

Terms of Reference

Consultant for Solution Exchange Evaluation - Results

20 October 2009

1. Background

Solution Exchange is an initiative of the UN Agencies in India (the “UN Country Team” – UNCT), begun in 2005 for the purpose of establishing Communities of Practice (CoPs) to share knowledge and experience among practitioners from Government, donors, civil society and academics. The initiative is organized around broad themes that correspond both to India’s Tenth Five Year Plan as well as to seven of the globally mandated Millennium Development Goals.

Within these broad themes, Communities are evolving organically; setting their own agendas and defining their own substantive priorities (see www.solutionexchange-un.net.in for details). Each is led by a *Resource Group* of relevant UN agency representatives and leaders from Government, NGOs, research/academic institutes and donors. The relevant UN Agency head(s) chair the Resource Group as the Community’s *Facilitators*. Facilitators are supported by a Resource Team comprised of a Community moderator (*Resource Person*) and a Research Associate to build the Community, moderate its electronic network, maintain its website and organize Community activities.

After four years of operation, twelve Communities of Practice have been established, and membership stands at over 16,000 members and 28,000 subscriptions. The initiative has three broad offerings: email exchanges resulting in *Consolidated Replies* (CRs), faced-to-face events, and small-group collaborative work.

In early 2009, the UNCT expressed concerns about the sustainability of Solution Exchange, asked for a review of the business model, and suggested that Solution Exchange evolve in accordance with advances experienced in IT since its creation.

2. Purpose

Assess the relevance of the SE business model in view of the changes to the context:

- scarcity of resources
- IT advances
- demands from members

3. Objectives of the Evaluation

This would be an appropriate time for an independent evaluation of this initiative, in order to:

- a. Provide an independent view on the project’s performance and impact to date;
- b. Offer recommendations on immediate adjustments and improvements;
- c. Contribute to defining the future direction of the effort, and review the business model in line with the opportunities offered by new technologies and needs identified by members.

4. Evaluation Questions

A. Impact

1. To what extent has SolEx informed policies and policy choices? Examples.
2. To what extent has SolEx influenced stakeholder programme design? Examples.
3. Is the SolEx business model still relevant, in view of:
 - Technology advances (social networking, wikis, blogs, etc)
 - CoP maturity
 - Stakeholder needs (including resources)

B. Effectiveness

1. Extent to which SolEx has been effective in sharing knowledge among stakeholders and beyond.

2. Extent to which SolEx has been effective in use of that knowledge among stakeholders and beyond – products – CRs, face-to-face events, collaborative group work, etc.
3. Extent to which Solution Exchange has been instrumental in enhancing capacities of individuals and organisations? Examples.
4. Effectiveness of Solution Exchange in creating *Communities of Practice*?
5. Effectiveness of Solution Exchange in promoting a 'culture of collaboration'? Examples.
6. Effectiveness of Solution Exchange in empowerment of stakeholders to share knowledge?
7. Effectiveness of Solution Exchange in seeding new ideas: learning → applied learning → results? Examples.

C. Efficiency

1. Extent to which resources have been used for the achievement of the results?
2. Effectiveness of face-to-face events? Is it justified that ICT enabled CoPs meet to advance their objectives?
3. Extent to which the business model based on Consolidated Replies and moderated discussions (resource intensive) is efficient?

D. Sustainability

1. Extent to which SolEx is institutionalised?
2. Resources available and projected? Alternative Models?
3. Devolution of authority to members?

5. Methodology

The evaluation would entail the following inputs:

- Review of project documentation and reports.
- Project documentation; Quarterly Reports; Country Team Reviews; knowledge products issued; user testimonials.
- Interviews of select stakeholders.
- From the UN Country Team, Resource Groups, *Action Group* sponsors; Community members from the different organizational and regional perspectives.
- Sample Surveys.
- Questionnaires to the different parties on value, benefit, constraining factors, possibilities etc.
- Benchmarking analysis.
- Statistical comparison with similar business models internationally; qualitative comparison with similar networks.
- Consultations with key stakeholders on preliminary findings.

6. Eligibility

Both individuals and institutions are eligible to apply for this assignment.

7. Desired Competencies - Evaluation Consultant (Results)

The Solution Exchange evaluation will be conducted by a team of two consultants.

Team of two evaluators, looking at:

- relevance and impact
- business model/efficiency and technology

One consultant would look exclusively at the results, relevance and impact of Solution Exchange. This consultant need not have any background on knowledge management, technologies, processes etc.

Profile of evaluator looking at relevance and impact

- Sound knowledge of development issues and practitioners in India
- Background in the social sciences with nearly twenty years of progressive experience
- Cross-sectoral (poverty, health, education) experience

- Substantive policy analysis/ development experience
- Substantive monitoring and evaluation experience

8. Deliverables

- Inception Report at the end of two weeks
- Draft Report plus presentation of findings after six weeks
- Final report – within two weeks of receipt of comments

9. Application Submission

- Email id: anand.k@un.org.in
- Deadline for submissions: November 05, '09.
- Commencement Date: November 21, '09
- Duration of contract: Ten weeks (estimated work days: 30)