

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Consultancy for Digitalization of Savings Groups

1. Background and Context

Food for the Hungry (FH), through its Nyagihanga and Gatunda Area Programs, is implementing interventions aimed at strengthening household resilience, financial inclusion, and economic self-reliance. Savings Groups represent a core pathway within FH's Asset Creation strategy, enabling rural and underserved households to mobilize savings, access credit, and invest in productive livelihoods.

Currently, most Savings Groups operate using manual record-keeping systems and cash-based transactions. While functional, these systems are vulnerable to human error, fraud risks, limited transparency, weak data traceability, and constrained scalability.

To address these challenges, FH intends to pilot the digitalization of selected Savings Groups in Nyagihanga (Gatsibo District) and Gatunda (Nyagatare District). The initiative seeks to enhance operational efficiency, strengthen financial transparency, improve data integrity, and facilitate integration with the broader digital financial services ecosystem.

FH therefore seeks to engage a qualified consultant to design and operationalize the digitalization process, build the capacity of Savings Group leaders and members, and ensure compliant, secure, and sustainable onboarding onto an accredited digital platform.

2. Purpose and Objectives of the Consultancy

2.1 Overall Purpose

To design and support the effective digitalization of selected Savings Groups in Nyagihanga and Gatunda Area Programs in alignment with FH's Asset Creation and financial inclusion strategies.

2.2 Specific Objectives

The consultancy shall:

1. Design and operationalize a context-appropriate digitalization model for Savings Groups.
2. Build the capacity of Savings Group leaders and members to effectively use digital savings platforms and mobile money services.
3. Facilitate onboarding and subscription of selected Savings Groups onto a compliant and functional digital platform.
4. Strengthen transparency, accountability, and data management within Savings Groups through digital tools.

5. Ensure clear ownership, hosting, accreditation, and regulatory compliance of the digital application.

3. Scope of Work

The consultant will undertake the following tasks:

Task 1: Inception and Planning

- Review relevant FH documentation related to Savings Groups and digitalization.
- Conduct a rapid digital readiness assessment of selected Savings Groups.
- Assess connectivity, digital literacy, and mobile money usage levels.
- Submit an inception report detailing methodology, tools, risk analysis, hosting arrangements, and a detailed work plan.

Task 2: Design of the Digitalization Model

- Design or adapt a context-appropriate digital Savings Group model aligned with FH's Asset Creation and financial inclusion strategies.
- Ensure compatibility with existing mobile money systems and digital financial service providers.
- Develop practical user guidelines, training materials, and operational manuals.
- Establish data governance, access control, and accountability protocols.

Task 3: Capacity Building and Digital Onboarding

- Facilitate participatory training sessions with live demonstrations and hands-on practice.
- Build capacity in digital financial literacy, digital bookkeeping, transparency mechanisms, and data security.
- Support onboarding and subscription of 34 selected Savings Groups onto the approved digital platform.
- Provide technical backstopping during initial operational cycles.

Task 4: Application Ownership, Hosting, and Compliance

The consultant shall:

- Clearly define intellectual property ownership of the digital application (including source code, configurations, and customizations).
- Specify whether the platform is proprietary to the consultant, licensed from a third party, or to be owned by FH upon completion.
- Outline licensing terms, long-term access rights, administrative control, and sustainability arrangements.
- Ensure that the proposed digital platform is hosted on a secure and accredited hosting environment compliant with Rwandan ICT and data protection regulations.
- Provide documentation of the hosting body, server location, uptime guarantees, encryption standards, backup systems, and disaster recovery mechanisms.
- Confirm that the application is already hosted on the accredited hosting body at the time of implementation.
- Provide evidence of regulatory compliance and accreditation where required.

Unless otherwise agreed in writing, FH shall retain full operational rights over data generated through its Savings Groups.

Task 5: Monitoring, Learning, and Documentation

- Monitor early adoption and utilization of digital tools.
- Identify implementation challenges and mitigation strategies.
- Document lessons learned and good practices.
- Provide strategic recommendations for scale-up to other Area Programs.

4. Key Deliverables

The consultant shall deliver:

1. Inception report and detailed work plan.
2. Digital Savings Group model design document.
3. Training materials and user guides.
4. Completion of capacity-building sessions.
5. Successful onboarding of 34 Savings Groups onto the digital platform.

6. Documentation of hosting, ownership, and compliance arrangements.
7. Final consultancy report including activities conducted, results achieved, lessons learned, and scale-up recommendations.

5. Duration and Level of Effort

The consultancy is expected to be short-term and aligned with the planned digitalization activity scheduled in March 2026.

The total level of effort is estimated at **10–15 working days**, including preparation, field engagement, training, onboarding support, and reporting.

6. Reporting and Coordination

The consultant will report to the Asset Creation Specialist and work in close collaboration with:

- Nyagihanga and Gatunda Area Program teams (AP Leads & technical staff)
- Relevant digital platform providers
- FH technical and compliance units as required

All deliverables will be subject to review and approval by FH.

7. Required Qualifications and Experience

The consultant should possess:

- An advanced degree in Economics, Finance, Development Studies, ICT for Development, or related field.
- Minimum 5 years of demonstrated experience in Savings Groups, VSLA models, or community-based financial systems.
- Proven expertise in digital financial services, mobile money systems, or Savings Group digitalization.
- Experience in application hosting, data protection compliance, or fintech system integration.
- Strong facilitation and adult learning skills.
- Experience working with NGOs and rural communities in Rwanda (preferred).

8. Ethical Standards and Data Protection

The consultant must adhere to FH safeguarding, ethical conduct, and data protection standards.

All collected data must be handled confidentially and used solely for purposes of this assignment. The digital platform must comply with applicable data protection and privacy regulations in Rwanda.

9. Payment Schedule (Results-Based)

Payments shall be linked to satisfactory completion and approval of deliverables:

- 30% upon submission and approval of the inception report.
- 30% upon completion of capacity-building activities and onboarding of 34 Savings Groups.
- 20% upon submission of verified hosting, ownership, and compliance documentation.
- 20% upon submission and approval of the final consultancy report.

10. Application and Selection Criteria

Interested consultants shall submit:

- Technical proposal outlining understanding of the assignment, methodology, hosting model, ownership framework, and compliance approach.
- Financial proposal.
- Curriculum Vitae (CV).
- At least two references from similar assignments.

Selection will be based on technical competence, relevant experience, regulatory compliance readiness, and cost-effectiveness.