Request for Proposals

Research Consultants
February 1, 2022
About DIAL

The Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL) is a “think, do, replicate” tank that investigates digital transformation best practice at the national, regional, and global level. DIAL combines practical research with evidence-based advocacy to identify which digital efforts work, package them as re-usable solutions, and encourage their use. DIAL is funded through a collaboration among the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the United Kingdom’s Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCDO) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and hosted within the UN Foundation in Washington, D.C.

In its new Strategic Plan period, 2021-2025, DIAL is providing more direct support to national governments, beginning with one country in 2021, to enable more low- and middle-income countries to embark on and accelerate a whole of society approach to digital transformation and responsible data use. DIAL believes that if more countries can demonstrate that their digital and data transformation investments improve service delivery, then new countries can accelerate their own digital transformation and responsible data use journeys.

Project Description

In support of these goals, DIAL’s research agenda is focused on how digital transformation and data governance can be designed for the public good, i.e., fostering participation, individual agency, choice, and trust. The research team pursues this through its own independent research as well as through a broad range of collaborative efforts with a global network of digital thought leaders. The team’s research products broadly are organized around two main categories:

1. Documentation & Analysis: Through this work, the team identifies, documents, and analysis current examples of digital transformation and data governance – producing case study-type products that seek not only to surface lessons learned and pathways to positive development impacts but also understand the risks of and constraints to digitization.

2. Exploratory Research & Thought Leadership: Through this work, the team identifies frontier issues that will play a formative role in how digital transformation and data governance is designed and implemented in the future. In some instances, these research processes can help DIAL investigate emerging topics and help shape an organizational perspective or policy position. In other instances, this work will be used to pose questions, bring visibility to emerging concepts, or prompt public debate.

In both cases, the goal is ultimately to produce practical guidance and actionable insights that enable policymakers, technologists, and those that support them to navigate the complex choices and inevitable trade-offs they are faced with today and those they will be faced with as technologies, business models, and consumer expectations evolve.

Scope of Work

Problem Statement

The DIAL Research team seeks individual consultant(s) to contribute to both its documentary and exploratory functions by being active participants in intellectual life at DIAL and by leading the production of specific research products. The purpose of this RFP is to identify consultant(s) with expertise and a demonstrated track record of high-quality research related to the 2022 thematic priorities of the research team: a) Digital public goods, inclusive platforms, and open digital ecosystems and b) Data governance and trusted data sharing.
Across these thematic priorities, the research team will be looking to develop a network of consultants who bring expertise related to a range of functional areas including but not limited to: 1) legal, policy, regulatory, 2) measurement and evaluation, 3) financing, and 4) underlying technology architecture for digital transformation.

**Goals of the Project**

Responsibilities of the consultant will include the following activities:

1. *Produce case studies and/or thought pieces:* The specific cadence and expectations for each piece will be determined based upon the topic, volume of existing research, DIAL’s intended use, etc. This may include producing short blogs or articles to spotlight specific issues, white papers to help refine and articulate DIAL’s position on an issue, and/or rigorous peer reviewed papers. The DIAL research team will work closely with the consultant at project initiation to identify the appropriate mix of written materials but, for the purposes of planning, would likely involve production of 1 white paper (approx. 12-18 pages) and 2-3 shorter spotlight pieces or case studies (approx. 3-5 pages) over the course of the year.

2. *Engage DIAL staff and relevant partners on thematic discussions:* In addition to engaging with DIAL staff and relevant partners over the natural course of developing research products, the consultant will be expected to lead at least one discussion/debate/presentation related to the themes covered in their area research.

3. *Serve as a thought partner and reviewer of other research:* This would include periodically reviewing other DIAL research products and joining relevant planning meetings as identified by the DIAL Research team. Level of effort in this capacity would be capped at project initiation based upon the consultant’s availability and DIAL needs/budget.

These responsibilities would be carried out over the course of 2022, beginning in April and concluding in December.

**Deliverables**

The following table reflects the anticipated deliverables and schedule required for this project. Respondents may suggest amendments as part of their proposals, for approval prior to contracting. All deliverables must also be submitted in widescreen format.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Deliverable/Outputs</th>
<th>Estimated Completion Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Spotlight Paper #1</td>
<td>May 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Spotlight Paper #2</td>
<td>July 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Spotlight Paper #3</td>
<td>September 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>White Paper</td>
<td>November 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Presentation to DIAL and partners on research</td>
<td>December 2022</td>
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Period of Performance
Work will start on or around April 1, 2022 and we’re requesting that it be completed by December 31, 2022. During this time, we anticipate a close working relationship with the chosen consultant(s).

Outcomes
The outcomes of this project are twofold. First, the consultants will generate best-in-class thought leadership which will contribute to the body of knowledge around digital transformation and development impact. Second, the project will expand DIAL’s technical expertise and raise the organizational profile as a research entity.

Proposal Submission Requirements
Proposal submissions, which may be created in Word, PowerPoint, or a combination of the two, must include the following components. Respondents may include additional elements as needed.

• Proposed approach: Briefly summarize your understanding of the project objectives and your approach to contributing to those objectives. As part of this, please enumerate areas of technical expertise and research interests and how those would support DIAL’s thematic research priorities: a) Digital public goods, inclusive platforms, and open digital ecosystems and b) Data governance and trusted data sharing.

• Relevant experience: Explain experience relative to this project and provide 2-3 examples of similar work (where possible please share links or attachments to existing research products)

• Budget: Provide a desired daily rate and an estimate percentage of time you would have available to commit to this project on a weekly basis for the duration of the Period of Performance [up to but not to exceed fifty percent of the consultant’s time]

• References: Provide names and email addresses of at least two prior clients willing to discuss their experiences working with you.

Submission Format and Timeline

• All submissions are due on February 24, 2022 by 6:00pm EDT. We expect the submissions to be in the 2–3-page range but will not penalize submissions that are above or below this range.

• Questions and clarifications will be communicated as needed to Respondents by March 1, 2022

• The selected Respondent will be notified on March 4, 2022 by 6:00pm EDT

• Please send all submissions to RFP@digitalimpactalliance.org

• In case Respondents encounter a problem submitting, please contact Jonathan Dolan, DIAL Research Director at jdolan@digitalimpactalliance.org.

Questions and Answers
Please forward any questions to RFP@digitalimpactalliance.org by February 15, 2022. DIAL will make every effort to respond to questions within 24 hours and may choose to share the questions and answers from these bilateral discussions with other Respondents.
Evaluation Process

DIAL will review all written proposals and may request a phone interview to address questions or provide clarification. The evaluation committee will use the following criteria to evaluate candidates’ response and make selection decisions:

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<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Score (1-5)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Approach</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The proposed approach demonstrates an understanding of the project goals and a process / strategy that will advance those goals</td>
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<td><strong>2. Relevant Experience and Expertise</strong></td>
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<td>Solid understanding of the key dynamics and trends in the relevant substantive areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appropriate level of understanding of the key stakeholders and dynamics within the ecosystem</td>
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<td>Can speak with authority and credibility on the key project issues</td>
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<td>Experience working with emerging markets and the field of global development</td>
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<td><strong>3. Budget / Value</strong></td>
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<td>The proposed pricing is within budget</td>
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<td>The proposed pricing demonstrates a competitive price and good value for the money</td>
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<td>Development and Emerging Market Experience</td>
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<td><strong>4. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive</strong></td>
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<td>Preference for individual consultant who would help reach DIAL’s diverse community – particularly women, candidates from LMICs, and other underrepresented groups</td>
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Intent and Disclaimer

This RFP is made with the intent to identify a consultant (or consultants) to deliver results as described in this RFP. Issuance of this RFP does not obligate DIAL to award a resulting contract and any costs incurred in preparation of a proposal is the sole responsibility of the respondent.

In submitting a proposal, the respondent certifies that information contained therein is truthful and accurate to the best of the respondent's ability. Should any information later be found to not be in-line with this certification, DIAL reserves the right to terminate any resulting contract(s) and/or select an alternative contractor. DIAL assumes it can be confident in the Consultant’s ability to deliver the product(s) and/or service(s) proposed in response to this RFP.

If DIAL amends the RFP, copies of any such amendments will be sent to all respondents.

DIAL is partially funded by SIDA with a commitment to women and non-US owned organizations, DIAL will consider all proposals in consideration of the selection criteria but will give preference to women and non-US owned businesses.
Contract Terms

The UN Foundation/DIAL will negotiate contract terms upon selection. A copy of the contract terms and conditions will be provided upon pre-selection. All contracts are subject to review by UN Foundation’s Business Services Budget Reporting (BSBR) team. Once a draft contract is reviewed by BSBR, DIAL’s Program Manager will contact the Vendor. The project will start upon the execution of the contract. The contract will outline terms and conditions, scope, budget, and applicable flow-down terms proscribed by the funding partners and the UN Foundation.

Release

Consultant understands that DIAL has chosen to solicit an RFP for consulting services, and that consultant’s response does not guarantee that DIAL will enter into a new contract with Consultant or continue any current contract(s) with Consultant.

Consultant agrees that DIAL may, in its sole discretion:

- Amend or cancel the RFP, in whole or in part, at any time
- Extend the deadline for submitting responses
- Determine whether a response does or does not substantially comply with the requirements of the RFP
- Waive any minor irregularity, informality or nonconformance with the provisions or procedures of the RFP
- Negotiate with all consultants UNF deems acceptable
- Issue multiple awards
- Copy the responses

This RFP is not an offer to contract. DIAL assumes no responsibility for Consultant’s cost to respond to this RFP. All responses become the property of DIAL.

The Consultant, by submitting a response to this RFP, waives all right to protest or seek any legal remedies whatsoever regarding any aspect of this RFP.

Consultant represents that it has responded to the RFP with complete honesty and accuracy. If facts provided in Consultant’s response change, Consultant agrees to supplement its response in writing with any deletions, additions, or changes within ten (10) days of the changes. Consultant will do this, as necessary, throughout the selection process. Consultant understands that any material misrepresentation, including omissions, may disqualify it from consideration for a contract award.

Consultant understands it may receive proprietary and confidential information from DIAL during the RFP process (“Confidential Information”). Consultant agrees to not use Confidential Information for any purpose other than its participation in the RFP process and to not reveal Confidential Information directly or indirectly to any other person, entity, or organization without the prior written consent of DIAL. Consultant further agrees to exercise all reasonable precautions to maintain the proprietary and confidential nature of Confidential Information where it can best demonstrate its value and capacity to deliver ecosystem-wide, meaningful value.
Intellectual Property (IP) Considerations

DIAL’s mission is to create public goods that enable a more efficient digital economy for everyone’s common benefit. To serve this goal in partnership with other organizations and individuals, DIAL funds the development of important hardware and software, databases, computer protocols, research and useful industry standards.

Intellectual property ("IP") is at the heart of all things creative and inventive. DIAL’s IP policy is shaped by our key funders’ (i.e., the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) policies. DIAL’s work products thus must comply with BMGF’s “Open Access” policy. Further, any IP DIAL funds should be licensed for free use worldwide. This is accomplished through open source and Creative Commons licensing and by open standards, unencumbered by restrictive copyrights and patents.

The scope of work for this project and deliverables will, as such, abide by DIAL’s intellectual property (IP) policy and its donor’ compliance requirements. If special considerations are required, DIAL will negotiate those on a case-by-case basis with selected vendors.

As required by its donors, DIAL is committed to “Global Access”. As such, DIAL will ensure that knowledge and information gained from any project and any deliverable produced will be prompt and broadly disseminated under a creative commons license, and any funded developments will be made available at an affordable price to:

- People most in need within developing countries and /or
- In support of the U.S. educational system and public libraries, as applicable

DIAL will take into consideration consultants’ intellectual property issues as part of the selection process.