

TERMS OF REFERENCE

THE CHS VERIFICATION SCHEME: THE WAY AHEAD

1) BACKGROUND

The **Core Humanitarian Standard** (CHS) was launched in December 2014. Since then more than 50 organisations have assessed or been assessed on how their organisations are meeting the Standard. The opportunity to verify against the Standard is a critical development to coherently and transparently assess how organisations and the sector as a whole is improving how it works with and for people affected by crisis.

The CHS is a voluntary and verifiable standard. Verification is a structured, systematic process to assess the degree to which an organisation is achieving the CHS. The CHS Alliance's Verification Scheme currently offers four options of **self-assessment, peer review, independent verification** and **certification**. Although each option is stand alone, the indicators used in each process are common to all four options to allow for sector-wide analysis of the results.

Currently, in line with good standard setting practice, certification and independent verification is undertaken by an organisation independent from the CHS Alliance. At the current time there is one organisation who can undertake this, HQAI.

With more than 50 organisations having undertaken one of the processes of verification, this represents a substantial commitment by organisations to review their accountability to the Standard. It also represents a substantial commitment of time and resources by the sector as a whole. However, for the Standard to have the intended impact of building trust and learning for the organisations and the sector, there needs to be a growing commitment to verify against the Standard by organisations. This requires

- A verification scheme that is clear and accessible for organisations, as well as robust and rigorous in its application.
- The processes for independent verification or certification are accessible and sustainable for organisations. This requires the services to enable the scheme are cost effective for large and small organisations.
- Increased clarity on the incentives of verification and the respective recognition for organisations.

This research will review the processes to date and consider how the current scheme and its various institutional processes can be further developed to achieve the above.

2) PURPOSE, SCOPE & OBJECTIVES

2.1 Purpose

The research will review the current scheme and make actionable recommendations for the Verification Scheme and its accompanying institutional arrangements, to ensure it is fit for purpose, i.e. it develops trust, learning and improvements in organisations and the aid sector.

2.2 Scope

The research will take a retrospective look at the current scheme, whilst making recommendations for moving forward. It will evaluate this based on the following:

- a) **Relevance:** Are the four options of the current verification scheme still valid and relevant? If yes, could they be improved, and if not, what are the alternatives?
- b) **Effectiveness:** What are the major obstacles of the current scheme and its various options for organisations applying them? What is needed to overcome these obstacles? Is the scheme clear enough in terms of the expectations for organisations to meet the requirements?
- c) **Efficiency:** Are the current processes of the scheme cost effective? Are there more cost-effective alternatives to the options that could lead to better promotion of trust, learning and improvement? Should it be a requirement for all bodies providing independent verification to be ISO Accredited?
- d) **Impact:** How can verification reach the required scale to have impact for the sector? How are organisations recognised for their efforts towards meeting the CHS?
- e) **Sustainability:** How sustainable is the current model, particularly regarding external verification? How cost effective is it? What would make the scheme more cost effective and sustainable?

2.3 Objectives

The objectives of the research will be to develop clear propositions for the following:

- a) **A clear, accessible Verification Scheme** that a diverse range of organisations, including large, small, north, south, NGO, UN, donors, governments and others can access the various verification options, whilst providing rigour and consistency in its use.
- b) **A way forward to engage other certification bodies who are able to provide** accessible and cost-effective options for certification, ensuring there is clear consistency and rigour in their respective approaches, and they contribute to a cohesive learning for the sector.
- c) **A scheme that is clear in how its results are used, showing clearly the** incentives to use the scheme, how organisations are recognised for their efforts, as well as how both collective and individual organisational results are communicated.

3) METHODOLOGY

A combination of primary data collection and secondary data review is expected during the evaluation. Primary data will be collected through a variety of methods, including key informant interviews and group discussions. Visits to meet key stakeholders should be planned for.

Key stakeholders will include:

- CHS Alliance Board and Staff
- CHS Alliance members – with a clear sampling approach to cover the range of experience in verifying against the CHS
- Non CHS members who have conducted a verification process.
- CHS copyright holders (Groupe URD and Sphere) plus members of the CHS Steering Committee
- HQAI staff and auditors (as guided by HQAI)
- ACCREDIA – accreditation body
- Partners –DEC, SCHR, ALNAP, UN organisations, RCRC Movement,
- Other Standard setting bodies and NGOs using other standard setting schemes
- Government partners
- Funding Partners

4) EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND TIMEFRAME

It is estimated that the consultancy could take up to 60 days in total and should be finalised by 31 May.

- 1 March – Proposal for methodology of review submitted.
- 11 March – Contracts finalised and work commenced
- 11 April – Midterm update to the CHSA staff and Board and HQAI.
- 1 May – Draft Report submitted to CHSA for comment
- 31 May- Final Report submitted

5) CONSULTANT SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

This review requires substantial experience of conducting humanitarian evaluations, combined with management system auditing in the humanitarian / development sector, legal background, and standard setting in different sectors. Knowledge of the CHS and other quality and accountability initiative in the humanitarian sector would be useful.

This is likely to require a team approach.

It is envisaged that the review would take up to 60 consultant days.

6) APPLICATION

Applications are invited from suitably qualified senior consultants. Interested individuals or teams should submit a proposal with an outline of methodology (no more than 4 pages) specifying the daily fee rate and possible timeline for the completion of the work, plus current CV and examples of similar pieces of work.

This should be sent to recruitment@chsalliance.org by Friday 1 March CoB. Shortlisted candidates will be notified by the 5 March.