

Request for Proposal (RFP): consultation with LMIC research funders on equity in funder-level partnerships for development research

Request for proposal

UKCDR are seeking to commission a supplier to conduct consultations with Low- and Middle- Income Country (LMIC) research funding institutions to understand their experiences of engaging with and building partnerships with High-Income Country (HIC) and other LMIC funders, with a view to producing a final deliverable by 13th September 2023. This piece of work is part of a project UKCDR is undertaking exploring equity in funder-level partnerships for development.

About UKCDR

[The UK Collaborative on Development Research \(UKCDR\)](#) is an organisation working with a group of UK research funders working in international development – including Government departments with Official Development Assistance (ODA) research funds, UK Research and Innovation, and the Wellcome Trust. UKCDR provides funders with evidence-based information to support their decision-making processes.

UKCDR is governed by the [Strategic Coherence of ODA-funded Research \(SCOR\) Board](#) independently chaired by Marie Staunton, which brings together the Chief Scientific Advisors and Directors of UKCDR’s core members (below) alongside three independent members:

- Department for Science, Information and Technology (DSIT)
- Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
- Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)
- UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
- Wellcome Trust

The SCOR Board aims to build high-level coherence across all Government ODA-funded science and research and to maximise the impact and relevance of the UK’s ODA research investments. More details are available on our [website](#). As UK funders of ODA research, the SCOR Board are committed to ensuring UK investments in development research are impactful and focused on the priorities of LMICs.

UKCDR uses its expertise and collective voice to shape policy in three areas of activity:

1. Mapping, analysis and foresight,
2. Convening for joint action,
3. Sharing information and best practice.

Background

In the activity area of sharing information and best practice UKCDR seeks to bridge the gap between “what” is funded and “how” it is delivered. Providing evidence-based information to ensure equity is embedded in research partnerships is a strategic priority for UKCDR and the SCOR board.

We believe research funders have a key role to play in supporting equitable partnerships. Given our role working with major UK funders of development research and our connections with global funders through the [International Research for Development Funders Forum](#) (IRDFF), we are well placed to support funders with best practice guidance in this area and build coherence in how development research funders approach equitable partnerships.

UKCDR has been working on this issue since 2017 when we produced a report highlighting [10 ways funders can make North-South partnerships more equitable](#). Building on this work, last year we published a [Good Practice Document: Four Approaches to Supporting Equitable Research Partnerships](#) in collaboration with ESSENCE on Health. This document aims to help funders, research institutions and research teams move from principles of equitable partnerships to practice by providing practical recommendations and case study examples structured around four inter-connected approaches. The document is available in English and French and is accompanied by a [resource hub](#) hosted on the UKCDR website.

The document identifies **equity within funder-level partnerships** as one area that can catalyse changes within the research partnership ecosystem. UK development research funders are increasingly seeking to collaborate with other funders from HICs and LMICs (public, private, and philanthropic) to:

- advance shared areas of interest,
- pool resources to achieve value for money,
- ensure greater coordination and avoid duplication of funding and research efforts, and
- leverage the expertise and flexibility of different funders.

To ensure that partnerships lead to positive development outcomes equity needs to be considered and power imbalances addressed, especially as relationships become more complex and alignment more challenging in multi-lateral settings and with partnerships between public, private, and philanthropic organisations.

To address this issue UKCDR has initiated a new project exploring **equity in funder-level partnerships** guided by an expert group of research funders from HICs and LMICs. This project seeks to understand:

- The types of partnerships funders are developing (e.g., co-funding, networking, strategic)
- The extent to which equity is defined and/or put into practice
- Lessons learned on supporting equity between research funders

This work will be informed by in-depth consultation with research funders from LMICs and HICs to identify case studies to learn from and understand funders' experiences of partnership building processes. We will be looking at the extent to which equity is a consideration within partnerships between funders, and how power imbalances have or have not been addressed to date.

Recognising UKCDR's position as a membership organisation of UK funders and based on the advice of the project's expert group, we are seeking an independent LMIC based organisation or consultant to undertake consultation with LMIC funding institutions on their experiences of engaging and building partnerships with HIC and other LMIC funders. The deliverables of this tendered work will be combined with work undertaken by UKCDR engaging HIC funding institutions. The two streams of work will be brought together in a **learning report for research funders highlighting challenges and lessons for supporting equity in funder-level partnerships**.

Objectives

The overall objective of this tender is to understand LMIC funding institutions experiences of engaging in partnerships with HIC and other LMIC research funders with the aim of identifying challenges to equity within such partnerships and lessons for research funders on how equity can be best supported. This will contribute to the following project-level research questions:

- Within funder-level partnerships, to what extent has equity been discussed and defined?
- Within funder-level partnerships, to what extent has equity been translated into practice?
- What lessons have been learned about supporting equity when building funder-level partnerships?

We expect this to be achieved through **in-depth consultation engaging at least 12 funding organisations in LMICs across geographies** (e.g., Asia, Africa, South America). We recognise this could be carried out in a range of ways. This preferentially would include a combination of online focus group discussions and key informant interviews to ensure alignment with the consultation UKCDR is doing with HIC funders. However, we are open to the supplier proposing alternative approaches to consultation to realise the tender objectives if we can ensure alignment with UKCDR’s consultation approach. We will provide a list of target organisations and connections to relevant organisations through the project’s expert group but will prioritise suppliers with existing networks to draw upon.

Deliverables

To reach this objective, the supplier is expected to:

1. Produce a short workplan outlining a proposed approach, methodology, and timeline for deliverables.
2. Develop data collection tools to support the consultation process and engage with UKCDR staff to ensure alignment with their consultation approach.
3. Conduct consultations e.g., focus groups and interviews engaging at least 12 funding organisations across geographies.
4. Develop a draft consultation report.
5. Produce a final consultation report following feedback from UKCDR and the project expert group.

The draft report should be produced by 1st September 2023. The final deliverable must be clear, concise, engaging, and be complemented by relevant data files. **This should be produced by 13th September 2023.** We expect the supplier to propose a workplan and timeline to meet this deadline.

Deliverables timeline and payment schedule

We anticipate supporting a total of 15 days to carry out the consultation and write-up. Up to two additional days may be required to undertake any redrafting that might be required.

| Deliverable | Timeframe | Responsibility | Payment |
|---|--|----------------|---------|
| Work plan and methodology | 18 th – 24 th July 2023 | Supplier | 25% |
| Consultations and data collection completed | 25 th July – 25 th August 2023 | Supplier | 25% |
| Draft consultation report | 1 st September 2023 | Supplier | 25% |
| Final consultation report | 13 th September 2023 | Supplier | 25% |

Payment will be made once each deliverable has been achieved. Payment will only be made when UKCDR has confirmed that each deliverable received is of an acceptable standard.

The supplier should include in their commercial proposal a daily consultant rate card. Invoice payment terms are 30 days from receipt of invoice.

Requirements

- Strong understanding of the international development research sector in LMICs, HICs and UK especially of funding organisations.
- Experience undertaking qualitative consultation to develop lessons learned/inform best practice for targeted audiences.

- Expertise in consultation and engagement processes including online methods.
- Able to demonstrate established networks with key stakeholders.
- Attention to detail and ability to adhere to timelines.
- Excellent writing and presentation skills.

Project management

The project is commissioned by UKCDR and the selected supplier will be accountable to UKCDR. The supplier will report to: Giulia Lanfredi, Research and Policy Officer

Proposals submitted in response to this request should include the following:

- Proposed methodology for consultations, including any recommendations or changes to the proposed work specification and details of existing networks that can be drawn upon.
- Clear work plan with timelines outlined, including details of regular updates to UKCDR on progress, and any risks associated with the timelines set out.
- Realistic budget with detailed breakdown for proposed work.
- Details of people involved in the work and their areas of expertise, including CVs and examples of previous work.

The Wellcome Trust hosts and provides procurement services to UKCDR. Please note that the General Terms and Conditions attached to this tender are non-negotiable.

UKCDR welcomes joint proposals and may consider inviting suppliers to collaborate in a partnership or consortium once proposals have been received and reviewed.

Non-Disclosure and Confidentiality

Any information subsequently made available to prospective suppliers is deemed confidential and must not be disclosed without the prior written consent of UKCDR unless required by law.

Independent Proposal

By submission of a proposal, prospective suppliers warrant that the prices in the proposal have been arrived at independently, without consultation, communication, agreement or understanding for the purpose of restricting competition, as to any matter relating to such prices, with any other potential supplier or with any competitor.

Costs Incurred by Prospective Suppliers

It should be noted that this document does not relate to a firm commitment from UKCDR to enter into a contractual agreement. UKCDR will not be held responsible for any costs associated with the production of a response to this Request for Proposal.

Timeline for identification of supplier

| Activity | Date |
|---|---|
| Issue tender to suppliers | 13 th June 2023 |
| Calls with suppliers to discuss queries | 14 th – 29 th June 2023 |
| Proposals submitted by suppliers | 3 rd July 2023 |
| Notification of contract award | 11 th July 2023 |
| Contract clarification and negotiation | 12 th – 17 th July 2023 |
| Start date | 18 th July 2023 |

Contact Details

The single point of contact for all communications is indicated below. **Electronic copies of your proposal should be submitted no later than 22:00 GMT on 3rd July 2023.**

Giulia Lanfredi (Research and Policy Officer) info@ukcdr.org.uk