Invitation to tender for supplier: COVID-19 Researcher Coordination Online Platform

Request for proposal

The UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR) is seeking to commission a supplier to develop an online, mixed-media platform which will support coordination of researchers funded by the [COVID-19 Research Coordination and Learning Initiative (COVID CIRCLE) partners](#), undertaking COVID-19 research relevant to low resource settings. The platform will enable researchers to connect, identify synergies and opportunities for collaboration, facilitate information sharing and host an online resource hub.

This platform aims to support COVID CIRCLE's broader ambitions to improve coordination of funded research to inform research for future epidemic and pandemic response.

About UKCDR

The UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR) is a group of research funders interested in international development; including UK Government departments with Official Development Assistance (ODA) research funds, UK Research and Innovation, the devolved administrations and the Wellcome Trust.

UKCDR is governed by Her Majesty's Government's Strategic Coherence of ODA-funded Research (SCOR) Board independently chaired by Professor Peter Piot and brings together the Chief Scientific Advisors and Directors of UKCDR's core members; the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Wellcome.

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**.**

Further information on UKCDR and UKCDR members can be found at our website: www.ukcdr.org.uk

Background

[COVID CIRCLE](#) is a global initiative to improve coordination and efficiency of research funding and practice, to increase impact of the research response to COVID-19 with a focus on resource limited contexts. UKCDR in partnership with [GloPID-R](#) are supporting the alignment of research funders towards a coordinated effort for supporting COVID-19 research in, for, and with, low and middle income countries (LMICs) to improve relevant research outputs, ensure outputs are shared rapidly to permit consolidation and review, inform policy and practice and ensure lessons are learned to improve responses within this outbreak and for future outbreaks. Details of COVID CIRCLE partners are included in **Annex 1.**

COVID CIRCLE Aims: Aligning and strengthening the global effort on COVID-19 research in resource limited settings, through:

1. Funder coordination through a **joint principles approach, identification of research priorities for LMICs and mapping and analysis of funding.**
2. Researcher-level coordination through **communities of practice** to support the research process.
3. Facilitating **learning** for both funders and researchers to improve responses to future epidemics and pandemics.

The online platform supports the ambitions of the second aim, researcher-level coordination, to ensure that funded researchers can collaborate, and are coordinated to ensure and effective epidemics impactful COVID-19 research for low- and middle-income countries.

Core principles

This work is underpinned by the UKCDR & GLOPID-R seven funder principles for supporting high quality research in epidemics and pandemics, and the platform aims to support researchers to fulfil the requirements outlined under these principles. These principles are:

1. Alignment to global research agendas and locally identified priorities
2. Research capacity for rapid research
3. Equitable, inclusive, cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary partnerships.
4. Open science and data sharing.
5. Protection from harm
6. Appropriate ethical consideration
7. Collaboration and learning through enhanced coordination

Scope

To develop an online platform to support communication, information sharing and knowledge exchange between a cohort of researchers, and access to relevant resources and networks to support epidemics and pandemics research. The scope is limited to the provision of the online platform and ongoing support for updating information and maintaining functionality. The scope does not include provision of the content of these resources and activities (which will be provided by the COVID CIRCLE team).

The researcher cohort this platform seeks to support will be researchers working on COVID-19 research relevant to resource limited settings, funded through the Global Effort on COVID-19 (GECO) Health Research (GECO), the Wellcome/FCDO Joint Initiative on Research in Epidemic Preparedness and Response and the UKRI GCRF/Newton Fund Agile Response call to address COVID-19. However, elements of the platform will be open to a wider range of researchers.

In scope for the online platform:

- Platform web hosting and ongoing functionality support. This platform will enable researchers to connect and collaborate internally within their researcher cohort. Specific activities such as webinars, workshops, training sessions or other relevant activities may also be open to wider research communities undertaking COVID-19 research relevant to LMICs. *[Core functionality and elements are further outlined in the Deliverables]*
- Open, publicly accessible platform with closed/password protected areas for the core researcher cohort *[details of which activities will be in open and closed areas are detailed in Deliverables below]*
- Search engine optimisation
- Optimisation for mobile and low bandwidth
- Testing and debugging of the platform
- Automatic translation of website content
- Estimated number of regular users (up to 1000 users). Users will be based across Europe, Asia, Africa, North America and Latin America and therefore it will be necessary to ensure that the platform is functional in regions with low bandwidth.

Objectives

Whilst the content of the platform will be provided by COVID CIRCLE initiative, the platform should enable researchers to meet these objectives:

1. **Connect and collaborate** – *The platform will enable the cohort of researchers to connect, collaborate and share resources, skills and expertise* through:
   - Sharing best practice and peer learning to strengthen capacity for and pandemics research relevant to low- and middle-income countries.
   - Identifying and supporting appropriate use of data repositories for LMIC researchers and open research mechanisms.
   - Accessing relevant resources to support good governance and regulatory process for epidemics research (e.g. ethical standards and requirements, study/trial protocols.)
2. **Engage broader networks** – *The platform will ensure cohort is linked to and can engage with broader research networks related to epidemics and pandemics preparedness and response* (in particular, relevant LMIC regional and global networks).

We want to avoid duplication of other providers in this field, and are open to partnering with existing infrastructures as appropriate.

Deliverables

At present, UKCDR's website does not have the functionality or support services to host a platform that could support the achievement of these objectives. Therefore, to help achieve these objectives, the supplier is expected to:

1. Develop and launch a mixed-media online platform, with both publicly accessible open areas and closed/password protected areas which enables:
   - Communication, collaboration and networking between researchers by building of an online community e.g. online forums, noticeboards, virtual networking *[In password protected/closed area]*
   - Hosting of meetings, workshops and webinars on relevant topics *[In open area]*
   - Hosting of a resource hub which provides access or links to resources relevant to epidemics such as reports, videos, online repositories (data), presentations, research papers, and ability to update and include new resources. *[In both closed area and open areas]*
   - Sharing of news (through regular newsletters) and events *[In both open and closed areas]*
   - Hosting of links to existing networks (e.g. ISARIC, COVID-19 Clinical Research Coalition), researcher repositories (e.g. WHO TDR Global) and research trackers (e.g. UKCDR & GloPID-R project tracker) *[In both closed and open areas]*
   - Signposting to online events of interest organised by COVID CIRCLE team or external stakeholders e.g. webinars/ workshops *[In both open and closed areas]*
   - Links to existing or develop new epidemics working groups *[In password protected/closed area]*
   - Key word search function to enable researchers to easily find information *[In open and closed areas].*

2. Provide ongoing support including:
   - Upload of new material or updates to existing material
     i. Ability to add new links to relevant events organised by COVID CIRCLE team or other stakeholders.

ii. Inclusion of new materials on the platform and updating of existing materials/resources.

iii. Inclusion and update of researcher repository of researcher cohort

- Technical support

    i. Troubleshooting any problems with functionality of the platform

    ii. Updates to maintain the functionality and security of the platform

    iii. Changes to layout and functionality following initial development. (*Please provide standard rate card.*)

The supplier is **not** expected to provide the content for the online platform, instead we are seeking the technical set up and support services.

Deliverables timeline

Project phase	Proposed timeframe	Responsibility
1. **Launch of online platform**	Mid Jan 2020	Supplier
2. **Provide ongoing support***	Mid-Jan 2020 – July 2021	Supplier

With possibility of extension

Payment schedule

Deliverable	Payment %
Initial up-front payment	20%
Launch online platform	50%
Provide ongoing technical support	[To be proposed by supplier]
Project completion	[To be proposed by supplier]

NB Payment schedule to be finalised with procurement and suppliers

Payment will be made once each deliverable has been achieved, following a timeline proposed by the supplier and agreed with UKCDR. Payment will only be made, and the next phase of work undertaken, when UKCDR has confirmed that each deliverable received is of an acceptable standard.

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

Requirements

- Ability and expertise to provide initial and ongoing technical support to build, maintain and expand the online platform.
- Experience in developing either websites or online information sharing platforms. *Please provide examples of previous activities/platforms created with similar functionality.*
- Ability to provide ongoing technology support for the platform until July 2021.
- Understanding of global health research sector.

Timeline for identification of supplier

Activity	Date
Issue tender to suppliers	19 Oct 2020
Calls with suppliers to discuss queries	21/23 October 2020
Circulation of relevant information raised in individual calls to all suppliers	26 October 2020
Proposals submitted by suppliers	1 November 2020
Interviews held with shortlisted suppliers	5-6 November 2020
Notification of contract award	12 November 2020
Contract clarification and negotiation	16 - 20 November 2020

Start date	23 November 2020

Project management

The project is commissioned by UKCDR and the selected supplier will be accountable to UKCDR. The supplier will report to**:** Sheila Mburu, Research and Policy Officer, s.mburu@ukcdr.org.uk

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

- Proposal detailing clear delivery plan with timelines outlined, including details of regular updates to UKCDR on progress, any risks associated with the timelines set out and mitigation strategy in the case of delays to delivery.
- Realistic fixed budget with detailed breakdown for proposed work.
- Details of the team that will be involved in the work, including profiles and CVs, team structure, individual responsibilities and proportion of time each team member will commit.
- Examples of similar projects (e.g. websites, platforms) completed which demonstrate competence in this area.
- The tender should include a provision for responding to ad hoc requests or additional items that may arise, quoting typical daily/hourly rates.

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.

Information Governance

Suppliers are asked to complete the TPSRA2 (LINK: TPSRA2) assessment before the tender submission deadline for UKCDR (**1st Nov 2020**) to assess how you handle data.

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.

Contact Details

The single point of contact for all communications is as indicated below. **Electronic copies of your proposal should be submitted no late**r **than 11:30pm (23.30 GMT) on 1 November 2020.**

Sheila Mburu - s.mburu@ukcdr.org.uk, Research and Policy Officer

Annexes

Annex 1: COVID CIRCLE initiative partners

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) brings together the UK research councils (Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), Medical Research Council (MRC), Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), as well as Innovate UK and the newly formed Research England.

UKRI's Medical Research Council is the UKRI representative for this initiative.

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC)

The Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) support ministers in leading the nation's health and social care to help people live more independent, healthier lives for longer. Following the UK government's 2015 comprehensive spending review, DHSC received ODA funding to support international development research Including the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Global Health Research Programme and the Global AMR Innovation Fund (GAMRIF).

Wellcome

Wellcome is one of the world's largest charitable foundations and exists to improve health by helping great ideas to thrive. They support researchers, take on big health challenges, campaign for better science, and help everyone get involved with science and health research. They are a politically and financially independent foundation. Substantial funding is devoted to global health research, both in the UK and in developing countries.

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DfID) merged on 1 September 2020 to form the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office pursues national interests and project the UK as a force for good in the world. We promote the interests of British citizens, safeguard the UK's security, defend our values, reduce poverty and tackle global challenges with our international partners. FCDO is a ministerial department, supported by 12 agencies and public bodies.

European Commission

The European Commission is the EU's politically independent executive arm. It is alone responsible for drawing up proposals for new European legislation, and it implements the decisions of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.

Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness (GloPID-R)

GloPID-R is a network of funding organizations investing in infectious diseases research preparedness and response. GloPID-R is the only alliance of its kind to bring together research funding organizations on a global scale to facilitate an effective and rapid research of a significant outbreak of a new or re-emerging infectious disease with epidemic and pandemic potential.