective of the scheme. Since the sub-components under CS schemes have different eligibility and implementation design, it is to be ensured that the sample and geography (including states and institutions) selection for beneficiary survey factors in representation from each of the respective target groups like discipline of study, academic level, gender, and institutes.
2. **Institutional Survey:** This survey is to be undertaken with the Nodal Officers appointed for schemes in the HEI identified as well as the Facilitation centers for SSSJ&KL scheme implementation.

3. **Key Informant Interviews:** Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) shall be held with officials from central ministries/departments, state-level implementing bodies and heads of institutes. Other stakeholders supporting implementation or indirectly involved in enabling the scheme's success should also be interviewed. National-level key informants should also include experts in higher education from recognized national level think tanks, institutions and prominent non-profit organizations.
4. **Dyad/ Triad Interviews:** Dyads/ Triads may be conducted with the teachers of the institute where the scholarship students are enrolled to understand the perception of teachers on the performance and engagement of students and the key banking institution nodals.
5. **Focus Group Discussions:** Additionally, focus group discussions shall be conducted at the institute level with the students covering the indicative categories stated, along with non-beneficiary students and those who applied but were not availing the benefit. The groups with representation of students of different disciplines, academic level, gender etc.
6. **Stakeholder meet:** A stakeholder meets at the national level with representation from the Lending Banks (public sector banks, private sector banks and foreign banks which are members of Indian Banks Association - Model Education Scheme shall be conducted.

The discussion guides, questionnaires (structured and semi-structured) for KIIs, FGD, Dyad/ Triad Interviews and Stakeholder meet should include the relevant data points pertaining to the evaluation of all the 4 sub-components of the scheme.

4.3. Sampling strategy

For sampling, a multistage stratified random sampling approach may be used for each of the sub-components. The design should ensure geographic and demographic representation across states, institutions, and beneficiary coverage. The sample plan can make use of clusters of states/ institutes; however, forced clustering should be avoided.

For each of the 4 sub-components of the scheme, a minimum of 6 states shall be selected based on performance index, which may consider indicators, such as selection of students, enrolment rates, drop-out rates and graduation rates, etc. Within each selected state, 5 Higher Education Institutes (HEI) should be selected from the list of institutions eligible under the sub-component of the scheme using stratified sampling. The HEI selection should be representative of diversity in ownership (central/state/private), discipline (general/technical) and academic levels (graduate/postgraduate) and enrolment rates under the scholarship. 20 students shall be selected using a stratified sampling approach for interview with 10 students from the “currently enrolled category of students (freshers, renewed),” 5 students from the “drop-out¹³” category and 5

¹³ In case students are not found for the category the number of interviews will be subsumed in the other categories.

students from “graduated” category maintaining representation across socio-demographic profiles, discipline, gender and academic level.

Additionally, a minimum of 240 interviews should be conducted with the students who applied and were eligible but did not receive the scholarship. **The minimum sample of the beneficiary survey is expected to be of 2640**, with the expectation that a minimum sample of each sub-component of 600 and 240 interviews with the non-beneficiaries disaggregated by scheme components at the national level. The survey with the “currently enrolled” category of students should be done face to face at the institute, the interviews with the “drop-out” and “graduated” categories can be done telephonically and virtually, with the development and deployment of Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) & Computer Assisted Telephonic Interview (CATI) tools accordingly.

In addition to the beneficiary survey proposed, Institutional surveys are also to be undertaken with the Nodal Officers appointed for schemes in the HEI identified as well as the Facilitation centers for SSSJ&KL scheme implementation. **The minimum sample for the Institutional Survey is expected to be 128 which includes 8 interviews at the facilitation center in J&K and Ladakh.**

Additionally, the study expects a minimum of **177 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with implementing stakeholders, 120 FGDs with the students, 120 Dyads/ Triads with teachers, 1 Stakeholder meet.**

The tentative list of stakeholders for KIIs are as follows:-

Table 2: List of Stakeholders for PM-USP

S. No.	Sector	Essential Stakeholders	Sample Size
1.	Government Officials	State/UT Education Departments (+ 1 for JKL Dept. head) or Officer nominated by the Heads of State/UT Education Boards (+ 1 JKBOSE)	6 + 1
		Heads/officer nominated by head of National Boards (CSBE & CISCE)	2
		Dept Financial Services, MoSJE, MSDE, MOTA etc.	5 JS/Director Level
		Ministry of Education- Dept. of Higher Education	1 JS
		Canara Bank (<i>Nodal agency for CSIS</i>)	1
2.	Implementing Agencies	National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd. (<i>CGFSEL</i>)	2

S. No.	Sector	Essential Stakeholders	Sample Size
		Head/officer nominated by head of AICTE	1
		Head/officer nominated by head of EdCIL	1
		KIIs with the Registrar/Dean	120
3.	Educational Institutions	Bank Branch Head and Nodal for schemes (KII/Dyad)	30
4.	Banking Institutions in selected states	Banking branch heads and nodal officers overlooking the scheme implementation	30
	Total		177

The detailed list of stakeholders to be interacted with during the key informant interviews, FGDs, and facility and beneficiary surveys to be formulated by the consultant in consultation with DMEQ.

Table 3: Target Group & Sample Size

Stakeholder	Type of Survey	Number
Students	Beneficiary survey	2640
Students	FGDs	120
Scheme Nodals at HEI & Facilitation centers at J&K & Ladakh	Institutional Survey	128
Teacher	Dyad/ Triad	120
Key Implementing Stakeholders	KII	177

The consultant may suggest an alternative approach best suited to meet the objectives of the evaluation, which is subject to approval from the DMEQ.

5. Deliverables details and Timelines

1. The timeline for the evaluation study is **5 months** from the acceptance of terms and conditions of LoA.

The deliverables of the study are tabulated as:

Table 4: Deliverables & Description

S. No.	Deliverables	Description
1.	Inception Report (maximum 20-30 pages excluding annexures) and presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction and background of the study ● Objectives of the study ● Approach and methodology ● Literature review and preliminary findings ● List of stakeholders and insights from preliminary stakeholder consultations ● Sampling plan including sample coverage ● Pilot plan ● Analysis framework and plan (Mapping of objectives with data points and potential data sources, etc.) ● Deliverables and timeline of the study (Weekly Gantt Chart) ● Survey Team structure ● Training plan for the survey team ● Field movement plan (Indicative) ● Quality control mechanism ● Perceived risks/ limitations and mitigation plan ● Research tools/instruments/ software- Qualitative and Quantitative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Questionnaires, discussion guides, etc. ○ Details of CAPI questionnaire development ○ Data/ information analysis software for both quantitative and qualitative research ● Detailed report structure
2.	Mid-term report (maximum 30-40 pages excluding annexures) and presentation (to be submitted as per the timeline and covering a minimum of 40% of the sample)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Study progress details including training and pilot summaries ● Summary on data collected so far including methods used ● Challenges faced and mitigation measures ● Preliminary findings and key observations ● Revised work plan, if applicable ● Measures adopted for ensuring data quality including data verification, data validation, back checks, surprise inspections, use of CAPI and tracking systems.

S. No.	Deliverables	Description
3.	Draft evaluation report (maximum 120 pages excluding annexures and references) and presentation for stakeholder consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Summary (It should be crisp, direct, lucidly written with emphasis on appropriate sections such as Findings and Recommendations. Findings should be elaborated with key statistics, and the recommendations should follow the findings. Length of the Executive Summary should be between 5 to 10 pages.) Sector and scheme Overview Study Objectives, Approach & Methodology (Brief discussion in the main report. The details could go in the Annexure)
4.	Final evaluation report (maximum 120 pages excluding annexures and references) and presentation after incorporation of inputs from all concerned stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of the scheme based on the RCEESI+E framework and using the primary survey data. Secondary and administrative data and literature to be used to triangulate findings from the primary survey. Identify gaps and challenges for each component separately under the RCEESI+E framework. Key Takeaways & Recommendations for each component of the scheme. Actionable points under each recommendation for the M/D to implement. To record (including video clippings) best practices and case studies. References & Appendices
5.	Presentations and sub-reports on primary data collection, data quality check, secondary research, best practices compendia, etc. as and when requested by DMEO.	

6. Payment Schedule

The sanction orders will be issued for all the instalments, and the sanctioned amount shall be released as per the table below:

Table 5: Payment Schedule

Key Deliverable	Description of Deliverable	Payment
KD1	Inception report approved by the Authority	20%
KD2	Mid-Term Report approved by the Authority	30%
KD3	Draft Evaluation Report approved by the Authority	30%
KD4	Final evaluation report approved by the Authority	20%
Total		100%

7. List of Stakeholders to be consulted

Qualitative consultations with the stakeholders: The following is an indicative list of the stakeholders that would need to be consulted throughout the evaluation study to gain a better insight into the implementation of schemes and the industry Table 2 List of Stakeholders for PM-USP. Furthermore, the consultants are not restricted to them and are free to consult with additional relevant stakeholders.

8. Indicative Report Structure

Executive Summary

1. Introduction
 - a. Background and context
 - i. Objective of the study
 - ii. Scope of the study
 - iii. Structure of the report
 - b. Sector overview
2. Approach & Methodology
 - a. Qualitative
 - i. Stakeholder and geographical coverage
 - ii. Evaluation Instruments/Tools
 - b. Quantitative
 - i. Sampling - Geographical coverage & respondent profile
 - ii. Sample size
 - iii. Sample selection
 - iv. Evaluation Instruments/Tools
3. Scheme Analysis
 - a. Scheme Name
 - i. Background and components
 - ii. Fund flow process
 - iii. Key stakeholders of the scheme
 - iv. Physical and financial Progress
 - v. Performance Analysis using REESCI + Equity Criteria, i.e. Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability, Coherence, Impact & Equity
4. Key takeaways and recommendations
5. Actionable Points
6. Scheme rationalization
7. References

9. Reporting

- The Consultant will work closely with the Authority. The Authority has established a Working Group (the “WG”) to enable the conduct of this assignment. A designated Project Director of the Authority will be responsible for the overall coordination and project development. The designated Project Director will play a coordinating role in the dissemination of the Consultant’s outputs, facilitating discussions, and ensuring required reactions and responses to the Consultant.
- The Consultant may prepare Issue Papers highlighting issues that could become critical for the timely completion of the Project and that require attention from the Authority.
- The Consultant will make a presentation on the inception report, mid-term report and draft evaluation report for discussion with the WG at a meeting. This will be a working document. The Consultant is required to prepare and submit a weekly update that includes and describes, inter alia, general progress to date; data and reports obtained and reviewed; conclusions to date, if any; concerns about availability of, or access to, data, analyses, reports; questions regarding the TOR or any other matters regarding work scope and related issues; and so on. The Consultants’ work on the TOR tasks should continue while the report is under consideration and is being discussed.
- Regular communication with the WG and the Project Director is required in addition to all key communications. This may take the form of telephone/ teleconferencing, emails, faxes, and occasional meetings.

10. Meetings

The Authority may review with the Consultant any or all of the documents and advice forming part of the Consultancy, in meetings and conferences held at the Authority’s office. No travel time allowance shall be payable for attending meetings at the Authority’s office. The consultant is required to work at the Authority’s office, if required.

11. Quality Assurance of the Evaluation Report

The evaluation report submitted by the Consultant must comply with DMEO’s quality standards in order to be accepted. In case of any compromise in the quality of the deliverables, a suitable penalty would be imposed on the Consultant as per the provisions given in the RFP.

An indicative DMEO’s quality standard, followed by DMEO is given below. The consultant may include more such standards to further enhance the report quality.

11.1 Executive Summary (ES):

The executive summary (ES) is meant to be read by a wider audience; thus, it must be written with extreme neatness and attention to detail. It should be written with clarity, coherence, and crispness. The findings of the report should be elaborated with key statistics and

recommendations following from findings. The ES should present the triangulated findings succinctly and suggest feasible policy options. The ES should be forthright in its observations, precise in its deductions, and proactive in its suggestions. ES should ideally be written in short, separate paragraphs that do not exceed five pages. All data/findings/recommendations cited from the main report need to be properly referenced using page numbers. The evaluation questions, issues, and problems should not be overemphasised in the ES. It should be briefly presented without detailed elaborations. The ES needs to be sharp and centered on the conclusions and suggestions emerging from the evaluation study.

11.2 Professional Language and Referencing:

The report should be written in a professional manner and in accordance with the standards of a typical double-blind, peer-reviewed publication. The report should be free from grammatical error, plagiarism and spelling mistakes. Reports that have plagiarism content of more than 20 percent will not be accepted. It must adhere to the suggested report structure and appropriately reference it with necessary citations. Any data, diagrams, and graphs must be appropriately labeled and referenced.

11.3 Objective Findings and Recommendations:

The report should be a succinct, stand-alone document with objective language that may be used to inform decision-making. The findings should be presented clearly, providing sufficient evidence and systematically addressing all the evaluation objectives. The recommendations should be clearly formulated and logically derived from the findings of the report. It should be clearly articulated and prioritized based on its importance and potential impact on the improvement of the scheme. The conclusions drawn from primary and secondary research must be given equal weight. Recommendations that lead to an increased financial burden on the government (such as those on increasing budgetary allocation) should be avoided, unless there is sound evidence emerging from the analysis that an increase may be expedient. Focus should be on resource optimization/ judicious usage of resources.

11.4 Ethical Considerations and Data Protection: Ethical considerations, such as confidentiality and data protection, and data quality, must be upheld throughout the process.

12. Miscellaneous

All the study outputs, including primary data, shall be compiled, classified and submitted by the Consultant to the Authority in soft form apart from the reports indicated in the Deliverables (Section 5 of TOR). The study outputs shall remain the property of the Authority and shall not be used for any purpose other than that intended under these Terms of Reference without the permission of the Authority. The Consultancy shall stand completed on acceptance by the Authority of all the Deliverables of the Consultant and execution of the Agreement. The Consultancy shall, in any case, be deemed to be completed with the mutual consent of the Authority and the Consultant.

Annexure B

I. LIST OF INSTITUTES PARTICIPATING UNDER SSSJ&KL

1. Government and Publicly Funded Institutions
 - ◆ All Central Universities, State Government Colleges, and Institutes of National Importance
 - ◆ All Government Medical, Engineering, and General Degree Colleges
 - ◆ Institutions approved by the 26th Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) for specific courses such as:
 - B.Sc. Nursing
 - B. Pharmacy
 - Hotel Management and Catering Technology
2. Premier Institutions of National Importance
 - ◆ Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)
 - ◆ National Institutes of Technology (NITs)
 - ◆ Indian Institute of Science (IISc)
 - ◆ Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISERs)
 - ◆ Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs)
 - ◆ National Law Universities (NLUs)
3. NAAC/NIRF/NBA-Accredited Institutions
 - ◆ NAAC-accredited institutions with a CGPA of 3.0 or above
 - ◆ Institutions ranked in the Top 100 in NIRF rankings (MoE)
 - ◆ AICTE-approved institutions with at least 30% of courses accredited by NBA
4. Institutions with Consistent Academic Demand
 - ◆ Institutions with $\geq 80\%$ admissions over the last five academic years
5. Discipline-Specific Eligibility (Entrance-Based)
 - ◆ Engineering/Science Courses: Admission via JEE (Main/Advanced) or CUET
 - ◆ Medical Courses (MBBS/BDS): Admission via NEET only, with document verification at Facilitation Centers
 - ◆ Architecture Courses: Admission via NATA
 - ◆ Law Courses (BA-LLB): Admission via CLAT, limited to NLUs
6. Reputed Private Institutions (Selective)
 - ◆ Private institutions where students are admitted under merit (not under management quota)
 - ◆ For BDS seats: Maximum 5 students per private dental college (as per Dental Council of India circular)