Date: 08-10-2025

Subject: Inviting Public Comments on Draft "Guidelines for Formalisation of NGO-led Skilling" – reg.

1. NCVET, by virtue of functions and powers entrusted through gazette notification No. SD-17/113/2017-E&PW dated 5th December 2018, under Chapter II, Para 16, is mandated to frame guidelines and procedures for recognition, quality assurance, and monitoring of vocational education and training delivery systems. The NCVET, while ensuring quality and laying down minimum standards is also responsible for ensuring inclusivity and accessibility of skilling to all sections of the society.

2. Further, as advised by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), NCVET was tasked to frame guidelines for formalisation of NGO-led skilling in alignment with NCVET framework

3. In line with this mandate, detailed deliberations with multiple stakeholders including NGOs and Corporate foundations were undertaken and based on the inputs and suggestions received, NCVET has formulated **Draft Guidelines for Formalisation of NGO-led Skilling** which aims to regulate skilling programmes/courses offered by various NGOs across the country for maintaining requisite standards and quality.

4. Accordingly, comments, inputs, and suggestions are invited from all stakeholders and the general public on the draft Guidelines, which is accessible at https://ncvet.gov.in/guidelines/. Feedback may be shared on or before **30-10-2025** at: https://forms.gle/J86fw5F3aroh2t818 or via email at publicconsultation@ncvet.gov.in

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Guidelines
for
Formalisation of NGO-led Skilling

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1.   Background

1.1. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in India have historically played a vital role in education, skill development, community empowerment, and livelihood creation. With their grassroots presence in rural, tribal, and underserved regions, they are uniquely positioned to mobilise communities, deliver contextualised training, and extend opportunities to vulnerable groups often beyond the reach of mainstream programmes. Their role as catalysts of inclusion and innovation makes them indispensable to the skilling landscape.

1.2. Despite the significant expansion of government-led initiatives under the Skill India Mission and related programmes, challenges of last-mile delivery, outreach, and contextual adaptability remain. NGOs, already active at the grassroots, can bridge these gaps but face constraints of scalability, quality, and sustainability. Their integration into the formal skilling ecosystem is, therefore, essential to ensure that the benefits of national skilling policies reach the last mile, advancing the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of inclusive and demand-driven skilling as a cornerstone of India's growth and demographic dividend.

1.3. Government of India tasked NCVET *to regulate skilling programmes/courses offered by various NGOs across the country for maintaining requisite standards and quality.'* Accordingly, **'Guidelines for Formalization of NGO led Skilling' have been formulated** by NCVET. This is expected to align NGO-led training with the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), integrate it within the National Credit Framework (NCrF), and ensure quality assurance for credibility, portability, and career progression.

2. NGO - An Overview

2.1. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are legally constituted, not-for-profit entities, registered under the relevant statutory provisions, which undertake activities aimed at advancing social welfare, education, environmental sustainability, and community development. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) include a broad range of entities such as Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Microcredit and Thrift Societies, Cooperatives, and other Community-Based Organisations (CBOs).

2.2. **Definition:** As defined by the World bank, "Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development"- *World Bank Report, "Working with NGOs" (1995).*

2.3. **Registration Laws:** NGOs in India are generally registered under the following Acts:

a. Indian Trusts Act, 1882

b. Societies Registration Act, 1860

c. Companies Act, 2013 (Section 8)

2.4. **Some Governance and Compliance Requirements**

a. **NITI Aayog's NGO DARPAN Portal –** Encourages transparency and accountability by requiring NGOs particularly those seeking grants from GOI, to register and provide details about their activities and funding.

b. **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) under Companies Act, 2013** – Companies that meet certain financial criteria must spend a portion of their profits on CSR activities, this can also be channelised through NGOs.

c. **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA)** – Regulates foreign funding to NGOs to ensure that such contributions do not affect national security or political stability. NGOs receiving foreign donations must register under FCRA and comply with reporting requirements.

d. **Income Tax Act, 1961 (Sections 12A & 80G)** – Provides tax exemptions for NGOs and incentives for donors contributing to registered NGOs.

e. Enhanced Government audits and oversight have been introduced to ensure transparency and accountability in NGO operations.

f. With NGOs increasingly handling sensitive beneficiary data, compliance with the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2025** is required to safeguard beneficiary personal and biometric data.

3. Guidelines for Formalisation of NGO-led Skilling

3.1. The National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), notified in 2018, serves as the overarching national regulator with the mandate of setting standards, developing comprehensive regulations, and improving the vocational education, training, and skilling ecosystem in India. Its primary objective is to ensure strong industry interfacing and implement effective regulations that enhance both the quality and outcomes of vocational education and training. The NCVET, while ensuring quality and laying down minimum standards is also responsible for ensuring inclusivity and accessibility of skilling to all sections of the society.

3.2. The Awarding Body Guidelines, initially released in 2020 and revised in July 2025, reinforce NCVET's vision of inclusivity by permitting relaxations for entities providing skill training to disadvantaged, marginalized, and special-needs groups. These provisions aim to broaden participation, create clear pathways for formalisation, and ensure that all forms of learning, particularly those delivered outside traditional institutional settings, are formalised, creditised and recognized in alignment with the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

3.3. In this spirit, with a view to explore the integration of skill training provided by NGOs into the formal skilling ecosystem, NCVET initiated detailed deliberations and consultations with various types of NGOs/civil society organizations/ corporate foundations.

4. Deliberations by NCVET

4.1. The NCVET conducted two meetings with NGOs and corporate foundations on June 19, 2025 and July 30, 2025 to gain insights into the functioning of NGOs and the challenges faced by them.

4.2. Key Challenges Raised by NGOs and Corporate Foundations

a. Challenges in ensuring quality assurance across smaller NGOs.

b. Lack of clearly defined quality parameters for NGO-led skilling.

c. Difficulties in mobilisation and screening of candidates.

d. Absence of credible assessment mechanisms and in some cases delays in assessments reduce learner motivation and affect training outcomes

e. Absence of structured processes which have led to inconsistencies in certification.

f. Learners do not receive the benefits of standardised training and assessment, recognition of certificates and award of credits, which limits their acceptance by both industry and academia.

g. The lack of industry-connect results in fragmented outcomes, limiting overall impact and creating insufficient clarity on pathways for formal integration.

h. Inadequate mechanisms for monitoring compliance.

4.3.   Other Challenges

a. **Operational Constraints:** Many training programmes face challenges due to a lack of standardisation, as they are often not aligned with national frameworks such as the NSQF, resulting in suboptimal placement outcomes. Additionally, the absence of efficient governance mechanisms, limited availability of competent trainers and assessors, and constraints related to accessibility and infrastructure, including inadequate equipment and digital tools, further hinder the quality and effectiveness of training delivery.

b. **Multi-State and Multi-Sector Constraints:** Organizations operating across multiple states often face difficulties in collaborating with NCVET recognised Awarding Bodies (ABs) that have only state-level jurisdiction. Similarly, NGOs engaged in multiple sectors may find it challenging to identify the appropriate AB for each sector to align their courses with the NSQF.
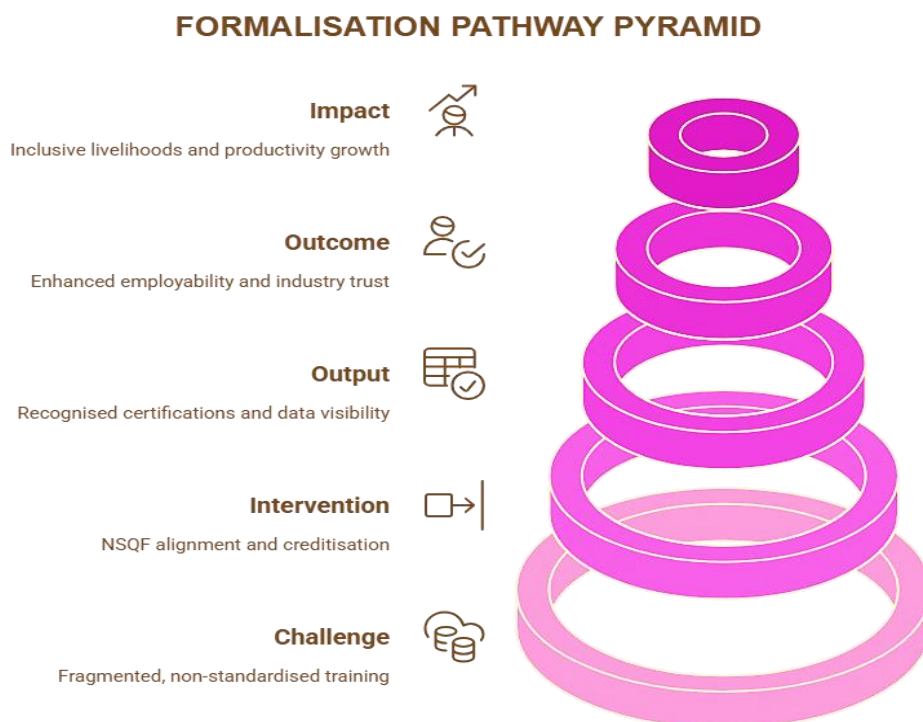
Keeping in view of these challenges, these guidelines have been formulated to standardize processes, streamline compliance, strengthen capacity-building, and facilitate the formal integration of NGOs into the national skilling ecosystem.

5.   Why there is a need for Formalisation of NGO-led Skilling?

Formalisation will translate NGO-led training from being **standalone interventions** into part of the **national skill ecosystem**, making learners more employable, helping employers trust the certification, and enabling data-driven policy planning. It is expected to lead to following outcomes.

5.1.   **Standardisation and Quality Assurance:** NGO training curricula shall be NSQF-aligned, with assessments conducted as per NCVET guidelines to ensure objectivity, transparency, and credibility. Only NCVET-recognised Assessment Agencies shall be authorised to undertake such assessments.

5.2.   **Recognition of Credentials:** Formalisation shall enable NGOs to award nationally recognised credentials, aligned with National Credit Framework (NCrF) and the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC). This will facilitate credit assignment, transfer, learner mobility, and promote lifelong learning and career progression.

5.3.   **Certification and Labour Market Mobility:** NCVET approved certification shall allow learners to access employment opportunities beyond local contexts, enhancing mobility across geographies and sectors, thereby improving career prospects and earnings. All certifications shall be digitally issued and uploaded on DigiLocker and integrated with the Skill India Digital (SID) platform to ensure authenticity and portability.

5.4.   **Regulatory Compliance:** NGOs will be subject standardised regulatory and financial compliance frameworks as defined in Awarding Body Guidelines. Regular monitoring and performance audits by NCVET along with capacity-building shall ensure credibility and accountability.

5.5.   **Access to Government Benefits and Schemes:** Formalisation shall also allow NGOs to become eligible for government funding and performance-linked incentives, creating a virtuous cycle for scaling impact.

5.6.   **Industry Confidence and Partnerships:** Employers are more likely to collaborate with organisations whose programmes follow recognised standards and produce verifiable, job-ready outcomes, facilitating apprenticeships, internships, and direct placements.

5.7. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): NGO-led training initiatives shall also be integrated with Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), so that informal and experiential learning at the grassroots level will be recognised and credited under the national skilling ecosystem.

5.8. Data Tracking and Evidence-Based Policy Planning: Mapping programmes to formal frameworks shall allow inclusion in national databases (e.g., SIDH), enabling policymakers to monitor outcomes and design interventions based on robust evidence.

FORMALISATION PATHWAY PYRAMID

Impact
Inclusive livelihoods and productivity growth

Outcome
Enhanced employability and industry trust

Output
Recognised certifications and data visibility

Intervention
NSQF alignment and creditisation

Challenge
Fragmented, non-standardised training

6. Implementation Mechanism for Onboarding and Formalisation of NGOs

6.1. NGOs operate at varying levels of scale, capacity, and governance. NGOs can become a part of the formal skilling ecosystem in following ways:

a. Aligning with Recognised Awarding Bodies (ABs) of NCVET

NGOs can directly collaborate with NCVET-recognised ABs for aligning their courses to NSQF, conducting standardized assessments, and issuing NCVET-recognised certifications. Such alignment will enable uniformity in course design, learning outcomes, and competency levels.

b. Seek Recognition as an Awarding Body by NCVET

The eligibility criteria and process for becoming an NCVET recognised AB has been outlined in the *Guidelines for Recognition and Regulation of Awarding Bodies, 2025 (AB Guidelines).* The Guidelines can be accessed at Guidelines-For-Recognition-and-Regulation-of-Awarding-Bodies-2025.pdf.

Further, the Para 3.3 of AB Guidelines has provision for certain relaxations, for entities engaged in skilling in certain specified areas/ activities like in Future and Emerging Skills/Technology areas, niche sectors, or those working with specific sections of society with special needs, such as Persons with Disabilities (PwD), Safai Karamcharis, etc.

The NGOs which fulfil the eligibility criteria can apply as per the defined process through KaushalVerse portal at https://kaushalverse.ncvet.gov.in.

6.2. NCVET facilitates the alignment of NGOs with recognised ABs by inviting Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from its ABs to onboard, support, and mentor small-scale NGOs. These ABs shall be responsible for development of Qualifications, assessment and certification of trained learners and undertake periodic quality checks. The ABs which come for such collaboration may also be incentivized in terms of Grading and Rating of Awarding Bodies.

a. The interested ABs shall onboard and provide handholding support to credible smaller NGOs under a **Hub-and-Spoke model.**
Such handholding would include:
   i. Mentoring the NGOs regarding skilling ecosystem, norms and policies related to quality training and assessment.
   ii. Ensuring NSQF alignment of training programs being implemented
   iii. Ensuring effective training delivery through certified trainers
   iv. Ensuring adherence to prescribed norms for assessment and conduct of assessment through certified assessors.
   v. Ensuring timely assessment and certification
   vi. Facilitating placements (where possible) and data management
   vii. Timely and periodic monitoring of activities

b. Accordingly, the recognised ABs including NGOs/ Corporate Foundations who agree to onboard and handhold the smaller NGOs, will need to prescribe

minimum norms for selection of smaller NGOs. These would necessarily include the following.

    i.   NGO DARPAN registration and compliance.

    ii.   Existence of Governance mechanism

    iii.   Availability of well-equipped space with appropriate infrastructure

    iv.   Availability of qualified trainers for the qualifications being implemented.

    v.   Sufficient digital and IT infrastructure ensuring effective data management systems.

c.   Also, the ABs may prescribe additional selection norms, over and above those mentioned in **para 6.2.b**, for onboarding of smaller NGOs. These norms may be shared with NCVET for information.

7.   Process for Modification/Updating of Guidelines from Time to Time

7.1.   The Guidelines for Formalisation of NGO-led Skilling may be modified as per requirements. Urgent/ minor modification may be issued with the approval of the Chairperson, NCVET. Interpretation of the Council regarding any of the provisions of the guidelines will be final.