

## Knowledge management: improving cross-organisational sharing and learning

### Consultant Terms of Reference (ToR)

#### Background

Conciliation Resources is an independent international organisation working with people in conflict to prevent violence, resolve conflicts and promote peaceful societies. We believe that building sustainable peace takes time. We provide practical support to help people affected by violent conflict achieve lasting peace. We draw on our shared experiences to improve peacebuilding policies and practice worldwide.

Conciliation Resources has a reputation for innovation in peacebuilding driven by cross-contextual comparative learning. This is in evidence through practical exchanges between our country programmes, our research publications, and our flagship *Accord* publication, which documents lessons and innovations in peacebuilding.

Despite this, learning across the organisation is ad hoc rather than systematic, often verbal and informal, and potential opportunities for exchange are missed. Many teams struggle to keep the rest of the organisation informed and apprised of their on-going work, which is partly due to the variation in sizes of teams, different cultures within teams and the extent to which programme teams are away from the office<sup>1</sup>.

Through a specifically-funded project, we are looking at improving our organisational learning. We have identified five workstreams through which to deliver this improvement:

- cross-organisational learning – identifying common thematic learning questions and appropriate learning methods to explore them
- incentives, roles and responsibilities – ensuring organisational learning is embedded in job descriptions, appraisal and line management sessions;
- planning, monitoring and evaluation – ensuring our PME draws out learning when reporting on project deliverables;
- organisational culture and leadership – ensuring senior leadership prioritise, demonstrate and give visibility to effective organisational learning;
- knowledge management

This ToR document relates specifically to the knowledge management workstream, although efforts on knowledge management should seek to complement and engage other workstrands as much as possible. The knowledge management working group (KMWG) within Conciliation Resources will work to ensure synergy between this and other workstreams, both during and following the consultancy period.

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<sup>1</sup> Under Conciliation Resources' operating, programme teams are based in London, with frequent and extended travel overseas. Conciliation Resources does not have offices overseas, although four staff members are based either in or near the programme contexts on which they work

## Knowledge management: key issues

In June 2017, we conducted a staff baseline assessment<sup>2</sup> to establish: which current knowledge management systems<sup>3</sup> are used and how; whether and how these systems help staff to share information; what challenges exist in the use of these systems that prevents effective sharing.

The baseline assessment confirmed that Conciliation Resources' knowledge management systems for storing and sharing information (whether for reporting purposes, developing fundraising ties, sharing insights on best practice, or presenting learning for other contexts) are used in many different ways and to different degrees across the organisation.

Staff members are unsure as to what types of information should be shared on different knowledge management systems, with whom and how information should be presented, all of which has eroded levels of engagement and lessened the cross-organisational learning potential of this information exchange. There are many occasions of teams 'reinventing the wheel' and starting from scratch working on a particular issue or approach, when there might already be knowledge, learning or expertise in-house that could be used.

In addition, current systems are felt not to be working effectively. Staff concerns around usability, off-line and distance working access and cyber security have led to a lack of user confidence and low levels of engagement. In turn, this has reinforced a culture of 'silo working' and some teams have moved away from Conciliation Resources' 'in-house' knowledge management systems in favour of app-based or online tools/platforms, which better correspond to their needs.

## Purpose and scope

We are looking for a consultant with a strong track record in organisational development to support and advise on how Conciliation Resources can make more efficient and coherent use of its knowledge management systems, with a particular focus on enabling cross-organisational learning.

Over the course of the consultancy, the consultant will look both short-term and long-term. In the short term, they will propose a number of 'quick-win, quick-fix' actions addressing staff uncertainties around what, where and how information related to organisational learning should be shared. These actions will streamline and clarify existing systems, with the aim of building the momentum of information sharing in support of organisational learning amongst staff. Whilst the KMWG will lead on integrating these actions into organisational practice, the consultant will be expected to offer support and advice on how best to do so.

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<sup>2</sup> The baseline assessment asked 3 questions as a basis for discussion: 1) what systems do you/your team use and how? 2) what is working well? 3) what doesn't work/what are the main challenges? Discussions enabled staff to elaborate on what content they share to inform the organisation, who they share with and when, and where they store information.

<sup>3</sup> Knowledge management systems in Conciliation Resources include: server or cloud-based filing systems; contact and fundraising databases; server or online project management tools; the organisation's intranet; the organisation's central monitoring and reporting system; email accounts (for communication and filing)

Looking longer term, the consultant will assess Conciliation Resources' knowledge management systems in the round, drawing conclusions on their suitability in enabling effective information sharing, identifying blockages and suggesting recommended reforms to its knowledge management systems which the organisation should consider undertaking over the medium to long term. These recommendations will be used to inform ongoing discussions on organisational development.

## Overall objectives

Existing knowledge management systems are streamlined and strengthened so that staff are clearer and more confident in sharing information contributing to organisational learning

Existing knowledge management systems are assessed to determine their suitability in enabling Conciliation Resources' organisational learning needs, with suggestions for reform proposed where appropriate.

## Deliverables

- 1) Consultations with KMWG and 'deep-dive' conversations with selected staff members to reflect on staff baseline assessment findings to identify blockages/challenges and to explore opportunities for improving existing knowledge management systems.
- 2) A report containing:
  - a) an action plan, produced in consultation with the KMWG, outlining a set of short-term action points based on the above consultations and offering best practice on how to implement these. The actions should consider how best to find the balance between respecting individual teams' 'working culture' and encouraging greater contribution to common KM systems.
  - b) an 'in-the-round' assessment of the organisation's knowledge management systems, their suitability for organisational learning, and proposed changes/reforms to be considered by the organisation in the medium to long term.

## Professional criteria

- Professional experience and expertise in organisational development, with a familiarity of knowledge management systems and how they contribute to organisational effectiveness.
- Experience of working with international NGOs and/or organisations which have undergone growth from small to medium size in a short period.
- Experience of advising on and implementing organisational change processes and influencing organisational behaviour/culture change.
- Pragmatism, with good listening ability and problem-solving attitude.
- A strong motivational and engaging style.
- (Preferable) UK-based and able to travel to London for consultations.



We anticipate that the deliverables will require 12 days of the consultant's time, subject to further discussion with applicants and agreement with the chosen consultant . The work should be carried out by the end of June 2018.

You are invited to submit a covering letter, no longer than 2 sides of A4 paper, which responds to the TOR and articulates: how you would approach the challenges set out in the TOR; what experience/expertise you bring to the role; your day rate in light of the work outlined. If helpful, we are available for you to have a conversation with us, prior to you submitting your proposal.

The deadline for applications is 17.00 on Monday 26 February.

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