

# Terms of Reference: Supporting research communication, uptake and impact

*Designing Research Communications and Uptake supplementary resources*

## Background | The Research for Development Impact (RDI) Network

The RDI Network is a community of practitioners, researchers and evaluators working in international development. The Network is a collaboration between the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and Australian universities.

Established in 2009, the RDI Network was formerly known as the ACFID University Network. Currently, there are over 2,000 members utilising the Network to access diverse research expertise, brokering research partnerships, convening capacity-building events, forums and conferences.

The Network's key objective is to support the collaboration and understanding of evidence-based research, practice, and ethical guidelines within the Australian development sector. Membership is free and open to all practitioners, academics, students, policymakers and evaluators, anyone interested in research and evidence in international development.

The RDI Network works in partnership with ACFID, and funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

### The Problem:

A long-term objective of the RDI Network is to improve the communication of and engagement on international development research. Ultimately, the Network will promote and encourage the use of evidence in policy and everyday practice. There are already many national and international resources that exist to encourage researchers and academics to think about accessible research communications, uptake pathways, actions and strategies. These resources also encourage practitioners and policy-makers to consider their use of evidence in their policies and programming.

The RDI Network recently released a 2018 report, [Research Communication and Uptake Snapshot](#), which identified the skills, capacity, practice, barriers and enablers that exist in the sector for research communications and uptake.

The *Snapshot* identified key factors that hindered research communication including, amongst others:

- Academic paywalls to access key research
- Skill shortages
- Lack of time to synthesis results of research

As a result, it was identified that further up-skilling of researchers, development practitioners, and policymakers would be beneficial. In particular, it was identified that providing easy access and a tailored learning pathway to existing resources would be a valuable contribution to the sector.

### **The Project | Deliverables & Expression of Interest**

The RDI Network is seeking a consultant with experience in creating learning and development packages, to submit an expression of interest (Eoi) to develop a strategic learning framework and learning modules to access relevant, curated materials and resources. The aim is to;

- Support development researchers and practitioners to easily find high-quality existing resources, materials and guides on research communications, uptake and use such that they may incorporate these into their practice with minimal resistance

Users of the curated materials include the following:

- Researchers and academics: towards improved skills in engaging practitioners and policy-makers in research processes and communicating research in accessible manner
- Research translators: towards improved skills in identifying, synthesising, commissioning and communicating research evidence
- Research users: towards improving demand for and interest in research evidence, processes to identify, engage with research processes and research evidence, determine quality of research evidence, and skills in commissioning relevant research

The resources and materials are to be collated and curated from existing thought leadership on communications, research uptake, behavioural economics, and learning from Australia and internationally, including from outside the development sector. RDI Network has already identified and collected many of the relevant sources.

There will be a mix of materials and resources produced by the Network and links to other existing materials to create the learning modules. These learning modules will ideally be hosted on the RDI Network website. Decisions will be required on data storage and the updating of materials and resources.

The following Terms of Reference (TOR) are our current requirements, and there is flexibility to discuss.

The initial research phase will be used to develop tailored, strategic learning framework for each user group to ensure a 'scaffolded learning' approach to maximise learning when utilising these learning modules.

This project will include the following, as determined by user research;

- validating user groups (our initial theory is three main user groups in the RDI Network) and identify others not mentioned in the research provided by the Network
- refining content needs, learning styles and content delivery. There is already extensive research by the RDI Network to use as a starting point.
- determining best-possible strategies to influence decision-making and research uptake. For example, what 'call-to-action' or 'nudge' will influence positive behaviour change.
- development of initial concepts for the learning framework and learning modules. This should include;
  - Concept mock-ups of learning modules, with the placement of content and any additional imagery to support this concept (*high of fidelity of concept to discuss as part of EOI application*)
- downloadable and/or printable materials, alongside e-learning resources (curated from existing RDI Network materials and/or linking to external thought leadership). This can include;
  - written material, such as guides, toolkits, case studies, stories of change or reflection blog, and/or multimedia showcasing successful and unsuccessful examples of adopting and implementing research into policy and practice (purpose-made and/or linking to external thought leadership).

Decisions will be required about where and how to ensure resources are stored within the Network's ecosystem (to prevent broken links etc.), versus linking to the websites. Decisions will also be required on the need or process for fresh content and updates to materials in the future.

The consultant will work with the Network Communication Coordinator, the project Steering Group, and the Network's website developers to deliver this project.

The consultant will also work with the Communication Coordinator to develop a marketing and communications (MARCOM) plan to ensure uptake and use of the learning framework and modules, as well as a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan to examine reach to the appropriate audiences and evaluate its effectiveness. The deliverables will be further defined collaboratively with the Steering Group as lead by initial user research.

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

## Proposed timeframe

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consultant(s) engages with Communication Coordinator and Steering Group to refine the scope of work and access existing collated resources</li> <li>- Engage in initial steps in developing a learning framework to test with users through sector engagement</li> <li>- Engages with RDI Network website developers to understand available options for developing the learning modules</li> </ul>	<p>Mid-February 2020</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- User research (able to use the Network's existing relationships in the sector)</li> <li>- Sourcing additional resources and gap analysis</li> <li>- Release of first tranche payment on delivery of report</li> </ul>	<p>Delivery of initial research report: The Month of March 2020</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Draft of learning framework, resources, and proposed approach plan is developed and submitted for comment by Steering Group</li> <li>- MARCOM and M&amp;E plan is developed and submitted for comment by Steering Group</li> </ul>	<p>March-April 2020 (allow ten working days for seeking feedback from steering group)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Working prototype with finalised materials</li> <li>- Prototype testing with each user group</li> <li>- Second tranche payment released on completion of user testing</li> </ul>	<p>End of May 2020 (allow ten working days for seeking feedback from Steering Group)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completed design of learning framework and/or module(s)</li> <li>- Third tranche payment released on completion of project</li> </ul>	<p>June-July 2020 (please detail user testing in EoI for completed product/service)</p>

*Please note that 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:

- High-level familiarity with international development and community outreach, and/or research communication uptake;
- Demonstrated experience leading, developing and delivering human-centred learning and development modules for organisation/agencies
- Demonstrated experience in designing successful, effective learning frameworks and learning module(s) to deliver educational content and influence positive behaviour
- Demonstrated understanding of the value of research communications and uptake in the process of influencing policy and practice
- Excellent ability to synthesise and understand complex information, data and content while being able to critically evaluate information
- Familiarity with the various uses of different mediums for multiple audiences, including but not limited to multimedia, animation, digital content, written content and/or visual content
- Strong oral communication and high-level written skills (the ability to write for multiple audiences) and the ability to communicate effectively with a broad range of stakeholders
- Ability to create a safe space to explore new ideas that respects diverse perspectives, engenders positivity, instils creative confidence in others and favours action-bias
- Ability to establish good working relationships with key stakeholders and project team (the team is located across several sites, so clear and constant communication is required)
- Demonstrated experience using agile delivery methods to deliver projects, including the use of visual management boards, and coordinating project reporting and evaluation

## Management

The project will be managed by Whitney Yip, Network Communications Coordinator, 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, high-level oversight and quality assurance.

The consultant(s) must also be available for regular teleconferences with the steering group.

Drafts of the resources will be presented to the Steering Group for feedback prior to final drafts version for submission. The RDI Network will retain the opportunity to make final edits in consultation with the consultant(s).

### **Submission of Expressions of Interest**

Please send an EOI to Whitney Yip, Network Communications Coordinator, at [wyip@acfid.asn.au](mailto:wyip@acfid.asn.au) with the following:

- A capacity statement on your / your team's suitability, experience and availability to undertake the scope of services as described in the TOR 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);
- Samples of your own / your teams work of a similar project; and
- An accompanying consulting budget inclusive of a daily rate (in line with the DFAT Aid Adviser Remuneration Framework) and any anticipated administrative costs (+GST).

Questions can be directed to Whitney Yip via email at [wyip@acfid.asn.au](mailto:wyip@acfid.asn.au) or at (03) 8373 2555.

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 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020**