

Call for proposals

Systems thinking for strengthening district health systems - Country teams (selected countries: Timor-Leste, Pakistan and Botswana)

Deadline:

18 March 2020, 23:59 CET

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Overview

The Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research invites proposals from research institutions in Timor-Leste, Pakistan and Botswana to work with district health management teams on the application of systems thinking tools and methods to routine district health management. Proposals should be focused only on the country where the research institution is located. **Only research institutions from Timor-Leste, Pakistan and Botswana are eligible to apply.**

Background and objectives

District health manager decision-making is an important input into district health system performance. District health managers translate national health policies and strategies into actionable plans to provide health services and meet overall goals and targets. District health managers are responsible for the operationalization of health policies and for the integration of different disease-specific programmes.

It is increasingly recognized that understanding and intervening in complex health systems can be aided by having a systems thinking perspective. As an approach to navigating complexity, systems thinking aims to identify the interrelations between a system's various components. It is a way of problem-solving that views problems as part of wider, dynamic arrangements (de Savigny and Adam, 2009). A systems thinking approach can help district health managers understand the interactions between health system actors and the processes and procedures in which they are embedded.

The Systems Thinking for Strengthening District Health Systems (ST-DHS) initiative takes a unique approach by supporting district health management teams to apply systems thinking tools and methods to understand and intervene in their local health systems. Country activities will be supported by a Technical Support Centre (TSC) with expertise in systems thinking and district-level health systems strengthening. The TSC is based at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, in Basel, Switzerland.

The objectives of the ST-DHS initiative are to:

1. strengthen district health systems by strengthening the capacities of district health managers to apply systems thinking tools and approaches to their routine practice; and
2. adapt systems thinking tools, methods and approaches to district health manager needs.

ST-DHS will work initially in three countries: Timor-Leste, Pakistan and Botswana. These three countries have been identified in collaboration with WHO regional offices as priority countries for district health systems strengthening and are focus of this call.

Scope and activities of the research institution

Research institutions in the selected countries will provide research support to district health management teams in two districts (one urban and one rural) as they apply systems thinking tools and methods to their routine management practice.

Proposals should clearly outline how the research institution will:

1. Act as liaison between the TSC and district teams to adapt relevant systems thinking tools and methods and reflective practice to district-identified areas of work.
2. Provide research oversight and guidance to district teams in data collection, including identification of data sources, instrument development and ethics submission where necessary.
3. Participate in regular district meetings for data analysis, sense-making, tool troubleshooting and manuscript writing.
4. Organize national-level workshops and facilitate discussions with policy-makers through policy dialogues and other fora.
5. Develop dissemination products such as policy briefs, toolkits, guides and manuals, brochures and reports.
6. Manage overall communications and coordination of the ST-DHS in-country.

Eligibility

For eligibility for this award, research institutions must be located in Timor-Leste, Pakistan or Botswana and the proposal should focus on the country in which they are located only.

Applicant teams should be gender-balanced, with women comprising at least 50% of the team. Teams led by women are encouraged but not required.

Furthermore, applicant teams must demonstrate the following:

1. Firm knowledge of the public health systems at national and district levels.
2. Cognizance of current health system challenges and potential areas of work to be addressed by a systems thinking approach.
3. Experience and/or interest in systems thinking methods or health systems research.
4. Ability to support implementation research.
5. Ability to support policy dialogue processes and research uptake.

Evaluation of proposals

Proposals will be evaluated by a panel of external reviewers based on criteria that will include:

1. High quality research-support methods.
2. Qualifications and experience of the team.
3. Value for money.

Funding and period

It is anticipated that up to three awards (one in each eligible country: Botswana, Pakistan and Timor-Leste) will be made. No further funding beyond the scope of the bids will be provided by the Alliance within or beyond the project period. The actual number and size of awards under this call will depend of the proposals received and the availability of funds from the Alliance. The period of performance for each award is estimated at 18 months.

Application process

Deadline: 18 March 2020, 23:59 CET

Bids submitted after this deadline will not be considered.

Successful applicants can be expected to be notified within one month 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. Call for Proposals: ST-DHS country teams.**

Submissions of **no more than 5 pages** (standard font size 11, 1.15 line-spacing, normal margins) should include the following:

1. Name of the bidding institution, including contact details and name of the key contact person.
2. Motivation for applying: how this work fits in with the bidder's expertise and aligns with current areas of work in research and capacity strengthening, and systems thinking.
3. Composition of the proposed team: names, expertise, function in institution, role in team, and experience relevant to the call. CVs should be included as an annex to the submission.
4. Description of the proposed approach to be used to support district teams in systems thinking.
5. **Itemized budget for 18 months** based on the objectives and activities outlined in this call. The budget should be in US \$. **Please, also provide a summary budget** of the total costs broken down by the following categories (not all may be applicable): personnel, supplies/facilities, equipment, communications, travel and per diem, and other (meetings, publications, etc.) Institutional overheads should not exceed 13%. The Alliance may challenge proposed costs that it does not consider appropriate or as offering optimal value for money.

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. 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.

References

- DE SAVIGNY, D. & T. ADAM. 2009. Systems thinking for health systems strengthening Geneva: Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, World Health Organization.