Validation of RFI Reports

V1.0 - 10 Nov 2017

1) Criteria

Rationale:

The RFI is a reporting framework – at this first stage of development, there are no correct answers, no (widely accepted) best practices, no (widely accepted) standards, no benchmarks for any of the 45 indicators on which institutions are required to respond. There may be 'politically correct' answers, 'locally accepted' guidelines and practices – but these can not (yet) be taken as a global requirement for all RFI Reporting Organisations (RROs) – and can therefore not be used to 'validate' quality of information provided in RFI Reports.

Secondly, COHRED as organisation does not have the logistical capacity to validate content of RFI Reports – not even if we know organisations well. There is, therefore, no possibility on quality assurance at this stage of RFI development except indirectly through: i) requiring institutions to publish their own RFI reports – and thus take responsibility for their actions themselves; ii) encouraging partners to comment on this – directly, or iii) via RFI Web.

Thirdly, COHRED does not necessarily have the global credibility, representativeness nor means to adjudicate in case of disagreements about substance and/or quality of content. The RFI is being designed as an open, 'stakeholder-owned' system in which an independent RFI Board that is globally representative and has members from all key stakeholder groups. The RFI Board will have the credibility, representativeness and means to adjudicate and change future versions of the RFI. At this stage, the RFI Board is 'nascent' – being formed. This is the third reason why, in this first version of the RFI, no quality control of content – other than suggestions for improvement – will be done.

Lastly, the RFI is 'Improvement – Focused' : much emphasis is placed on the third component of any response – the "C" questions : 'what improvements are planned over the next 2 years ?". This is at the heart of the RFI – a system encouraging movement forward instead of providing a current report card.

For that reason, in terms of 'terminology', the RFI system uses the phrase **'Validation'** and not certification. An institution can use the RFI Logo once its RFI report is "validated" – which is explained in detail in the next pages. This may well change in future versions of the RFI as the increased global learning and global evidence base are likely to result – in due course – in /wide acceptance/ of 'best practices', standards or benchmarks.

For now – in the first RFI version – the following **four (five) straightforward, neutral, measurable criteria that promote transparency will be used for RFI Report Validation**:

4 (5) CRITERIA FOR RFI REPORT VALIDATION

1. RFI Report is written according to *RFI Reporting Guide*

1.1. There are complete answers to all 45 Indicators – and, where needed, to the supplementary 3 Domain related questions.

1.2. Each question has a 'reasonable' or 'realistic' outline of what improvement(s), if any, will be made in the short-term (2 years).

1.3. A summary list of improvements is provided at the end of the RFI Report, and is listed in a descending order of prioritization – preferably using a 'SMART' approach.[1]

- *As part of the RFI Validation process – the RFI Team may suggest improvements in each of these three sub-requirements. Such suggestions are non-binding.*

- *The RFI Report may seem a bit 'repetitive' at times. RFI Reporting Organisations are free to group responses under indicators. However, Reports are required to indicate how they can 'improve' on each of the 45 indicators – either in the short-term (up to 2 years) or afterwards.*
  Because the key of the RFI System is continuing improvement – validation will NOT be provided unless there is an explicit statement on each area of the RFI - preferably in a 'SMART' manner – and summarized at the end to provide both the RFI Reporting organisation and all readers with a management oriented overview of research partnership related improvements planned for the future.

2. RFI Report has been prepared in line with recommendations provided in the *RFI Implementation Guide*

2.1. The RFI Report should list the Chair and Team Members of the Institutional RFI Report Writing Team. *For the Chair, contact details need to be provided.*

2.2. The RFI Report or accompanying letter of submission should provide recommendations for improvement of the RFI – *based on experiences gained during preparation of the RFI Report.*

2.3. Other comments are made in the RFI Validation Feedback letter.

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[1] SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria

3. The RFI Report – in its final version – <u>will be published by the Institution</u>

3.1. <u>Can be done through website and/or hard-copy.</u>

   3.1.1. ***It should be easy to find, free to access, clearly carry the Institution's name*** *– and title of the report. Two options are possible:*

   • ***[INSTITUTION] Research Fairness Report***
      or
   • ***[INSTITUTION] Research Partnership Report***

   3.1.2. ***Publication should include a web-publication with opportunity for partners or others to provide publicly visible comments.***

   3.1.3. ***It should provide the RFI Logo and information according to standard and the date of validity of the RFI Validation.*** *(Details will be provided in a separate paper)*

3.2. <u>The RFI Reporting Institution allows COHRED to re-publish the RFI Report on the RFI Web for full and free distribution.</u>

   3.2.1. *RFI web publication will include a web-publication with opportunity for partners or any others to provide publicly visible comments – including in anonymous manner.*

3.3. <u>The RFI Reporting Institution agrees to give COHRED / RFI Team access to data and information that was used to prepare the RFI Report</u>, for purposes of quality control and aggregate analysis, upon request.

4. The RFI annual subscription is paid

   • The RFI subscriptions are based on the principles of i) affordability (especially for institutions in low and middle income countries), ii) proportionality (larger institutions pay more than smaller ones), and iii) (future) financial independence of the RFI.
   • Additional services and benefits will remain available to institutions who continue their annual subscriptions. The benefits and added-value is detailed on the RFI Web.
   • An overview of current subscription rates can be viewed at http://rfi.cohred.org/subscription-information/

5. Supplementary Requirement for RFI Reports in languages other than English – <u>submit a translated version as well</u>

   • *All RFI Reports published in other languages than English will need to be submitted with a copy of a translation into English. The RFI Team realises that this is, in principle, not 'fair'. The reason for this is that the global evidence-base can only work for all stakeholders everywhere, if all evidence is accessible to all. English, as the main language of science and technology is the common platform – at least, for now.*

2) Validation Process

Step 1:

Institutions are free to download RFI Reporting Guides and Other Information from the RFI Web at any time, at no cost. (https://rfi.cohred.org)

Step 2:

Prospective RFI Reporting Organisations (RRIs) or any other Users are advised to notify the RFI Team (rfi@cohred.org) of their intention to complete the RFI report for their institutions. This can simply be done through the RFI Web.

Notification of 'intent to write an RFI Report' is the basis for obtaining technical support from the RFI Team, access to additional web-based resources to assist in RFI Report production and publication.

An additional benefit is that institutions will be listed on the RFI Website as 'Preparing RFI Report' for 6 months from date of notification – thus providing the benefit of being seen as 'supportive of fairness in research collaborations' while exploring how best to do this, and well before actually producing an institutional RFI Report.

Step 3:

Institutions then proceed by establishing an internal RFI Team – *Ideas and suggestions on how to do this are contained in the RFI Implementation Guide, available from the RFI Web.*

- *The key: RFI Team leader is someone senior enough to have direct access to the institution's executive and to bring key personnel together in the RFI Team.*

Step 4:

The RFI Report is compiled according to the RFI Reporting Guide - *available from the RFI Web.*

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Step 5:

Submission of the RFI Report to the RFI Team – through RFI Web. This version of the RFI Report is seen as a 'DRAFT Report' that is not made publicly available. Instead – this Draft RFI Report will be sent back with recommended suggestions for improvements, if any.

- *The appropriate RFI Subscription fee needs to accompany the submission – for the first or first and second years (as the RFI Validation is current for a maximum of 2 years).*

Step 6:

RFI Team allocates the report to 2 reviewers, who have declared an absence of conflict of interest in relation to the submitting institution, and who have signed a confidentiality agreement with COHRED for this purpose.
Should there be disagreement between reviewers, a third reviewer will be asked to provide a final decision.

Review will be completed and feedback provided within 2 months.

Review can result in:
1) Accept as submitted
2) Recommendations for improvement – either content or lay-out or both
3) Rejected / requiring major revision

- *The RFI Team can make (exceptional) decisions not to validate a submitted RFI Report if it lacks serious in content or quality of solutions being suggested. The submitting institution will – in such cases – be provide with a set of necessary improvements and be issued with a 'model RFI Report' for comparison of quality.*

Step 7 (optional):

In case of recommended changes, the Institution has 3 months to re-submit a modified report. Beyond this period, the process will have to be considered as a new submission.

Should there be disagreement between the RFI Team and the Institution resulting in a decision by the RFI Team for non-awarding of a validation, the Institution can appeal to the Executive Director of COHRED – who will refer this matter to the 'nascent' RFI Board for a final decision.

Step 8:

The RFI Team will validate the RFI Report – and provide instructions and ideas on how best to use this great achievement for added value to all concerned.

NB. Validation is current for 2 years from data of validation.

Step 9:

Once validated, the submitting institution will be notified of validation in writing and receive a document with standard logo's and phrases that it can use to show that it is now an 'RFI Validated Institution', as well as a RFI Validation certificate that can be displayed in public.

Step 10:

The RFI Web will be updated with the institutional RFI report, and the institution will be added to the list of "RFI Reporting Institutions'. The RFI Validation is valid for 2 years from award.

COHRED / RFI Team / 10 November 2017