



Champions Action Research Project for the enhanced production and use of evidence in international development

Terms of Reference

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 works in partnership with 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. Through RDI Network surveys and recently completed research on research [communications and uptake](#), we have identified several key institutional barriers within universities, implementing organisations, and DFAT that limit the use of research evidence. As examples, on the side of universities (or other research 'producers'), for example, incentives for promotion may be focused on prestigious journals rather than engagement with end-users and societal impact. Equally, practitioners face pressures to deliver programs in short time-frames and may not feel confident in finding and using research evidence. Policy-makers are often time-pressed and without the necessary time and space to draw on research evidence. Implementing organisations may be reticent to fund research, thinking of it as a 'luxury' rather than fundamental to effective development.

The RDI Network offers substantial social capital which can be applied to address the barriers that prevent research use by individuals and organisations implementing development programs, as well as the barriers that prevent researchers from making their research policy-relevant or practice-relevant and engaging more purposefully with end-users of their research. In order for the RDI Network to begin to address these barriers, this action research project will aim to understand and uncover the solutions and pathways to change.

Project details:

This participatory action research project will foster changed behaviours in research commissioners, producers, brokers and users. Acknowledging the different drivers, incentives, ways of working, and structures that exist across different actors (practitioners, academics, policy-makers and private sector), efforts will be undertaken to shift **individual and organisational constraints** and foster dynamic connections that lead to stronger policy-practice-research linkages. The RDI Secretariat, Committee, and cross-sector participants - called Champions - will lead this change.

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in international development.

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Champions will work together in groups of three¹ within participating organisations to identify opportunities and barriers as regards to both individual and organisational incentives and structures that affect the production and use of policy-practice-relevant research. Ideally, a nationally representative sample of approximately 30 individual champions across 10-12 organisations/institutions would be invited to participate. This should include at a minimum, three universities (across different states), three NGOs (with different organisational structures), DFAT and another donor such as MFAT, DFID), and two from the private sector (i.e. managing contractors, consultancy firms). The champions within organisations and across sectors, will support each other to develop a sense of mutual support or brains trust to develop and test solutions, and reflect on 'what worked'. The results will then be shared amongst champions and with the consultant to inform the development of a Recommendations Report and Guidance Document for the sector. In addition, success stories from participating organisations will be shared through RDI Network channels (newsletters, website etc).

The action research should reflect the recommendations identified in the Communication and Uptake Snapshot, mentioned above, which identified several key institutional barriers within universities, implementing organisations, and DFAT that limit the use of research evidence. This project will also interact with another project being run by the RDI Network for a practical toolkit and related materials which build on recommendations aimed at improving the way research evidence informs development policy, practice and discourse in the Australian development sector. This presents a potential opportunity for Champions to use, socialise or apply this toolkit as part of their strategy.

Project outcomes sought:

- Provide leadership to shift the sector towards valuing and using research and evidence, demonstrating that structural barriers can be shifted and overcome.
- Tangible changes or shifts in the approach to production or use of research at the organisational level within participating organisations.
- Changes at the individual level in terms of their capacity built, facilitating change, increasing research uptake and use within sphere of influence of participating individual.

Call for Expressions of Interest

Background:

The RDI Network is looking to engage a consultant or consultancy team, to support a number of champions identifying opportunities and barriers in regard to institutional incentives and structures that affect the production and use of policy-practice-relevant research.

¹ Three has been selected as an ideal number to ensure mutual support and critical mass within organisations, however flexibility will be provided around this in the case that this is needed, for example, smaller agencies could have two or NGOs that are a part of a consortium could have three consortium staff involved.

The consultant(s) will facilitate the process, monitor the progress, observe and capture the self-reflection of champions (diaries, phone calls, etc.), and proactively sustain the engagement and momentum of the champions over the length of the project. The consultant will need to develop a sense of trust with and within the community of champions over the life of the project to foster ideas and changes in behaviour. The consultant will work with the champions to uncover the pathways to change and document lessons learnt, case studies, and recommendations from the champions, and use this information to produce a report and guidance document for individuals and organisations in the sector.

It is important that a participatory action research approach is used. This will entail leadership from participants, as the required conditions for the champions to investigate, understand and change the way that research is produced and used is from *within* the practice traditions, structures and incentives that inform and orient them.

Timeframe and Deliverables

The scope of the project will entail the following outputs/deliverables:

June – July 2019

- Full project plan, including overall participatory action research design, approach to eliciting commitment and communications with potential champions, an engagement plan, workshop design, approach to research ethics, and a M&E plan, drafted and submitted for RDI Network steering group comment and approval – allow at least ten working days for the steering group to comment (first tranche payment).
- Recruitment and engagement of champions, and organisation of the first workshop - with assistance of the steering group.

Aug – Sept 2019

- Organisation of the first workshop, including logistics and facilitation (second tranche payment).

Aug 2019 - April 2020

- Document 3-5 brief interim outputs (creative formats encouraged) for dissemination through RDI and other communication channels (e.g. articles comprising success stories, videos/podcasts etc.)

Nov – Dec 2019

- Organisation of city-based events with the champions who live in the same region, and design of the second workshop.

March 2020

- Organisation, including logistics and facilitation of the second workshop (third tranche payment)

April – May 2020

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- A full report on the project outcomes; guidance document to support individual and organisational/institutional change in addressing systemic barriers and opportunities, towards improving research uptake, use and impact; an updated dissemination and M&E plan, are drafted and submitted for comment by the steering group – allow at least ten working days for the Steering Group to comment.
- Recommendations are given for how to increase the impact of this project and the further work that could be done over a second phase (for internal use)*
- Documentation is professionally edited and designed, and submitted in an online ready and printable format (fourth tranche payment).

There will need to be continued monitoring and engagement with the champions monthly throughout the project.

The consultant may be required to continue to report to the RDI Network according to the dissemination and M&E plan, outside of the contract period.

*The consultant may be re-engaged under a separate second contract.

Any changes to this timeframe will need to be agreed on in advance by the RDI Network and the consultant(s).

Selection Criteria

The consultant(s) will be expected to have:

- Ability to establish good working relationships, to convene a community of practice, and to consult with a diverse group of stakeholders in the implementation of a project;
- Demonstrated experience in the design and facilitation of workshops;
- Experience in or an understanding of participatory action research;
- Demonstrated experience in, or an understanding of, the processes for the production and use of policy-practice-relevant research;
- Demonstrated writing skills with an ability to write for multiple audiences; and
- Demonstrated experience in, or an understanding of, international development (both academic and practitioner experience is desirable);

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 midday AEST Friday 31st May 2019