



**ThinkTank
Initiative**
*Local research
for lasting solutions*

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Thinktank**
*La recherche menée à l'échelle locale
en vue de solutions durables*

Call for Expressions of Interest - Think Tank Initiative Policy Engagement and Communications Program, Coordinating Lead(s)

Summary

The Think Tank Initiative (TTI) is seeking Expressions of Interest from qualified organizations to implement its Policy Engagement and Communications Support Program. The objective of the program is to strengthen the ability of TTI-funded institutions to influence policy in ways that lead directly to improvements in people's lives. The program is based on a mentorship/facilitation model that allows for both highly engaged support and constant learning across the program.

In an effort to attract a diverse range of organizations, TTI has made this call as open and inclusive as possible. Expressions of Interest are therefore being solicited from organizations that are interested in implementing the program in one or more of TTI's four **regional levels** (West Africa, East Africa, Latin America and South Asia) or at a **global level** across all the programming regions. Organizations can submit Expressions of Interest that position them either as a regional or global implementer, or as combining regional and global implementation.

About the Think Tank Initiative

The Think Tank Initiative is a multi-donor program dedicated to strengthening independent policy research institutions — or think tanks — in developing countries by improving their ability to provide sound research that both informs and influences policy. TTI currently supports 49 institutions in 22 countries.[1]

In its first three years of implementation, TTI has selected the participating institutions and assisted them in identifying opportunities to improve their organizational performance. It will now address

[1] TTI operates in the following four regions: Latin America (Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, Peru); West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal); East Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda); South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka).

two further objectives:

1. To provide a combination of general support funding and access to training and technical support that will permit these organizations to improve research quality, policy linkages, and other aspects of organizational performance; and
2. To capture and share learning about strategies for supporting and managing policy research organizations in order to influence the future activities of the funding partners, think tanks, and other development actors.

For more information on TTI, please visit www.idrc.ca/thinktank.

Background

As part of TTI's objectives, and in response to demand by the institutions it funds, TTI is launching a Policy Engagement and Communications Program. Its objective is to support TTI-funded institutions in strengthening their policy engagement and communications efforts so they can promote their research more effectively and ultimately improve opportunities to have an impact on policy.

TTI's support to organizational development (OD) is underpinned by key principles that emphasize a focus on policy impact that leads directly to improvements in peoples' lives.[2] These principles stress the need for OD to contribute to practice, sharing and participation, and reaching the broader policy research community. TTI's OD support is designed to demonstrate the successes of its participating think tanks.

Objectives of the Policy Engagement and Communications Program

TTI defines *policy engagement* as developing an understanding of, and taking part in, the policy-making process. This includes interactions with stakeholders and directly or indirectly informing or influencing the policy debate.

TTI views *communications* as the dimension of policy engagement that focuses on synthesizing, packaging and distributing research results, throughout the research cycle, and through media and interactions with key stakeholders.

The objectives of this program are to strengthen the policy engagement and communications capacity of TTI's funded institutions in the following areas:

[2] The full list of principles is available upon request.

- Understanding policy processes in specific contexts (identifying key stakeholders, political supporters and opponents; prepare for and react to policy windows, etc.);
- Engaging in knowledge brokering (ensuring the evidence is credible and practically useful,

building coalitions with like-minded groups, being entrepreneurial – getting to know and working with policy-makers, building long term programmes of credible research, and identifying key networkers and leveraging them);

- Contributing to the public debate (involving and reaching out to different policy actors – not only policy-makers); and
- Synthesizing and packaging knowledge and evidence (writing effective policy briefs, translating research results for different audiences, enhancing institutional websites, and taking advantage of online resources and more).

Program Modality

The Policy Engagement and Communications Program is based on a mentorship/facilitation model that allows for highly engaged support, as well as constant learning across the program. *Mentorship/facilitation* is defined as the role of listening, providing guidance, learning from mistakes, seeking solutions from the team, and suggesting new paths when opportunities present themselves.

The program will enable think tanks to customize their own capacity building with the support and ongoing input of a mentor/facilitator (hereafter: mentor). TTI-funded institutions will be invited to work in small groups of two to four institutions and a mentor will be assigned to work with each group. Mentors will be supported by a global or regional (depending on the implementation model chosen) Program Coordinating Lead who will coordinate and integrate lessons across the different groups supported.

The program is based on individual institutional needs, with an emphasis on collaboration between think tanks where common synergies have been identified. This model will aim to encourage a learning-by-doing approach where think tanks enhance policy engagement and communications by sharing best practices with peers, adjusting and innovating to suit the specific context. It provides an opportunity to contribute to a community of practice focused on experience sharing, learning and ultimately improving the way that think tanks communicate their research. The program is targeted at the Communications Director/Manager/Officer, or staff responsible for the communications function within the institution.

Purpose and Scope of the Consultancy

TTI is searching for an implementing organization or organizations to act as Coordination Leads for the Policy Engagement and Communications Program, at a global and/or regional level. Whether the program is implemented globally or regionally will depend on the pool of expertise identified by this call for Expressions of Interest, and will be decided before issuing invitations to submit a full proposal.

Working in close collaboration with TTI staff to plan, coordinate and implement this program over 18 months, the selected organization(s) will:

1. Gain a thorough understanding of the policy engagement and communications support needs of

the TTI-funded institutions in each of the programming regions (West Africa, East Africa, Latin America, and South Asia).

2. Select three to five experienced practitioners per TTI programming region (12 – 20 globally), who will act as mentors and provide strategic individualized support to small groups of think tanks in the area of policy engagement and communication over a period of 12 months. TTI grantees may suggest mentors, to facilitate recruitment. In situations where a group does not identify a suitable mentor to work with, mentors will be recruited through the Coordinating Lead's own networks. The Coordinating Lead(s) should be open to hiring highly qualified mentors outside their existing networks.
3. Develop contracts with all mentors and carry out the administration of these (including travel arrangements and payments).
4. Organize and manage all financial and logistical arrangements associated with regional meetings.
5. Co-facilitate inception meetings in each region with all of the potential mentors and the communications personnel of participating think tanks.
6. Coordinate closely with TTI staff and mentors to undertake a diagnostic exercise with the participating think tanks to identify and prioritize areas of improvement.
7. Coach mentors as they provide strategic individualized support to each group of think tanks.
8. Liaise regularly with the mentors to report on progress, challenges, and overall implementation.
9. Participate in project-wide planning and operational meetings.
10. Report on mid-term progress, lessons learned and success indicators/targets for measuring the impact of the mentoring program.
11. Organize an end-of-year review meeting to synthesize and roll-up learnings and outcomes of the support program.
12. Produce a final program report, as well as a shorter summary report for dissemination.

Candidate Profile

The consultancy is open to global or regional organizations from the private and not-for-profit sectors. TTI is looking for Expressions of Interest from candidates with a wide range of geographic expertise. This call is therefore open to candidates interested in implementing the program in one of TTI's four regions, as well as to those interested in implementing the program across all of the regions. The pool of expertise identified through the Expressions of Interest will determine whether the program will be implemented by region or globally; a final decision will be made before organizations are invited to submit full proposals. To the extent that global organizations plan to engage local partners, they should not lock them into exclusive arrangements for the purpose of this call. Please note that country-specific applications are not eligible.

The successful organization(s) should have extensive knowledge and experience working with think tanks and/or research organizations. They should be experts and innovators in the field of research to policy to action. Moreover, the organization(s) should:

- Possess a strong administrative structure in order to manage multiple consulting contracts, organization of events, synthesis and reporting;

- Be able to operate in TTI's three working languages (English, French, and Spanish) or, at a minimum, in the working language relative to the region in which they are expressing interest; and,
- Be willing to work very closely with TTI staff and interact on a frequent basis through calls, emails and in-person meetings.

Level of Effort and Timing

The Policy Engagement and Communications Program will be phased in by region starting in January 2013.

The Coordinating Lead(s) are expected to work for the span of 18 months. The expected start date for this consultancy is January 2013.

Expression of Interest

Interested organizations are invited to submit an Expression of Interest by November 20, 2200h GMT, to thinktank@idrc.ca which includes:

- Concept note, with proposed approach to coordinating this program at a global or regional level (2-4 pages);
- Synopsis of previous comparable assignments, to demonstrate relevant experience, including costing (2-4 pages, plus annex);
- CVs of key personnel, specifically tailored to highlight relevant expertise (consolidated into one PDF document); and,
- Long list of projects undertaken in the last five years, together with coordinates (email and phone number) for a minimum of two references who can be contacted to speak to the organization's expertise and professionalism on comparable assignments.

Next Steps

The following are the next steps for applicants:

1. Register interest at thinktank@idrc.ca by November 15, 2012. Given the innovative nature of this effort, interested organizations are likely to have a number of questions. Questions and answers deemed beneficial to all potential applicants will be shared with anyone registering interest.
2. Submit Expression of Interest by November 20, 2012;
3. Eligible candidates will be invited to submit full proposals by November 23, 2012
4. Deadline for receiving full proposal is December 1, 2012;
5. Selected candidate(s) will be notified by December 7, 2012;
6. Agreements signed in early 2013.

For further enquiries please contact Julie LaFrance (jlafance@idrc.ca) and Maria Urbina-Fausser (murbina-fausser@idrc.ca).