RDI Network Committee Meeting

ACFID, Canberra

15 February 2018, 9:00am-5:00pm

Attendees: Juliet Willetts (chair), Jo Pradela, Thomas Soem, Jo Crawford, Kurt Seemann, Mike Toole, Tessa Hillgrove, Robyn Mildon, Philippa Smales, Jenny Vaccari

Apologies: Peter Westoby, Katie Greenwood, Rochelle Spencer, Elise Klein

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1) Welcome

Juliet (chair) opened the meeting and welcomed the committee members.

The November 2017 committee meeting minutes were accepted by the committee with no amendments.

The committee was updated on recent changes to the committee membership.

2) Work-plan update – Grant Year 3

The committee reviewed updated versions of the RDI Network work-plan, performance update and MEL reporting documents. The committee discussed how to improve the process for committee members to report data for MEL purposes.

Action: The Secretariat will update the MEL reporting documents to reflect the outcomes structure contained in the performance update, and share with committee to respond according to a provided deadline.

The committee discussed and asked questions regarding current work-plan activities:

- Identified the need for NGO representation on the sub-group supporting the research communications and uptake project
- Identified the need for more guidance to be provided to university representatives for promoting the Principles and Guidelines for Ethical Research and Evaluation to Ethics Committees in their institutions.
- The committee were reminded that the ethical practice module is available as a module to sell to organisations and institutions, in a one-day facilitated or self-facilitated format.

Marc Purcell (ACFID CEO) joined the meeting.

3) Updates from ACFID

Marc updated the committee on current key priorities for ACFID.

Proposed legislative changes regarding foreign donations and political expenditure have been a major concern to ACFID since mid-2017, and these concerns have more recently been shared and

voiced by other sectors. ACFID is proactively leading advocacy against the changes on behalf of, and with, its members.

The recent spotlight on behaviour of Oxfam GB staff has not reached the same level of media scrutiny in Australia, however ACFID has issued a response and is working with membership to ensure it is staying ahead of the issues, particularly through compliance with the Code of Conduct.

ACFID is anticipating an election later this year or early 2019, and as such will be focussing efforts on influencing party platforms.

The RDI Committee were invited to raise issues relevant to ACFID and its role in the sector. A number of issues were discussed relating to the Government aid program, and opportunities relating to the upcoming OECD DAC review.

4) Partnership Health Check

The opportunity was opened for ACFID and the RDI committee to reflect on the state of the formal ACFID-RDI Network partnership.

Marc extended his appreciation for the significant voluntary work put in by the committee. He highlighted the RDI Conference as an important event to profile the Network, and a variety of initiatives happening across the sector.

The committee updated Marc on the current state of the Network's engagement with DFAT, and there was discussion as to how strategic relationships and opportunities to leverage and raise profile could be utilised. The need to clearly communicate the Network's work and progress to date was emphasised, including through the require end of program evaluation.

RDI Committee TOR and ACFID-RDI Partnership Agreement.

The proposed changes to the committee terms of reference and the ACFID-RDI Partnership Agreement were reviewed and opened for discussion.

It was noted that a discussion between Co-chairs and ACFID had previously determined that the Network's tagline will not be changed at this point.

Decision: The proposed changes to the Partnership Agreement and ToR were accepted by the committee.

Action: The Secretariat will confirm the updated Partnership Agreement and ToR, and share back with committee.

Marc Purcell (ACFID CEO) left the meeting.

5) RDI Network Program Proposal 2018-2021

Juliet updated the committee regarding how the current draft of the program proposal 2018-2021 had been reached. The discussion was opened for feedback from the committee on the draft document:

- It was noted that the current mission and vision statements, as well as the theory of change, do not meet the purpose of those forms and needed review.
- The specific program outcomes were discussed in light of achievability, measurability and the target role of the Network in the sector.

- It was noted that clarity, consistency of the use of "research" and "evidence" in terms of terminology should be confirmed throughout the proposal. Also highlighted the need to ensure whether and how MEL as a form of evidence is included/excluded.
- Noted that language needs to avoid false distinctions between academics as research producers and NGO staff/private sector as research users.
- It was noted as important to bring a small NGO member lens to the draft.

It was proposed that the program proposal should be opened for consultation with the Network more broadly, to ensure we are meeting the needs/expectations of our participants.

Robyn left the meeting

This discussion is returned to following item 7 below.

6) DLP Presentation

The committee were joined by delegates from the Developmental Leadership Program (DLP), who presented on their findings from 10 years of research globally.

The two reports discussed can be found online here:

[Inside the black box of political will: 10 years of findings from the Developmental Leadership Program](#)

[From Silos to Synergy: Learning from Politically Informed, Gender Aware Programs](#)

Lunch, DLP delegates depart

7) Development Studies Association

The secretariat provided the immediate background of how the proposition papers had been produced: the JCU Rethinking Development symposium in June 2017 had surfaced demand among academics for a professional organisation particularly in response to the lack of a Field of Research (FoR) Code. A volunteer had been tasked by the Network to review options and present potential ways forward.

It was noted that similar ideas have been discussed several times during the history of the Network.

The committee shared feedback on the current proposition papers:

- The value of membership bodies/professional associations in the current context was discussed.
- The distinct potential functions of the body proposed in the paper were discussed.
- Clarification was sought on the proposed role of the RDI Network in establishing and supporting an association.
- The question of how the association might achieve credibility was discussed.

The committee agreed that the RDI Network was not currently in a position to facilitate the establishment of an association, and suggested that further groundwork and clarifications would be required before any commitment could be made.

With the intent to address the initial problem of lack of FoR code, it was suggested that the RDI Network could alternatively support the formation of a sub-group as part of the next work-plan to specifically work towards advocating for an FoR code.

Action: The secretariat would discuss the above feedback with the paper author, as well as convenors of the upcoming Rethinking Development symposia at Murdoch University in June.

Returned to Agenda item 5: RDI Network Program Proposal 2018-2021 (cont'd)

The timeframe for finalisation of the program proposal were discussed, including implications relating to the current program end of program evaluation.

<u>Consultation with the Network</u>

The need to consult with the broader Network on the content of the draft proposal was discussed, as a means of testing and confirming assumptions.

It was agreed that consultation would take place with key stakeholders, including:

- ACFID membership, particularly program effectiveness teams/staff
- ACFID staff
- Private sector/managing contractors
- Recent past committee members
- DFAT
- Miscellaneous

The means for consultation was discussed. Surveying was not pursued for risk of opening up too broadly to suggestion; online group discussions and one-on-one conversations were agreed to as the most appropriate method.

<u>Revisiting our mission and vision – stepping back</u>

The committee brainstormed ideas for a refreshed RDI Network vision and mission, to take us forward into the new grant. The proposed revised statements to be used in the new grant proposal were:

Our Vision: "Effective development through evidence and collaboration."

Our Mission: "More than the sum of its parts: bringing together evidence, enquiry, practice and policy (and people)."

It was agreed that the targeted consultation invitations discussed earlier need to be backed up by a form of the proposal ready for consultation (2-3 pages).

Committee members self-nominated to help draft the consultation draft

Action: The members identified will produce a consultation draft.

Action: The secretariat will define and facilitate a process for the consultations.

8) Communications and Engagement

The secretariat led the committee through a process of testing key messages and value propositions. These proposed messages were drafted in response to findings from the mid-term review suggesting a lack of clarity around identity/purpose in the broader Network. It was confirmed they were intended for publication online.

Noting that the tagline, vision and mission had been addressed previously, the discussion advanced to the proposed Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and value propositions to different segments of the Network's constituency.

Specific feedback was received from committee members.

Action: The secretariat will revise the FAQs and value propositions in light of feedback and new vision/mission – to produce a second draft. The best means of publication will also be reconsidered.

9) Nomination of new Committee member

Committee members discussed the nominations received for the casual vacancy for an NGO representative in the committee, and agreed a preferred candidate.

Action: The Secretariat will follow up members not present to test the decision reached today for agreement, prior to informing the successful candidate.

End of meeting