Call for proposals: Adopting a behavioural science lens to improve the impact of FCDO's technology and innovation investments: a portfolio review

This document provides written responses to questions received since the launch of this and other calls issued by the Research Commissioning Centre on **2 September 2024**. Where relevant, we have edited the original to combine similar questions.

Responses to questions specific to this call

Q1: What will be the role of the RCC in this review? Do 3ie and/or the University of Birmingham expect to deliver any aspects of the review? To what extent and in what capacities would they be involved in information-gathering, diagnosis, and knowledge-sharing activities?

A1: The Research Commissioning Centre facilitates this commission on behalf of the TIU, organises a peer review of the applications, ensures proper due diligence and facilitates the contracting process. Following the award, the RCC provides quality assurance of deliverables and monitors project delivery. We monitor quality (we employ subject specialists to do this) and give recommendations on improvements. We do not otherwise participate in the research activities of the funding recipient.

Q2: What is the size and structure of the TIU team?

A2: The TIU team consists of 14 staff members. All other relevant information on this subject is annexed to the call for proposals.

Q3: Can FDCO please confirm if there is a budget template?

A3: Yes, the budget template can be accessed here.

Q4: Can the authority provide an indication of the budget (floor/ceiling, if possible) for this opportunity?

A4: The budget limit of the project is £150,000.

Q5: To be able to review the current portfolio of work, how would we be able to access this?

A5: The funding recipient is expected to work closely with the TIU team, who will share relevant information on a case-by-case basis.

Q6: Will TIU staff be supported to attend any research activities (e.g., interviews/ workshops)? How much notice is required?

A6: TIU staff will be encouraged to participate, although as a busy team as much notice as possible is helpful. Delivery partners should also be considered.

Q7: Other than the listed documents, what further information currently exists on: the use of behavioural science and design on TIU projects and potential applications and barriers of behavioural science in FCDO's investments? Apart from the documents mentioned in the TORs, have there been any other internal or external (to FCDO) evaluations?

A7: Please refer to the documents listed in the call for proposals for all information the TIU can share with applicants at this time. Further access will be granted to funding recipients.

Q8: How many TIU projects are within the current portfolio? What is their geographic spread/distribution? What is their size?

A8: There are seven projects within the current portfolio. For details, please refer to annex 1 of the call for proposals and follow the link to the DevTracker to find out more.

Q9: What time period of TIU projects within the portfolio, is the review expected to cover?

A9: The project should focus on current work in the portfolio, but the team would like to be able to flexibly co-produce the work and may give contextual information to past data where relevant and possible to share.

Q10: How would access be provided to the supplier for conducting research with the project owners/managers?

A10: The expectation is for the funding recipient to be present within the TIU, to have direct communication with its staff and for the approach to this work to be collaborative. The type of contact and communication will differ depending on the staff member, but the vision is for a close co-production process.

Q11: Apart from the FCDO portfolio owners/managers and the beneficiaries, who else are important stakeholders to be involved in the review activities?

A11: This work is limited to FCDO stakeholders and their delivery partners

Q12: Is there an existing preferred FCDO definition of "behavioural science" and an understanding of its application within the portfolio, to be applied within the review? If not, how will this be determined and is this an output/outcome of the portfolio review?

A12: One piece of the work is to choose a definition that is comprehensive and that reflects the multidisciplinary lens of behavioural science. Applicants can provide a rationale on how they will choose the definition they will work with as long as it does not restrict to one aspect of behavioural science designs (for example, it should not only refer to public health interventions). It will be important that the portfolio partners and FCDO staff agree and align from the start with common terminology and a working definition.

Q13: Will the desk research require a selection i.e., a sample of appropriate TIU projects, and what is the expectation of such a sample size? Or is a comprehensive assessment of all TIU projects expected?

A13: We expect a comprehensive assessment of all TIU projects.

Q14: What is within the scope of potential applications (recommendations) and highlighting of barriers within the review? And are there any elements that are out of scope (e.g. management within FCDO, training opportunities, partnerships, funding decision-making processes, etc.)?

A14: There are no elements outside the scope at this stage, applicants may suggest and provide a rationale on what they see fit best within the timeline

Q15: Given the iterative and discovery nature of the review – what is the expectation of "traditional academic rigour" in the methodology, such as the theory of change?

A15: The trade-off should be minimal between academic rigour throughout the work and keeping the findings realistic and the learnings implementable.

Q16: The methodology may include a mixed-method approach, of surveys, workshops, 1-1 meetings or other convening events. Is there an expectation of the minimum number of activities required of such research methods, for example 1-1 interviews =10, workshops= 2, etc?

A16: There is no expectation of a minimum number of engagements, rather we expect the team to conduct as many as are needed for the best results.

Q17: Can these be reviewed/changed during the portfolio review given the iterative nature of the review?

A17: Yes, we expect there will be adjustments to these as the review goes on in reaction to the findings and the feedback received from the team.

Q18: Are there any ethical or methodological procedures with either FCDO and/or RCC for conducting this work? Please provide details with appropriate timescales.

A18: Please refer to the supporting information provided here.

Q19: Are any of the deliverables, as described in the TORs (Table 1, Section 6), fixed and not changeable?

A19: Once the awarding decision is made, but before the contract is signed, some negotiations between the FCDO and the funding recipient may take place, however, once an agreement is reached and the contract is signed, the milestone deliverables, which will lead to the release of tranche payments, will remain fixed.

Q20: Will the deliverables be for internal use only, publicly available, or both? Please explain.

A20: This will depend on the sensitivity of the material in question, and so will be assessed between RCC and FCDO on a case-by-case basis, however the default position is that findings will be publicly available where possible.

Q21: What is the expected page numbers/size for the deliverables (e.g. report, slide deck, etc)?

A21: This will depend on the deliverable but is negotiable.

Q22: Will there be one point of contact and what will be their role?

A22: The FCDO has a project lead to whom the funding recipient is accountable and who has to accept the deliverables as being of satisfactory quality. The RCC will have a research manager with whom they will work closely monitoring progress and reviewing milestones. A programme manager and an academic director will support the project management and the quality assurance parts of the research manager's role. The FCDO lead will be able to consult with the funding recipient on the steps that need to be taken, introductions to the relevant projects and personnel etc.

Q23: What role will they take in the actual research activities (e.g. workshops/interviews, reports, etc)?

A23: The FCDO lead may participate in them or help facilitate them, depending on the event and who is involved.

Q24: Please provide information on how co-creation and co-production will be managed effectively and to deadlines.

A24: The FCDO expects the funding recipient to manage this and to expertly guide the project through this process.

Q25: Will the FCDO identify/engage/invite relevant experts and practitioners in the learning journey? If there are any costs, please confirm whether these are outside the budget of the review, and will be covered by FCDO or through other means separately?

A25: The aim of this commission is to find a team capable of providing this expertise and should be covered by the project budget.

Q26: For small UK-based organisations, would it disadvantage them if they are not from an LMIC? Do they have to have an LMIC partner?

A26: The applicants should focus on ensuring that the team is able to provide the expertise asked for in the call for proposals and choose their partners and collaborators accordingly.

Q27: Are there specific SDGs or targets within the SDGs that the FCDO is prioritizing for this project?

A27: No.

Q28: For outcomes, what type of actionable insights or recommendations would be most valuable for the FCDO (e.g., should we prioritize on strategic, operational, or programmatic-level insights)?

A28: Applicants should focus on the research questions and adopt an approach most effectively answering these.

Q29: For co-creation, are there expected or preferred methods for engagement (e.g., workshops, surveys, or focus groups)? Are there other preferred formats that have worked in the past or that the FCDO would like us to prioritize?

A29: We are looking for a propositional and proactive approach from the applicants, and are open to exploring different ways of engaging with the team.

Queries relevant to all current calls

Q1: Can a non-UK university apply? Or does the applicant need to be legally registered in the UK?

A1: Non-UK institutions are eligible to apply.

Q2: The guidelines state 'only legally registered organisations and consortia of registered organisations, not individuals, may apply'. Does this mean that, if I apply, I will submit my application on behalf of my institution?

A2: We will only award to organisations rather than individuals. So organisations are welcome to apply through individuals directly affiliated with those organisations but we can’t accept applications from individuals outside of organisations or working for organisations but applying on their own behalf.

Q3: Will the award incur VAT?

A3: This depends on the trading status of the applicant. As a US nonprofit organisation providing a public good, 3ie does not incur VAT for the management of the Research Commissioning Centre. If you are likewise applying as a not-for-profit organisation or registered charity, this award should not incur VAT.

Q4: Once awarded, who owns IP?

A4: Intellectual property in all material (including, but not limited to, reports, data and designs, whether or not electronically stored) produced by the funding recipient will be the property of the funding recipient. The funding recipient will be asked to grant to 3ie and FCDO a worldwide, non-exclusive irrevocable and royalty-free licence to use all the material produced, where “use” shall mean, without limitation, the reproduction, publication and sub-licence of all the material and the intellectual property therein, including the reproduction and sale of the material and products incorporating the same, for use by any person or for sale or other dealing anywhere in the world.

Q5: Would we be able to freely use the IP for teaching and non-commercial activities?

A5: The IP may be used for teaching and non-commercial activities provided that this is approved by FCDO.

Q6: Are there page limits per question or overall maximum limit on the bid? (and that CVs are excluded from this limit)?

A6: There are no page or word limits except on the CVs, which should not exceed two pages.

Q7: Can the authority confirm whether suppliers are able to include links within our submission?

A7: Please write all information you want to be peer-reviewed in your application. External attachments (except CVs) and links will not be reviewed.

Q8: Are we able to submit our response as a PDF?

A8: Yes.

Q9: Would the authority prefer a Gantt chart in a weekly or monthly breakdown? Would this be part of question 6 or can this be in the appendix outside of a maximum page limit?

A9: Please include all answers in the application form. The applicant can decide how best to frame their proposed timeline.

Q10: What are the key milestones for approval/sign-off? What will be the process for approval/sign-off?

A10: Please refer to the call for proposals. Deliverables are sent to the RCC research manager who will coordinate a quality assurance process which may require the funding recipient to make amendments or seek further information. Once the quality is cleared, the deliverable is submitted to the FCDO for acceptance. Once accepted, the tranche payment is released.

Q11: Will there be a clear turnaround time for approval/sign-off?

A11: Yes

Q12: Will there be an extension for delays in sign-off/approvals for key milestones in the review?

A12: While we are working towards a firm deadline, depending on circumstances, the delivery of various outputs may be flexible during the process. This will be discussed with the RCC team and approved by the FCDO team.

Q13: Will the payments to the organisations be on a counter-payment in deliverables submitted by each research package, or will part of the funding be provided upfront?

A13: Each tranche payment is released on the submission of deliverables, however we can negotiate a first tranche payment to be released upon contract signing if necessary.