

Draft Terms of Reference (TOR)
for engaging an Independent Verification Agency (IVA)
for Punjab Outcomes-Acceleration in School Education (POISE)

Background:

The Government of Punjab (GoP) has prioritized education as a key area for development with an aim to build an inclusive and quality education system for all. There are more than 3.1 million students enrolled in 27,701 schools of which more than 71 percent are government or government-aided. The Department of School Education (DoSE), GoP, is preparing the Punjab Outcomes-Acceleration in School Education (POISE) operation to be implemented with assistance from the World Bank, with a Program-for-Results (PforR) financing instrument. The objective of POISE is to improve school education outcomes and strengthen Punjab's school education system management. POISE will primarily focus on improving a) foundational learning skills at pre-primary and primary levels; b) classroom teaching practices; c) school-to-work/higher education transition; and c) school management systems in the state.

The DoSE, GoP, will be the nodal implementing agency. DoSE operates through three key bodies- the Directorate of School Education (elementary) and the Directorate of School Education (secondary) to oversee administrative functions, and the Punjab State Council of Educational Research and Training (PSCERT) to oversee quality and academic aspects.

Assignment Objectives:

The Independent Verification Agency (IVA) hired for this assignment will:

- 1) Carry out an independent verification of the results achieved as per the Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs) as reported by the DoSE. The details related to the DLIs are presented in Annexure I.¹
- 2) Prepare and submit the independent and comprehensive verification reports to the DoSE in a format that is acceptable to both the GoP and the World Bank, and aligned with the results-wise verification protocols agreed upon between the DoSE and the World Bank. A description of the verification protocols is presented in Annexure II.

¹ The DLIs identified at this stage are subject to revisions over the course of the preparation process. Any changes to the DLIs will be communicated to the bidders at an appropriate time.

Scope of Services:

The scope of services for the assignment includes the following:

- 1) Develop a detailed methodology and action plan to verify the achievement on each of the DLIs listed in Annexure-I. The agency will be required to incorporate the inputs of the World Bank and GoP teams in the action plan.
- 2) Prepare a verification report for each DLI every year certifying the achievement of the targets as per the verification protocol listed in annexure-II.

At the beginning of the assignment, the agency will design the methodology and action plan for verifying the achievement of DLIs in consultation with the DoSE, GoP, and the World Bank. Thereafter, the agency will be required to verify the achievements when the yearly targets on the DLIs are claimed to be achieved by the GoP. While the targets for DLIs are yearly, some of them are not time-bound, and therefore, all DLIs may not be claimed at the same time. However, as most of the targets are linked with the academic year, the agency should plan the staffing assuming the instances when achievements for multiple DLIs need to be verified together or in quick succession.

For the purpose of this assignment, the team will report to the Project Director, POISE, and interact continuously with the Project Management Unit (PMU). Any request for additional data or clarifications should be addressed to the Project Director. The Project Director will also facilitate, with necessary approval, any data collection from the field.

Some of the verification activities require travel to the field and data collection from primary sources. The agency will bear all the associated costs, and the financial bid for the assignment should be inclusive of all such costs.

Deliverables & Payment Schedule: Payments will be made on a lump-sum basis only as follows:²

Deliverables	Payment terms
An inception report with detailed methodology & action plan for verification of DLIs	10%

² The payment terms are fixed on the basis of achievement of each disbursement linked result. Hence, in case of any revisions in the DLIs, the payment % attached to each DLI and the reports will be adjusted accordingly.

Verification Reports for Year 1	20% (equally divided among all the disbursement linked results for the year)
Verification Reports for Year 2	35% (equally divided among all the disbursement linked results for the year)
Verification Reports for Year 3	35% (equally divided among all the disbursement linked results for the year)

Indicative Staffing:

The table below lists the indicative team requirements based on our assessment of work volume. The agency may propose a different composition that meets all the requirements with justification for deviations.

The agency will be required to provide names and CVs of all key staff at the time of signing of the contract.

Key experts:

S No	Designation	Key Responsibilities	Minimum qualification & experience	Number of persons required	Person days
1	Team Leader (key expert)	Overall leadership of the project and accountable for the final outputs Lead discussions with the client	Post-graduate or equivalent in management/ economics/ statistics/ social sciences. Minimum 10 years of relevant experience, of which at least 7 years experience in assessment and/or evaluation Experience in leading at least 1 independent verification assignment involving quantitative data collection, questionnaire design, and assessment	1	30 days per year

2	Quality Assurance Expert/ Evaluation Expert (key expert)	Design the methodology for evaluation Prepare the questionnaire and analysis frame Lead the evaluation process and finalize the report	Post-graduate or equivalent in management/ economics/ statistics/ social sciences. Minimum 7 years of relevant experience, of which at least 5 years' experience in designing the methodology and questionnaire along with assessment and/or evaluation	2	60 days per year per person
3	Statistician/ Data Scientist (Key expert)	Analyse the data collected by surveyors and provide insights	Post-graduate or equivalent in economics/ statistics/data science/ management/ development studies or any related discipline with proficiency in using statistical software such as SPSS, STATA, or R; advanced skills in Excel Minimum 5 years of relevant experience in analysing large-scale evaluation data	3	20 days per year per person

Non-key experts:

S No	Designation	Key Responsibilities	Minimum qualification & experience	Number of persons required	Person days
1	Surveyors	Collect information in the field	Graduate or equivalent in social work/ rural management/ economics/ social sciences or related discipline Experience in undertaking data/information collection exercises for evaluation or assessment	8	30 days per year per person

			Knowledge of Punjabi and/or Hindi is mandatory		
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Selection Process:

All the responses received will be screened for the eligibility criteria listed below.

Mandatory Criteria:

S No	Criteria	Documents required
1	The firm must be a registered legal entity (company/ society) in existence for at least 3 years	Company/society registration document / Certificate of incorporation
2	The firm should have an annual turnover of a minimum INR 1 crore (through consultancy assignments) for 3 years out of last five years	CA certified/audited financial statements for last 3 years
3	The firm should not be debarred by the World Bank	Self-declaration
4	The firm must have done a similar project with any government department/ Public Sector Undertaking/ Board/ Corporations	Completion report from the client

The bids meeting the eligibility criteria will be advanced to the technical evaluation stage where the technical bids will be evaluated on a scale of 100 on parameters with weights as detailed in the table below.

Evaluation Criteria:

S No	Criteria	Weightage
1	Specific experience of the Consultancy firm relevant to the assignment in the last 5 years	Max. 20 [2 marks for each contract]
2	Adequacy and quality of the proposed methodology, and work plan in responding to the Terms of Reference (TOR)	Max. 30

	<i>[Notes to Consultant: the Client will assess whether the proposed methodology is clear and responds to the TORs, work plan is realistic and implementable; overall team composition is balanced and has an appropriate skills mix; and the work plan has the right input of Experts]</i>	
3	<p>Key Experts' qualifications and competence for the Assignment:</p> <p>a) Team Leader [Max.15]</p> <p>b) Quality Assurance Experts (2) [Max. 20 (10 each)]</p> <p>c) Data Scientist (3) [Max. 15 (5 each)]</p> <p><i>The number of points to be assigned to each of the above positions shall be determined considering the following three sub-criteria and relevant percentage weights:</i></p> <p>1) <i>General qualifications (general education, training, and experience):</i> _____ [20 %]</p> <p>2) <i>Adequacy for the Assignment (relevant education, training, experience in the sector/similar assignments):</i> _____ [60%]</p> <p>3) <i>Knowledge of working on government assignment:</i> _____ [20 %]</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Total weight: 100%</i></p>	Max. 50
	Total	100
The minimum technical score (St) required to pass is: 60		

The bids scoring at least 60 in the technical evaluation will be declared as qualified and will be notified about the financial opening. The financial bids of all qualified bidders will be opened on a pre-notified date and a representative from each of the qualified bidders will be eligible to witness the financial bid opening.

The final selection will be made based on a combined technical and financial score with 70:30 ratio.

Annexure – I: Draft DLI Matrix

S No	Indicator	Baseline	Y1 (Sept 2024 - Jun 2025)	Y2 (July 2025 - Jun 2026)	Y3 (July 2026-Jun 2027)	Y4 (Jul 2027-Jun 2028)	Y5 (Jul 2028-Jun 2029)	Y6 (Jul 2029-Jun 2030)
1	The proportion of grade 5 students above grade level proficiency in Punjabi, English & Math	No standardized state assessment providing comparable results over time.	Standardized assessment designed and approved	Baseline established		Percentage points (to be finalized after establishing baseline) increase (each for boys & girls) over baseline for each subject		Percentage points (to be finalized after establishing baseline) increase (each for boys & girls) over baseline for each subject
2	Share of schools with pre-primary section that have adopted the School Readiness Instrument (SRI) for pre-primary children	No standardized SRI in the state	A standardized SRI developed as per state needs and context	Capacity building of the State Resource Group on adopting SRI	80% of schools with pre-primary section have one or more teachers trained in SRI	25% of schools with pre-primary section adopt SRI	50% of schools with pre-primary section adopt SRI	75% of schools with pre-primary section adopt SRI
3	Number of DIETs with infrastructure, training modules (incl. on climate change), & human resource	Former SCERT and DIETs structures require changes to respond to new	Upgradation plan for SCERT and DIETs finalized	Pre-service training module of teachers at DIETs upgraded		5 DIETs upgraded	10 DIETs upgraded	15 DIETs upgraded

	capacity as per approved upgradation plan	requirements and NEP						
4	Share of education officials and senior teachers trained in updated school leadership curriculum	Lack of structured capacity building opportunities for teachers and education officials on school leadership	A framework and curriculum on school leadership developed	15%	30%	45%	60%	75%
5	Proportion of schools with secondary section offering career counselling for students through trained teachers	No structured counselling system	Structured career counselling system established	All teachers/officials nominated as career counsellors trained on the career counselling system	20%	40%	60%	80%
6	Proportion of schools preparing and adopting need based school improvement plans	Practice is not standardised	SOPs and Manuals for preparing need-based School Improvements Plans using participatory approach prepared and approved	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%

7	Share of education officials and school leaders trained in disaster risk management planning and climate change mitigation & adaptation measures in schools	No established procedure for climate change mitigation and adaptation in school infrastructure	Procedures for climate change mitigation and resilience in existing school infrastructure established	15%	30%	45%	60%	75%
8	Share of schools with School performance scorecard published	No school performance scorecard in the state	Framework for school performance scorecard in the state prepared and approved	15%	30%	45%	60%	75%

Annexure – II: Draft DLI Verification Protocol

S N o	Indicator	Description	Data Source	Verification Entity	Procedure
1	Proportion of grade 5 students above grade level proficiency in Punjabi, English & Math	<p>This indicator measures improvement in proportion of students above threshold scores in standardized tests on grade level proficiency in Punjabi, English, and Math at the end of grade 5. In year 1, the state will design and approve the standardised assessment for Punjabi, English, and Math. In year 2, the assessment will be administered to a representative sample of students to establish the baseline. In year 4 and year 6, the assessment will be administered across the state in all government schools with primary section and the improvement over the baseline will be monitored separately for each subject, disaggregated by gender. There are no target for year 3 and year 5.</p>	PMU	IVA	<p>For year 1, IVA will desk verify the approval letter from the state department as well as the assessment tools. For year 2, year 4, & year 6, an IVA will desk verify 100% of data and conduct computer assisted telephonic verification with 1% of the test-takers.</p>
2	Share of schools with pre-primary section that have adopted the School Readiness Instrument (SRI) for pre-primary children	<p>School readiness instrument is a framework to assess pre-schoolers on their readiness to join the school, including their progress on literacy, cognitive development, and motor development. Target for year 1 is to develop the instrument. In year 2, state resource group will be strengthened through capacity building programs and content development (including for digital & interactive module) on the instrument. In year 3, teachers across the state identified to steer SRI in pre-primary sections in their schools would be trained on the instrument. From years 4 to year 6,</p>	PMU	IVA	<p>For year 1, IVA will desk verify the approval letter from the state department as well as the assessment tools. For year 2 and year 3, an IVA will desk verify 100% data and conduct computer assisted telephonic verification with 5% of the trainees. For year 4 to year 6, an IVA will desk verify 100% of data and will witness the assessments in-person or in-video for 5% of the schools.</p>

		the SRI will be utilized across the state in pre-primary sections.			
3	Number of DIETs with infrastructure, training modules (incl. on climate change), & human resource capacity as per approved upgradation plan	<p>The indicator tracks upgradation of SCERT and DIETs to improve the quality of pre-service training of teachers in the state.</p> <p>In year 1, the state will develop and approve an upgradation plan for the SCERT and DIETs. The upgradation plan will include components on infrastructure, training modules, and capacity development of human resources. In year 2, the training modules for pre-service training of teachers at DIETs will be revised and approved by competent state authority. From year 3 to year 6, the DIETs will be upgraded as per the approved plan, including on infrastructure, training modules, and human resources.</p>	SCERT	IVA	<p>For year 1 & 2, IVA will desk verify the approval letter from DoSE and SCERT along with relevant attachments on upgradation plan and curricular framework.</p> <p>For year 3 to year 6, an IVA will conduct 100% desk and field verification against the approved upgradation plan.</p>
4	Share of education officials and senior teachers trained in updated school leadership curriculum	<p>This indicator measures capacity building of education officials (AD, DEOs, BPEOs, BEOs, CHTs) and senior teachers (seniority to be defined by the state) on school leadership. In year 1, the state will develop the framework and curriculum for leadership training. From year 2 to year 6, trainings will be conducted progressively.</p>	PMU	IVA	<p>For year 1, IVA will desk verify the approval letter from the state department as well as the curricular framework and training plan.</p> <p>For year 2 to year 6, an IVA will desk verify 100% data and conduct physical verification of learning based on a post-training assessment for 5% of the officials and teachers trained.</p>

5	Proportion of schools with secondary section offering career counselling for students through trained teachers	All government schools with secondary sections in the state will be required to offer career counselling to the students through a teacher trained in student counselling. In the first year, the state will establish a framework for career counselling in schools. In the second year, the teachers identified as student counsellors will be trained. From year 3 to year 6, the schools will progressively implement career counselling. A school will be considered to have implemented career counselling if they have a teacher trained in student counselling holding office hours for counselling at a frequency and in manner described in the approved framework.	PMU	IVA	<p>For year 1, IVA will desk verify the government order related to student counselling along with the framework document.</p> <p>For year 2, an IVA will desk verify 100% data and conduct telephonic verification with 5% of the teachers.</p> <p>For year 3 to year 6, an IVA will desk verify 100% data and conduct telephonic/field verification with 5% of the schools.</p>
6	Proportion of schools preparing and adopting need based school improvement plans	This indicator tracks progress towards need-based participatory approach in preparing school improvement plans. In the first year, the state will prepare, approve, and issue guidelines, SOPs, and manuals for using participatory and need-based approach in school improvement plans. From year 2 to year 6, the schools will prepare their school improvement plan incorporating these guidelines.	PMU	IVA	<p>For year 1, IVA will desk verify the government order along with guidelines, SOPs, and manuals.</p> <p>For year 2 to year 6, IVA will desk verify the data and verify the school improvement plan against the approved guidelines for 10% of the schools. For 10% of the sampled schools, IVA will use phone and/or video and/or physical visits to verify that the school improvement plans have been adopted in conformity with the approved guidelines, SOPs and manuals.</p>

7	Share of education officials and school leaders trained in disaster risk management planning and climate change mitigation & adaptation measures in schools	This indicator measures progress towards inculcating climate resilience and disaster mitigation in school development plan. In year 1, the state will prepare and approve a plan and framework to incorporate disaster risk management and climate change mitigation & adaptation in school infrastructure development and maintenance. From year 2 to year 6, the education officials (AD, DEOs, BPEOs, BEOs, CHTs) and the school leaders (Principals, Vice-Principals and equivalent) will be trained in adapting the framework in the school development/improvement plan.	PMU	IVA	For year 1, IVA will desk verify the government order along with guidelines. For year 2 to year 6, IVA will desk verify 100% data and conduct telephonic verification with 5% of the officials and school leaders.
8	Share of schools with School performance scorecard published	This indicator measures public disclosure of relevant information about the school in a standardised scorecard format. In year 1, the state will design the framework for School Performance Scorecard. From year 2 to year 6, the schools (government as well as private) will progressively publish the information in the scorecard format on the website of the department and display it prominently in their schools.	PMU	IVA	For year 1, IVA will desk verify the government order along with guidelines. For year 2 to year 6, IVA will desk verify 100% data and conduct field verification for 5% of the schools.