

Business Development Assistant

Full-time

Base location: Muzaffarpur, Bihar

Reporting Line: Operations Associate

Earliest Starting Date: 15 September 2021

Apply by: 31 August 2021



Access • Inclusion • Impact

About Oorja

Oorja (www.oorjasolutions.org) is a venture-backed, award-winning clean energy company based in New Delhi, tackling some of the most pressing challenges in the off-grid energy sector today: renewable energy expansion and energy poverty.

Oorja's focus is on powering beneficial appliances that help users to generate stable incomes, create jobs, and mitigate carbon emissions. Despite urgent need, around 90% of marginal farmers cannot afford to invest in solar technology for their farms. Oorja wants to close this gap. We install, operate and maintain decentralised solar energy systems for community use and sell irrigation, milling and refrigeration as affordable *services* on a pay-per-use basis to marginal farmers, without any upfront cost to them. We operate in rural areas of northern India where farmers are currently reliant on polluting and expensive diesel motors for their energy needs.

Our core strengths are our inclusive, customer-centred business model and a diverse and driven team with shared passion for sustainable development. We are determined to scale up access to essential services among marginalised communities. Some of our supporters and partners in this mission are:



Role Background

Oorja is seeking a self-directed Business Development Assistant to promote and expand its unique “Oonnayan” cooling-as-a-service that targets smallholder farmers. You should have a minimum of 2 years of relevant field experience in (agri)business in rural India. Oonnayan is a cooling service that helps farmers gain access to efficient, reliable and sustainable cooling. They pay only for the amount of food they store in the cold rooms, without any upfront investment. Oorja owns and maintains the cooling facilities, thereby covering the operational costs.

You are highly motivated by Oorja’s mission of boosting the livelihoods of smallholder farmers. You bring knowledge of the agricultural value chains of northern and eastern India and have strong persuasive and communication skills in Hindi and English. You are excited by our work in the agri and clean energy sectors and are keen to join a supportive, friendly and passionate team.

Responsibilities

Site Selection and Business Development

- Conduct desktop research to identify geographical areas with bulk production of horticultural crops, including perishable fruits, vegetables, or herbs (e.g. mango or litchi orchards, tomato producers, etc.), where smallholder farmers currently do not have access to cooling facilities
- Identify and foster partnerships with local farmer collectives and grassroots organisations (FPOs, FPCs, NGOs...) engaged in the value chain for horticultural produce; arrange meetings with representatives; represent Oorja and explain our services to obtain buy-in; complete due diligence process for partner selection, including site visits
- Collect primary data from farmers and other potential customers via focus group discussions and individual surveys to assess demand for Oonnayan refrigeration service; digitise survey data in KoboToolbox online tool
- Map potential sites for cold storage implementation to build the project pipeline, considering geographical location, distance from grid and the market/mandi, availability of transport options, location of nearest cold storage facility, and other parameters; maintain Project Tracker
- Mobilise farmers to sign up for and use the Oonnayan service; form groups of interested farmers; oversee the customer acquisition process including customer sign-up, deposit of membership fees, adding customers onto CRM, and provide onboarding support to farmers to use service
- Physically verify and provide feedback to management on most promising sites; identify suitable land for installation; negotiate land lease, execute and notarise land lease agreements; arrange for backup power by preparing and submitting application for commercial power connection to local electricity department
- Coordinate with supplier for timely delivery of equipment and materials; coordinate with Oorja Engineering team to ensure preparation of site for implementation
- Maintain relationship with solar cold room suppliers and other ecosystem enablers; foster relationships with new partners specific to the promotion of cold chain in agriculture

Sales and Marketing

- Ensure the utilisation (i.e. capacity) of commissioned cold storages stays above 50%: conduct continuous marketing among customer groups: coordinate and conduct door-to-door campaigns, focus group discussions, showcases at villages or marketplaces; implement local marketing and

- advertising efforts (distribution of printed leaflets, banners, posters, explainer videos); organize various promotional activities for brand building and relationship building with customers
- Execute a monthly sales plan and targets assigned by management in order to increase customer base and drive up Oonnayan sales volumes: canvas actively for new customers at existing sites; schedule use of cooling services to increase system utilization
- Perform early diagnosis of less performing assets; propose and implement ways to increase sales and utilization, in consultation with management
- Build meaningful relationships with customers to understand their needs, aspirations and challenges; record and communication customer feedback to management for improvement of service offerings

Farmer Services

- Organise farmer trainings and workshops to promote best practices in post-harvest management including how to control storage of produce to minimize food loss, when to sell their produce to maximise market value, etc., with support from partners including Ecozen and BASE and by implementing state-of-the-art mobile apps and software provided by the company
- Assist with facilitating transport of farmers' produce from the point of harvest to cooling facilities
- Assist with facilitating forward market linkages for sale of farmers' produce, establishment of partnerships with grocery chains and aggregators

Technical Operations

- Supervise Cold Storage Operators, ensuring they are assisting farmers with loading and unloading produce; verify registers are being kept in accordance with company procedures and apps are being updated; conduct initial training and re-training of Operators from time to time to ensure safety procedures and SOPs are being followed
- Regularly inspect all operational cold storage sites, ensuring that premises are kept tidy and clean at all times; ensure the integrity, safety and security of all company assets
- Ensure company standard operating procedures (SOPs) are being followed
- Ensure timely completion of technical O&M and routine maintenance procedures; monitor system performance via desktop or mobile software
- Coordinate with supplier service teams and Oorja Engineering team to ensure timely repairs and maintenance
- Formulate solutions to problems observed repeatedly in the field
- Coordinate with local electricity department to ensure backup power is available at all sites

Other

- Monitor project performance and provide regular progress reports, including preparation of monthly Payment Collections Report and other MIS for reporting to management; oversee digitization of payment data via company app on a weekly basis
- Collect baseline and periodic impact data using standardized surveys; enter data on KoboToolbox digital platform

Qualifications, Competencies & Skills

- University degree in a relevant area such as Agribusiness, Commerce or Agriculture
- At least 2 years of relevant professional experience in business in rural India
- Ability to work in an outdoor environment
- Good knowledge of field and horticultural crop cycles and agribusiness value chains
- Knowledge of CRM tools and digital literacy will be an advantage
- Excellent active listening and verbal and written communication skills in Hindi and English; ability to interact with sensitivity, respect and empathy with people of various backgrounds
- Confident communicator with good persuasion and capacity building abilities and tact
- Entrepreneurial, motivated and self-starting candidate
- Native speaker of Hindi; knowledge of local dialects of Bihar, U.P., Jharkhand, Odisha (desirable)
- Passion to make a change and ability to delivery quality results under time pressure
- Should have own laptop and motorcycle, valid driver's license

Benefits

As the Business Development Assistant, you will gain:

- Experience and significant responsibility at an award-winning company in the renewable energy and agritech industries, among of the fastest growing segments of the Indian economy
- Ability to shape and positively impact the company strategy and growth of its flagship cooling service
- Network with leading ecosystem partners and international organisations
- A deep understanding of the solar and rural development space, particularly the decentralised renewable energy industry
- Knowledge that you are positively contributing to environmental and social impact every day in your work

How to Apply

If this exciting opportunity appeals to you, please send your application by filling the online form before **31 August 2021** – www.oorjasolutions.org/apply-now.

Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination Statement

Oorja Development Solutions India Private Limited is an equal opportunity employer that values and respects the importance of a diverse and inclusive workforce. It is the policy of the company to recruit, hire, train and promote persons in all job titles without regard to religion, race, caste, gender, place of birth, sexual orientation, marital status or disability status. Oorja endeavours to provide a safe, diverse and comfortable workplace. Oorja will not adversely discriminate, and prohibits other adverse discrimination at the workplace, against any person on its premises, whether that person is in its employment or otherwise. If you can contribute to our organisation, you are welcome, regardless of your roots, religion, age or gender.