Mentorship programmes to develop sustainable institutional capacity for increased demand and use of (research) evidence for health systems strengthening

CALL FOR A LEAD MENTOR INSTITUTE

Background and Objectives

Despite global efforts to promote evidence-informed decision-making in health, the generation and use of policy relevant research remains a major challenge.\(^1\) To address this challenge and build sustainability at a country level, the global community needs to move beyond individual capacity strengthening efforts to strengthening institutional capacity. These efforts should be complemented by strengthening the capacity of teaching institutions and policy institutes in providing relevant and rigorous training in health policy and systems research (HPSR) methods and models and also step up efforts supporting the demand and use of research.\(^2\)

The Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (AHPSR) is launching an innovative programme of work to strengthen the capacity of local institutions (teaching and policy) in six low- and middle-income countries to embed high quality training in HPSR. This programme will target both researchers and decision makers. Researchers participating in the training would be encouraged to apply for policy fellowships at local policy-making institutions as part of a practicum experience. Decision makers taking part in the training will be selected from local policy-making institutions for part-time study at the training institutions and expected to apply learnings to their day-to-day activities.

Through this call for proposals, the Alliance is seeking bids from interested southern-based institutions with teaching and training capacity in HPSR to serve as a lead mentor for enhancing capacity of at least six mentee institutions (one in each WHO Region).

The lead mentor institute should:

− Identify and respond to capacity needs of local mentee institutions;
− Design in partnership with the local mentee institutions a context-specific capacity development ‘plan of action’ that is appropriate to the local environment;
− Promote a durable and sustainable model of capacity strengthening through proven capacity development mechanisms that target both individual- and institutional-level capacities;
− Incorporate post-training coaching and mentorship to enhance application and sustainability of learning and capacity-development initiatives within institutions;
− Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan for tracking progress, measuring change in institutional capacity in mentee institutions and identify key milestones including sustainability that should be achieved by the end of the programme; and


– Build a cadre of policymaking and research/knowledge institutions (at least one in each WHO Region) that champion the use of evidence in policymaking, and that will later serve as focal mentors to develop the capacity of other institutions within their respective countries and regions.

**Specific Tasks of the Lead Mentor Institute**

The lead mentor and training hub will support the development of this initiative by:

- Assessing the training needs of the mentee institutions;
- Supporting the development of relevant HPSR courses in the mentee institutions to help promote evidence-informed decision-making in health;
- Running on-site or virtual training sessions and workshops and similar capacity strengthening activities for the development of educators in mentee institutions;
- Developing and implementing a policy fellowship programme;
- Strengthening networking between research and policy communities; and
- Administering the grant awards to the six selected mentee institutions.

**Selection Criteria**

For consideration as a lead mentor institute, the following selection criteria apply:

- Proven track record and capacity for conducting policy-relevant research, training and building of networks;
- Proven track record and capacity in knowledge translation (i.e. the process of using research in health decision-making) with demonstrated policy impact;
- Established reputation for curriculum development in HPSR;
- Providing postgraduate teaching and training support for researchers and policy makers including customised training and capacity development activities and policy fellowship programmes aimed at policy-makers and researchers to promote evidence-informed decision-making in health;
- Nurturing policy-makers and researchers to generate and use policy-relevant knowledge to inform decision-making in health;
- Visibility within the HPSR community and have relationships with leading institutions in HPSR; and
- Administrative capacity to issue and manage grant contracts with other institutions.

For consideration as a mentee institution, the following selection criteria apply:

- Have existing teaching and training in HPSR; and
- Capacity to benefit from additional support to strengthen their training programmes both in terms of the capacity of their educators and the technical content and breadth of the programmes.
The selection committee will also consider how the proposal responds to following additional factors:

- Sustainability of program beyond the Alliance funding period;
- Value for the money; and
- Monitoring and evaluation of this programme of work.

Institutions’ Profile

The selected lead mentor and training institute must be southern-based and have an established research and training reputation in the field of HPSR as well as strong linkages to teaching and training support for the production and uptake of HPSR in LMICs. The selected lead institution will be expected to work independently, regularly completing and reporting on agreed products, while maintaining an ongoing collaborative relationship with the AHPSR Secretariat.

Application Process

Deadline: 15 March 2018

Bids submitted after this deadline will not be considered. Successful applicants can expect to be notified within three weeks of the deadline. WHO may, at its own discretion, extend this closing date for the submission of bids by notifying all applicants thereof in writing.

Submissions of bids should be made at alliancehpsr@who.int. Please use the subject: WHO Bid Ref. Request for Lead Mentor Institute

Submissions of not more than 10 pages should include the following:

- Name of the bidding institution including contact details and name of a key contact person;
- Names of the proposed mentee institutions including contact details and name of a key contact person;
- Motivation for applying: how this work fits in with the bidder’s expertise and aligns with current areas of work in postgraduate teaching and training in HPSR targeting both researchers and policy-makers;
- Description of a three-year plan based on the outlined specific tasks of the lead mentor institute and the selection criteria outlined with respect to the lead mentor institute and mentee institutions; and
- Itemized budget for three years based on ToRs. This call will not fund equipment, researchers' salaries or support for hiring new permanent teaching staff.

Note for Applicants

1. WHO may, at any time before the closing date, for any reason, whether on its own initiative or in response to a clarification requested by a (prospective) applicant, modify the bid by written amendment. Amendments could, inter alia, include modification of the project scope or requirements, the project timeline expectations and/or extension of the closing date for submission.
2. All prospective applicants that have submitted a bid will be notified in writing of all amendments to the bid and will, where applicable, be invited to amend their submission accordingly.

3. Applicants should note that **WHO reserves the right to:**
   
a. Award the contract to an applicant of its choice, even if its bid is not the lowest;  
b. Accept or reject any bid, and to annul the solicitation process and reject all bids at any time prior to award of contract, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected applicants and without any obligation to inform the affected applicants of the grounds for WHO’s action;  
c. Award the contract on the basis of the Organization’s particular objectives to an applicant whose bid is considered to be the most responsive to the needs of the Organization and the activity concerned;  
d. Not award any contract at all;  
e. WHO has the right to eliminate bids for technical or other reasons throughout the evaluation/selection process. WHO shall not in any way be obligated to reveal, or discuss with any applicant, how a bid was assessed, or to provide any other information relative to the evaluation/selection process or to state the reasons for elimination to any applicant.

4. WHO is **acting in good faith** by issuing this request for bids. However, **this document does not obligate WHO to contract for the performance of any work, nor for the supply of any products or services.**

5. **WHO reserves the right to enter into negotiations** with one or more applicants of its choice, including but not limited to negotiation of the terms of the bid(s), the price quoted in such bid(s) and/or the deletion of certain parts of the work, components or items called for under this bid.

6. **Within 30 days** of receipt of the contract, the successful applicant shall **sign and date** the contract and return it to WHO according to the instructions provided at that time. If the applicant does not accept the contract terms without changes, then WHO has the right not to proceed with the selected applicant and instead contract with another applicant of its choice.