Call for proposals

Producing a limited podcast series on systems thinking in health policy and systems research

Date issued: 1 July 2020
Deadline: 24 July 2020, 23:59 CEST

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Overview

The Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research invites proposals from a team of emerging practitioners and/or researchers in HPSR with health communications expertise to produce, host and distribute a limited podcast series on the topic of systems thinking for health systems strengthening. The five-episode project will involve working closely with the Alliance to define the format and select interviewees. Marketing of the limited series will be done in conjunction with the Alliance. This is not a research call.

About systems thinking

It has been recognized that understanding and intervening in complex health systems requires a set of approaches, methods and tools to navigate the features of complex adaptation, such as feedback, non-linearity, self-organization and emergence that are observed within complex systems. System thinking is a 'way of seeing', a discipline for problem-solving in complex contexts, that considers problems as symptoms of the wider dynamic system. Systems thinking places an emphasis on the interdependencies across systems components, instead of the components themselves.

Just over a decade ago, the Alliance published [its flagship report, *Systems Thinking for Strengthening Health Systems*](#). The Alliance was an early proponent of the utility of systems thinking for health systems strengthening in low- and middle-income countries. This report proved catalytic in introducing concepts of systems thinking to considerations of how health system interventions can be better designed and evaluated. In [2012](#) and [2014](#), the Alliance further supported the publication of two journal special issues focused on systems thinking; the first focused on applying systems thinking to health system frameworks, and the second showcased studies employing systems thinking from low- and middle-income countries.

Over the years, the Alliance has continued to uphold systems thinking as a key pillar of its work to build the field of health policy and systems research (HPSR). However, momentum has waned on advancing systems thinking; while there is broad consensus on its importance, there remains greater need to engage systems thinking in practice. This is true at both policy and service delivery levels.

Currently, the Alliance is developing an emergent portfolio on systems thinking and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This includes work on strengthening district-level capacities to use systems thinking in routine management; developing applied systems thinking case studies for healthier populations; developing a global community of practice of systems thinkers; and advocating for systems thinking at all levels of the health system. The expected outcome of these efforts is a renewed global interest in systems thinking for strengthening health systems, accompanied by increased opportunities for capacity strengthening, research use and greater investment in government use of systems thinking.

About the desired outputs

The Alliance is seeking to produce a limited series podcast comprising of five episodes on the topic of systems thinking in HPSR, to communicate the trajectory of systems thinking for strengthening health systems over the past decade, and promote its relevance in attaining the SDGs. Each episode will be approximately 20 minutes, and should work both as a standalone

episode, and as part of the series. The format of the episodes should be part of the proposal, but we expect at least some interviews with key systems thinking experts.

Therefore, to stimulate a new generation of HPSR practitioners and researchers in advocating for the importance of systems thinking in strengthening health systems, the Alliance is looking to work with a small team of emerging practitioners and/or researchers in HPSR with expert communication and production abilities to produce this series. The team will work closely with the Alliance to refine the format for the episodes and select experts for interviews. However, the sound design and production, as well as the hosting will be undertaken by the team. Marketing and dissemination of the series will be done jointly with the Alliance.

Call objectives and timeline

The objective of this call is to develop, produce and host a limited podcast series on systems thinking in HPSR. The specific objectives of the series are to:

- Present a historical perspective on systems thinking in health systems strengthening;
- Deliberate on the science of systems thinking in HPSR: definitions, tools and approaches;
- Explore the policy and political challenges that ensnare systems thinking; and
- Highlight LMIC experiences of using systems thinking.

Episodes will be uploaded to relevant podcasting services (e.g. Apple podcasts, Spotify, SoundCloud) and joint dissemination plan will be developed. **The podcast series is expected be fully completed by October 2020.**

Eligibility

Teams submitting proposals to this call must demonstrate a mix of core competencies, including:

- High-quality sound production/engineering expertise (including sourcing music and editing);
- Storytelling and editorial ability;
- Knowledge of health and HPSR;
- Ability to work and record interviews remotely; and
- Experience in previous podcast production and/or media preferred.

There are no geographic requirements for this call for proposals, though teams that involve members from LMICs are encouraged to apply. Teams with a gender balance and/or led by women are also encouraged to apply. Students and recent graduates are particularly encouraged to apply.

Selection process

Proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- Demonstrated understanding of concept, and suitable proposal (40%)
- Organisational capabilities and team composition (40%)
- Appropriateness of budget, and value for money (20%)

Following a review of the proposals by a team at WHO, shortlisted proposals will be invited to make a brief presentation to the selection panel as part of the interview process.

How to apply

Deadline: 24 July 2020, 23:59 CEST

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: Systems Thinking Podcast Series.**

Format of submission

Part 1: Administrative Information
Names of all proposed team members along with name and contact details (postal address, email, phone) of a key contact person.

Part 2: Technical proposal
The technical proposal should include the following sections:

Introduction (up to 250 words)
The introduction should provide an overview of the team and a basic statement of motivation.

Approach (up to 750 words)
Provide an overview of the proposed set of outputs and how they will be

achieved. This will include information about processes and technologies used. Highlight key challenges you see in approaching this project, and how these challenges will be managed. In particular, given the current COVID-19 pandemic and various travel restrictions, please indicate how you will proceed with the production of this high quality podcast series.

Proposed timeline (up to 250 words)
Indicate an approximate timeline for working to complete the overall project before the deadline of October 2020.

The team (up to 250 words to describe the team composition overall, and 150 words per each team member profiled)
Provide an overview of the team, and which team members will be responsible for which roles and responsibilities. Short introductions to the team members should also be included. Full CVs are not necessary. It is particularly important to demonstrate that the team composition covers the various capacities outlined in the 'Eligibility' section.

Part 3: Portfolio of relevant work
A portfolio can be provided in any format that best conveys the previous work of members of the team. A list of links to online versions is fine.

Part 4: Budget
Please provide a budget breakdown with a justification for costs. All figures should be in USD.

Budgets should provide a breakdown of personnel costs, equipment, technology subscriptions, and any other costs (such as project management etc.) that might apply.

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.