Toolkit for Enhancing Research Impact in International Development

Terms of Reference
1 April 2019

Background:

The Research for Development Impact (RDI) Network is an Australian based network of practitioners, researchers and evaluators - working in international development. With over 1,900 individuals, the Network has become a key outlet for accessing diverse research expertise, brokering partnerships, convening forums and conferences, as well as supporting ethical research practice among NGOs and academia in Australia. The RDI Network is a partner of and hosted by the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), and funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

The RDI Network aims to improve the way research evidence informs development policy, practice and discourse in the Australian development sector. One of the ways the Network will achieve this aim is to address current inadequacies in the requisite capacity and skills required to produce policy and practice relevant ethical research (amongst producers) and to use such research and evidence (amongst implementing partners). Recent evidence collected through the RDI Network sector snapshot on 'Research Communication and Uptake' indicates low skills in research communications and uptake amongst both research producers, and policy and practice implementers.

The RDI Network is positioned at the nexus of evidence producers, translators and users. The Network leverages this position to identify, develop and share effective communication, engagement, and uptake processes and guidance for evidence-informed policy and practice, as well as building skills and capacity amongst its constituency in this key area.

Targeted communication of evidence results and outputs to key stakeholders is a core element of achieving uptake and impact in policy and practice. For the purposes of this project, 'research uptake' (or research use) as defined by the Australian Research Council is: "the application of research outputs by users, resulting in outcomes. This may involve complex processes over time, whereby research outputs… are adapted, built upon and operationally applied". The Australian Research Council also defines 'non-academic impact' as ''the demonstrable contribution that research makes to the economy, society, culture, national security, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life beyond contributions to academia''.

Project details:

This project will expand upon the information and research already completed by the RDI Network in the form of the 'Research Communication and Uptake' snapshot and the 'From Evidence to Impact' analysis, to identify, develop and share effective communication, engagement, and uptake processes and guidance for evidence-informed policy and practice.

Within the 'From Evidence to Impact' study are several recommendations, including Recommendation 16: 'Utilise and build on the Framework for Exploring Research for Development Impacts (FERDI) developed in this study, to underpin future evaluations of the impact of development research'. The FERDI includes key phases in the

research process, aspects of the pathway to impact and key categories of contribution – output, take-up, use, outcome and impact. It was developed to underpin the systematic collection and consolidation of Australian Development Research Awards Scheme (ADRAS) projects'
impacts. Since the publication of the study there has been interest in the FERDI and in following up on our own recommendation.

In the 'From Evidence to Impact' study the FERDI was used to look back at completed projects, but in unpacking and building on the FERDI, the aim of this project is for the FERDI to be useful to plan for impact, when designing and implementing a project. That study also identified five key facilitators of research use and development outcomes. These can be mapped to the FERDI (see Figure 4 in the publication) to illustrate the five types of facilitators of research impact and their relative focuses at different stages of the research process.

The five facilitators of research use and development outcomes identified in the FERDI are:

1. Foundational facilitators: familiarity and prior engagement with research context and users
2. Planning for impact: intentional focus on impact and integrated methods for its achievement
3. Engaging end users: proactive engagement and co-production of knowledge
4. Influential outputs: tailored fit-for-purpose design of outputs
5. Lasting engagement: ongoing engagement and continuity of relationships

To utilise and build on the FERDI and the five facilitators of research impact, as well as the recommendation from the Communications and Uptake project, this tender seeks to develop a practical toolkit and related materials to be used by researchers and practitioners. The target audience for this toolkit encompasses development researchers (policy makers and program managers in government, NGOs, managing contractors, etc.), and producers of research (academic and research institutions, NGOs, government and consultants), noting that in some organisations the researcher and user is the same person, team or organisation.

The Toolkit will enable users to put the five facilitators of research use and development outcomes into practice via, for example, checklists, templates and case study examples. It will also address how to undertake effective research brokering activities and establish effective communication mechanisms, from policy briefs to multimedia. The Toolkit will address the five facilitators from the FERDI, include five to eight tools with explanations, in 20-30 pages, plus any required appendices.

The toolkit will be available online on the RDI Network Learning Hub and in hard copy format. The development of the toolkit is to follow the collaborative practice of the RDI Network by being developed in consultation with a steering group from across the sector, and by being thoroughly tested with the sector before finalisation.

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Call for Expressions of Interest
March 2019

Background:
As a continuation of work the RDI Network has been doing over a number of years, the Network is looking to engage a consultant(s) to develop a practical toolkit and related resources, as per the terms of reference for this project.

Timeframe and Deliverables
The scope of the project will entail the following outputs/deliverables:
May

- Full project plan (including a draft introduction and draft skeleton of the Toolkit with a table of contents, as well as an opening paragraph or summary for each component of the toolkit), including a dissemination and M&E plan drafted and submitted for RDI Network steering group comment and approval – allow at least ten working days (first tranche payment).

June - Aug
- The draft toolkit is developed and submitted for comment by the steering group – allow at least ten working days.

Aug - Sept
- Finalise the toolkit and plan the review, submit for comment by the steering group – allow at least ten working days (second tranche payment).

Sept - Oct
- Review the toolkit with a cross-section of the target audience, with full monitoring and evaluation, amend the toolkit as required and resubmission, with an updated dissemination and M&E plan, for comment by the steering group – allow at least ten working days.
- Recommendations are given for further work to innovatively promote the toolkit and for potential capability building activities*
- Toolkit is professionally edited and designed, and submitted in an online ready and printable format (third tranche payment).

The consultant may be required to continue to report to the RDI Network according to their dissemination and M&E plan, outside of the contract period.
*The consultant may be re-engaged under a separate contract to plan and roll out the further work that they recommend.
Any changes to this timeframe will need to be agreed in advance by the RDI Network and the consultant(s).

Selection Criteria
The consultant(s) will be expected to have:
- Experience in developing guidance and/or toolkits for enabling research impact
- Demonstrated experience in, or an understanding of, international development
- Demonstrated understanding of research and development policy interface theory and methods
- Demonstrated writing skills with an ability to write for multiple audiences;
- Ability to establish good working relationships and consult with a diverse group of stakeholders in the production of materials

Management
The project will be managed by Dr Philippa Smales, RDI Network and Partnerships Manager, to whom the consultant(s) will report. The RDI Network steering group will also engage at key points during the process to provide input, ideas and high-level oversight. The consultant(s) must also be available for regular teleconferences with the steering group. Final approval of the deliverables will be the responsibility of the steering group.

Submission of Expressions of Interest
Please send an EoI to Dr Philippa Smales, Network and Partnerships Manager, at psmales@acfid.asn.au with:
- A capacity statement on your / your team's suitability, experience and availability to undertake the scope of services as described in the terms of reference and the above selection criteria (max 2 pages);
- A brief statement of the proposed approach for the project with a detailed timeline (max 2 pages);
- Brief samples or a link to two original samples of your own / your teams work; and
- An accompanying budget inclusive of a daily rate (in line with the DFAT Aid Adviser Remuneration Framework) and anticipated administrative costs (GST inclusive).

Questions can be directed to Philippa Smales via email at psmales@acfid.asn.au or at 03 8373 2551 The RDI Network works in partnership with the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and has a secretariat based in Melbourne.

Submissions are requested no later than <mark>midday AEST Friday the 26th April 2019</mark> (note this is the day after ANZAC Day).