



ISDC Research Initiative Assessment Reviewer Scope of Work

April 2021

Background

The Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) is One CGIAR's external, impartial standing panel of experts in science and development subject matters. System Council (SC) appoints the eight members, including the Chair, to provide rigorous, independent strategic advice to SC (i.e., the funders). To implement the CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy, the One CGIAR portfolio will include approximately 36 Research Initiatives. Of these 36, up to 20 will launch in January 2022, with external review of Research Initiative proposals to begin as early as August 2021.

Role of ISDC in Research Initiative Proposal Assessments

As mandated in the ISDC [Terms of Reference](#) cited below (clauses 3.6 and 3.7), ISDC provides guidance comprising:

- “analysis and advice on optimizing the CGIAR Portfolio as a whole
- efficient processes for calling for and assessing proposals, including the appropriate proposal assessment metrics as well as linkages between proposals to achieve the high-level outcomes of a call for proposals
- any updated guidance relevant to the quality and relevance at entry stage of proposals taking into account the quality of research for development frame of reference. . .”

To accomplish its mandate, in 2020 ISDC published an updated version of the [Quality of Research for Development in the CGIAR](#) (QoR4D) frame of reference. In preparation to assess Research Initiative proposals, ISDC created 17 criteria and a scoring mechanism inspired by the QoR4D.¹ The [Brief](#) serves as the foundation for the assessment of Research Initiative proposals. ISDC, with the support of the CGIAR Advisory Services Shared Secretariat (CAS Secretariat), will conduct, organize, and summarize proposal assessments that it will submit to SC.

External Subject Matter Expert Reviewers

An [ISDC member](#), supported by CAS Secretariat, will lead each proposal Review Team. Each Review Team will comprise three anonymous, external peer reviewers² identified through a competitive CAS subject matter expert roster. Among the Team, CAS Secretariat will appoint a coordinator to aggregate and coordinate the review, working closely with an ISDC member or representative. Each Review Team will consist of two reviewers with expertise in the primary scientific areas of the proposal and one who brings a different scientific expertise perspective.

CAS Secretariat will engage reviewers on an honorarium basis. The formal contracting arrangement is via the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, the host of the CAS Secretariat. Reviewers cannot assess more than two proposals during the same calendar year. The time commitment for reviewers will be roughly three days for one review. It is expected an additional review would require only about two-thirds of this time allotment since background reading and onboarding would be diminished. A coordinator may only serve in this role once during a calendar year and the

¹ For details on the QoR4D operationalization process, refer to Quality of Research for Development in Practice for One CGIAR (2021).

² A proposal may have only two reviewers if extenuating circumstances occur.

time commitment is expected to be four days. It is anticipated the ~three days will be delivered in a review cycle for one proposal during approximately six weeks. The Scope of Work section details the flow of work during the period. The following outlines the honoraria.

- 1 proposal as reviewer (\$2,500)
- 1 proposal as coordinator (\$3,000)
- 2 proposals as reviewer (1st \$2,500 + 2nd \$2,000 = \$4,500)
- 1 proposal as reviewer and 1 as coordinator (coordinator \$3,000 + reviewer \$2,000 = \$5,000)
- Serving as coordinator for 2 reviews is not possible during the same calendar year

The following outlines the qualifications of the reviewers.

- Expertise in one or more of the One CGIAR Research Initiative topics (note: this is not an exhaustive list of expertise needed for the [CAS roster](#))
 - Agroecology
 - Agronomy
 - One health
 - Gender and social equality
 - Climate resilience
 - Sustainable or climate-smart livestock
 - Gene editing and novel technologies
 - Aquatic foods
 - Agrobiodiversity
 - Genebanks and genetic conservation
 - Urban food systems
 - Policy to drive food system transformation
 - Markets and value chains
 - Foresight for sustainable development
 - Healthy, safe, affordable diets
 - Dryland crop-tree-livestock systems
 - Market intelligence in agriculture and food systems
 - Plant health
 - Digital technologies in agriculture and food systems
- More than 10 years' experience working in research and/or development; minimum of a Master's degree, PhD preferred
- Completed [conflict of interest policy](#) form
- Availability to start August 1, 2021; flexibility exists with time since reviews will be rolling and continue through 2022
- Time commitment: 3-4 days over a 6-week period depending on role (i.e., reviewer or coordinator)
- Previous experience in reviewing quality of research (e.g., for peer review journals, grants)

Reviewer Scope of Work

- Independent background reading (CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy, QoR4D materials, provided independent evaluation resources)
- Attendance at a virtual assessment onboarding
- Completion of proposal assessment template (including scores and narrative), to be completed within 2 weeks upon receipt of proposal
- Incorporation of 1 round of feedback, if necessary, on proposal assessment template to be completed within 3 days of receipt
- Review of final aggregated review report to be completed within 48 hours upon receipt

- Availability via email or virtual meeting to answer questions by ISDC or CAS Secretariat during 6-week assessment cycle; meetings typically occur during the hours of 7:00–20:00 CET. An expectation is that email communication should be responded to within 48 hours during business days. An effort will be made to accommodate time zones when possible.

Scope of Work for Reviewer Coordinator

- All tasks of a reviewer with addition to:
 - Assist CAS Secretariat with feedback of initial template, if necessary, from additional two reviewers
 - Build consensus among possible divergent reviews
 - Completion of aggregated template from all reviewers of proposal
 - Work closely with CAS Secretariat and ISDC lead in preparing final aggregated report

Timeline

The timeline for ISDC assessments is projected to last six weeks and begin in August. External reviewers must be flexible as the *timeline is approximate*. Assessment of the entire 36 Research Initiative portfolio is anticipated to continue into 2022. A sample timeline is provided below:

