

Request for Proposals – Clarifications and Expressions of Interest

For: Craft, Entrepreneurship and Technology for Women's Empowerment: a research consortium project

Date: 16 January 2017

Thank you for submitting a question or expression of interest for the British Council's open call for research partners on the topic of Women's Empowerment through Craft, Entrepreneurship and Technology in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The aim of this research is to identify whether there is the need and opportunity for the British Council to develop projects in the sector. The research is mainly meant to identify potential partners in the 3 countries, including organisations already operating in these fields, and potential sources of funding for future programmes. It is hoped that the research will also identify the gaps in the sector needs a future programme could fill, such as design innovation support, enhanced international connections, business support and so on.

Another key aspect of this research is to enhance links between researchers and organisations in the UK and the South Asia region. As a result, we have opted to undertake the research in a consortium format with a research partner based in each of the 3 countries of focus. While a UK lead is not essential, it is preferable as we want to enhance connections with the UK. In addition, as the reports will need to be in English and we have 3 different cultural perspectives to contend with, it is hoped that by appointing a UK lead to create the methodology and consolidate the research that a more coherent output is generated.

We hope as well that this could serve as an opportunity to enhance existing research which partners may be undertaking and would welcome UK university partners who may want to explore the possibility of pursuing further funding from UK research councils.

As consortium partners will be expected to work together, our preference is to receive submission bid from an already formed consortium. The aim of sharing the expressions of interest is to facilitate this and for potential applicants to contact others they may wish to work with and submit a shared proposal. However, it is not a requirement to apply as a consortium, and the British Council will consider all relevant applications and bids and look at forming a consortium based on those sent as an individual organisation.

Next steps:

Please find attached contact details for those who have submitted an expression of interest for this research open call. Should you wish to apply as part of a ready-formed consortium, please contact those who you would like to work with to discuss further.

Supplier responses (Annex 2) are due for submission by 30 January 2017. If you are applying as a consortium, please include all partner company/individual names in the Company Name field and please consider all partners' contributions within the supplier responses.

If you are applying as an individual organisation or applicant, please provide a response to questions under Methodology and Approach (IDs MA01 – MA04). While the consortium lead will set the methodology to the research, we would still like to get an understanding of your approach to research.

You can still apply even if you did not submit an Expression of Interest. However, you will not have access to the contacts of the EOIs, and you may be disadvantaged in applying as a ready-formed consortium if you do not already have contacts in country. Preference will be given to ready-formed consortiums.

Clarifications

Notes on clarifications:

- Repeat questions have been consolidated into a single question and answer
- Clarifications have been divided into topics for clearer responses
- If you still have further questions, please contact Kendall Robbins on Kendall.robbins@britishcouncil.org

Clarifications on the Consortium

Who are the consortium partners being referred to?

The framework of the research will be set up between 4 partners. A UK organisation will set the methodology and lead the consortium. Research with regards to Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan will be undertaken by a researcher based in each country. Therefore, the consortium will be composed of a UK lead organisation, supported by a research partner in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Can one firm pitch for all 3 countries? Is UK also included as part of the research? Can we apply for only one country?

Yes, one firm can pitch for all 3 countries; however, it is expected that they will have an individual researcher or partner organisation based in each country as the British Council will not cover the costs of travel between countries. Our expectation is that each partner will be representing a single country.

A preference will be given to consortiums as part of the aim of the project is to build better connections between researchers and research institutions in the region and the UK.

Are we required to identify other consortium members or are we required to only share our own firm's details?

It is not necessary to identify other consortium members. However, at this stage all expressions of interests are being shared in order to aid the forming of a consortium. If organisations applying wish to contact others who have expressed interest and begin to form a consortium, then this is preferable. Otherwise, British Council will appoint a research partner in each country and form the consortium based on individual applications from each respective country.

I was born in Afghanistan, but not reside in Canada with citizenship. Do you I still qualify for the opportunity, if I don't currently live in Afghanistan?

You are welcome to submit an application; however, the British Council will not cover any travel-related costs to undertake the activity, so you would be responsible for all costs.

Being an Afghan Kabul-based firm, can the research be done only for Afghanistan or it must be implemented including Pakistan and Bangladesh?

It is expected that a research partner will be selected in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan and that each partner will be responsible for the research in their respective country.

Given the example shared on the British Council Website and in the particulars, is it a strict requirement for the lead of any proposed consortium to be based in the UK — or are the British Council agnostic on the base location? Can a British national lead the process while the firm is registered in a different country?

The aim of the British Council is to promote better links between the UK and the countries where we operate. Part of the aim of this research is to build better research links between the UK, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. While it is not a requirement for the lead of the proposed consortium to be based in the UK, it is the preference. Further details on the rationale are given in the brief at the beginning of this document.

Clarifications on the Research

The research locations of Pakistan are not given in the RFP, therefore, we assume that the exact sample size is not expected at this stage; it will be finalized in the inception meeting with the consortium.

This is correct. It should be noted that the emphasis of the research will be on mapping key organisations already active in this field with less of an emphasis on sampling artisan communities to identify skills gaps.

We assume that we are not required to make the research methodology as it has been indicated in the RFP and this, too, will be finalized in the inception meeting with the consortium.

This is correct. If you are submitting a bid as part of an already formed consortium, then it would be expected that as a consortium you would complete the supplier response, including recommendations on methodology and approach. If you are submitting as an individual organisation it would still be expected that you make an indication of the approach you would take, but once a consortium is formed the development of the methodology would be led by the UK partner and the consortium.

What do you mean by existing Literature (Do you mean current or past)?

Any existing literature published on the research topic which will help to answer the questions posed in the RFP.

Assuming that applicants will mine their existing networks in each of the proposed countries of study to include in the proposal, if successful would the British Council offer the benefit of ground support (from their own established networks within each country) to supplement these?

Local British Council staff will be available to feedback on research and will disclose our existing networks in country. However, the aim of this research is to identify the potential partners for this kind of work in country, so it is hoped that the research will include details outside the British Council's existing scope of knowledge.

Clarifications on Budget

Is the given budget is for all proposed countries or only for one country?

The given budget is the entire budget for the project and is intended to cover all costs, including the fees for all 4 consortium partners and costs related to the research, such as internal travel, staffing, translation, etc. Once the consortium is formed and governance is put in place, British Council and partners will assess this budget and make the necessary allocations.

Bearing in mind the stated assumption that applicants are expected to cover costs with the total fee paid as “charges for services or goods,” to what extent will the British Council support the cost of travel between a base location (e.g Delhi), and the designated countries of study?

The British Council will not support any travel between base location and the countries of study. Our expectation is that research partners will be based in their country of study.

Is £15,000 the maximum budget for this project? Given the scope of work, this does not seem like enough and we may not be able to apply under these terms.

Unfortunately, there is no flexibility within the budget. This is in line with past British Council research calls. Due to the nature of this, the opportunity is perhaps more suitable to university research departments as opposed to commercial research agencies. If the appointed consortium partners feel that the scope of work is beyond the allocated fees, then the British Council working with the partners will reassess the scope of work.