Request for proposals
Agreement for Performance of Work for a Qualitative Research Specialist

Revised deadline: 30 November 2018
1. Background

Embedding research is an innovative approach to health policy and systems research in which research is carried out as an integrated component of decision-making processes to improve the implementation of proven-effective interventions towards health systems strengthening and the achievement of Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Research that is embedded enables addressing decision-maker needs and engages them throughout the research process, is more responsive to health priorities and contexts, and can be used to inform decision-making and action for enhanced implementation and health systems strengthening. Thus, research resulting from the embedded approach can be described as relevant, demand-driven, collaborative, and actionable.

In 2012, the World Health Organization (WHO) called for greater embedding of research through its first strategy on health policy and systems research entitled Changing Mindsets. This call was echoed in WHO’s 2013 World Health Report on research for UHC. Since then, the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, an international partnership hosted at WHO, has been supporting the emergence of the embedded approach at the global and national levels by convening partners to orient them to the approach, producing multiple advocacy papers published in high-impact journals and forums, and collaborating with strategic partners to support a portfolio of initiatives employing the approach. This has resulted in a growing interest in and commitment to the embedded approach, as demonstrated by the large number of proposals received in response to calls for research, as well as the increasing number of partners using the approach in their own research portfolios.

One of these initiatives is the programme on Decision-Maker Led Implementation Research (DELIR) that was undertaken in collaboration with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. This initiative supports implementation research projects that are led by decision-makers as principal investigators in collaboration with researcher counterparts to strengthen immunization programmes and improve
immunization coverage in low- and middle-income countries around the world. Decision-makers may be policy-makers, programme managers, health providers, or others involved in implementation of an immunization policy, programme, or service. To date, a total of 14 embedded implementation research projects have been supported through this initiative, primarily in Africa and Asia. These projects are coming to an end or recently completed in 2018.

2. **Purpose and objectives**

While interest in and commitment to the embedded approach is growing, there remains limited real-world evidence on the practice of embedding research. Specifically, more evidence is needed on the process of carrying out embedded research projects, disseminating and applying the findings, and the results from the projects. As such, there is a need to systematically capture cross-cutting lessons from the embedded implementation research projects from the Decision-Maker Led Implementation Research Initiative. This will enable the identification of strategies, mechanisms, and lessons learned from the projects, including what worked, what didn’t, and why. The purpose of this Agreement for Performance of Work (APW) is to engage a qualitative research specialist to support the systematic gathering of cross-cutting lessons from the embedded implementation research projects from the DELIR initiative to understand the process of carrying out the embedded implementation research projects, disseminating and applying the findings, and the outcomes from the projects.

3. **Activities**

The following activities will be completed under this APW:

- **In-Depth Interviews.** The Qualitative Research Specialist will carry out in-depth interviews with decision-makers and researchers engaged in DELIR. Specifically, the researcher will conduct separate interviews with the primary decision-makers and researchers leading the projects (approximately 28 respondents). Interviews will be conducted through teleconference services, in English or French depending on the preference of the participant and based on a guide that is developed for this purpose and informed by the literature, conceptual framework, and results of a document review that is developed. Repeat interviews or follow up with respondents may be necessary to fill gaps in the data until comprehensiveness is reached.

- **Transcription.** The researcher will directly transcribe the interviews (approximately 28) in English using MS Word. If the interviews are conducted in French, they will also need to be translated prior to transcription.
• **Analysis.** The researcher will analyze the transcripts using content/thematic analysis based on the qualitative research strategy and guided by the Alliance’s Framework for Embedded Research. Analysis will be done using an appropriate qualitative analytical software, such as NVivo. Member checking of the findings will be used to improve credibility of the data.

• **Reporting.** The researcher will develop a technical report from the qualitative component of this cross-country learning exercise. This report will include a summary of the methods applied; table of respondent characteristics; narrative description of the process of carrying out the research, disseminating and applying the findings; coding tree and quotations used to represent the strategies and mechanisms used, findings, minor themes, or diversity of experiences and perceptions; cross-cutting analysis and lessons learned from the projects.

The Qualitative Research Specialist will support the generation of cross-cutting learnings exercise working in close collaboration with an independent consultant engaged with the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research for this activity.

4. **Funding**

The maximum amount of funding available from the Alliance for this work will be **US$ 15,000.** No further funding will be provided by the Alliance within and beyond the project period. Note that value-for-money will be assessed when reviewing and selecting proposals.

5. **Deliverables**

The following deliverables are expected under this APW:

1. **Qualitative Research Strategy.** The specialist will develop a qualitative research strategy to guide this component of the cross-cutting learning exercise. The strategy will include the guide for the in-depths interviews that will be informed by the literature, conceptual framework, and results of a document review.

2. **Interview Transcripts.** Transcripts will be made for each of the in-depth interviews for a total of approximately 28 respondents.

3. **Draft Technical Report.** A draft technical report will be developed to present the methods, results, and findings from the qualitative component of this cross-cutting learning exercise. The draft technical report will be reviewed by the independent consultant engaged with the Alliance and feedback provided.
4. **Final Technical Report.** The final technical report will be revised responding to the feedback from the Alliance on the draft technical report.

6. **Timeline**

The activities and deliverables will be achieved between December 2018 and March 2019.

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<th>Deliverables</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Qualitative Research Strategy</td>
<td>December 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Interview Transcripts</td>
<td>February 2019</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Draft Technical Report</td>
<td>March 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Final Technical Report</td>
<td>March 2019</td>
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Payment will be made based on satisfactory completion of the deliverables according to the timeline.

7. **Requirements/competencies**

Applicants should demonstrate the following requirements and competencies:

- Advanced degree (PhD or master’s) in public health or related area, ideally with a focus on health systems;
- Knowledge of the embedded approach to health policy and systems research;
- Experience in qualitative research;
- Fluency or professional competency in written and spoken English and French languages.

8. **Application instructions**

To apply for this APW, please submit a proposal of no longer than five pages that summarizes:

- Contact information of the applicant including telephone number, email, and institutional affiliation.
- Relevant background on your understanding of the embedded approach to health policy and systems research.
- Short profile and summary of your experience in qualitative research.
- Proposed research strategy for carrying out the qualitative component of this cross-cutting learning exercise.
• Proposed budget based on expected time and resources necessary to complete each of the deliverables specified. Proposed budgets should be no more than 15,000 USD and commensurate with the level of experience. Please attach your Curriculum Vitae or resume, including a list of relevant publications to your proposal.

Applications will be assessed based on an understanding of the embedded approach to health policy and systems research, relevant experience in qualitative research as evidenced through previous peer reviewed publications and reports, strength of the qualitative research strategy, and fluency in English and French. Feasibility of the proposed approach and value-for-money will also be considered.

**Proposals should be submitted no later than 30 November 2018.**

**9. Right to the work**

Under this type of WHO standard contract, all rights to such work, including ownership of the original work and copyright thereof, shall be vested in WHO, which reserves the right:

• to revise the work,
• to use the work in a different way from that originally envisaged, or
• not to publish or use the work.

**10. Communication during the period of the call**

A prospective applicant requiring any clarification on technical, contractual or commercial matters may notify the Alliance via email at the following address no later than three working days prior to the closing date for the submission of proposals.

**Email for submissions of all queries:** alliancehpsr@who.int (use subject: WHO Bid Ref. Qualitative Research Specialist).

The Alliance will respond via email to any request for clarification that it receives by the deadline indicated above.