



## **Request for Proposals External Evaluation**

### **I. Background and Motivation**

Established in 2009, the Belmont Forum (BF) is a global partnership platform that brings together research and innovation funding agencies and non-governmental organizations with shared interest in supporting transdisciplinary approaches to global environmental change. Through these strategic multilateral partnerships, resource providers leverage existing and planned parallel activity, access additional knowledge and infrastructure, and gain added value through end-user engagement.

The primary instrument of support is through Collaborative Research Actions (CRAs), which are international calls for proposals in challenge areas relevant to addressing global environmental change. The purpose, objectives and procedures of CRA have been summarized in a generic Memorandum of Understanding established in 2012 and is signed by all Belmont Forum member and partner organizations. It is a living document that maintains currency 5 years after the last signature.

The CRAs solicit multinational proposals that are co-developed and co-implemented by a consortium of natural scientists, social scientists, and relevant stakeholders to advance the Belmont Forum Challenge:

“understanding, mitigating, and adapting to global environmental change”.

Recently, the Forum has extended the consortium to include for specific CRAs, integration of public health science and data and information sciences.

The themes for CRAs are decided upon at the annual Belmont Forum plenary meeting by member organizations. The members represent scientific funding bodies with authority to engage in multilateral partnerships. Once approved by the members, the theme is explored through one or more scoping workshops that seek to engage input from both international experts and funding organizations to shape the breadth and structure of the eventual call for proposals. The scoping takes stock of the maturity of the field to address the theme, the needed mechanisms for support, expected outcomes, and relevance to strategic plans, regional-to-global frameworks, and policy.

During this scoping phase, the Forum seeks to connect with additional non-member funding and resource providers with interest in the theme. The flexible governance of the Forum allows engagement with resource providers from any sector or institution, with no stipulation on minimum contribution or type. Funding and in-kind contributors to CRAs are required to provide an annex that describes their contribution, who is eligible for their resources, any special conditions regarding theme or geography, and the name of a contact person to answer proposer's questions about their resources; and, they must sign the CRA partnership MoU if they have not already participated in a prior CRA. The CRA's uphold the Belmont Forum open data and open access policy and principles. This means that all partners, regardless of whether their own governance includes provisions for open data and open access, will uphold the Belmont forum data policy in all awards made through the CRA.

The resources for a CRA are aggregated in a "virtual pot" financial arrangement. The virtual pot model allows for contributors to maintain control over their provisions to the CRA and simply synchronize their contribution to projects with other investing partners. In this way, each meritorious project receives support from a minimum of 3 resource providers contributing to the CRA, fostering multilateral collaboration and leveraging partner contributions. Funding partners may commit their support in their usual manner with associated terms and conditions, lessening the administrative burden and without requirements for new procedures and complex agreements. CRA partnership is the first step towards possible future membership, if partners are so inclined.

As the Forum has matured, it has recognized the need for other partnership modalities to engage with a broader range of resource providers to support the growth of the transdisciplinary community but also to maximize the added value from the funded projects collectively. To that end new funding mechanisms have been developed to support coordination functions that increase both internal and external connectivity among projects within a given CRA; once longer established, it is hoped that the coordination offices themselves might coordinate with each other to spur cross-thematic synthesis and integration. Recognizing also the need to develop an early career cohort with transdisciplinary expertise, the Global Sustainability Scholars program connects undergraduate and graduate students with Belmont Forum-funded projects. New partnership modalities are co-developed with philanthropies, private sector, and global organizations to find pathways of mutual benefit that will advance transnational, transdisciplinary science and open data / open access.

The Forum has reached a 10-year milestone, and seeks to evaluate its progress towards the meeting the Belmont Challenge and the efficacy of the organization to continue to reach its goals and fulfill its mission. As a membership-based body that has grown from 7 members to 29 and now represents connectivity to resources in more than 50 countries, we have an obligation to demonstrate the benefits and added value from investment of member organizations in the Forum. We would also like to demonstrate the added value of this transdisciplinary, transnational approach to CRA partners (both member and non-member organizations), evaluate the flexible partnership methods of our CRA process, and validate the benefit of transdisciplinary approaches for informing decision making, policy, and practice. The

Belmont Forum also welcomes forward-looking recommendations on what can be achieved towards the Challenge in the next 10 years.

## **II. Scope of Work**

The Belmont Forum requests proposals for an external evaluation comprising two focal areas:

### **1. Delivery of the CRAs**

This area focuses on the scientific, policy-relevant, and other transformational aspects of the funded projects by the Belmont Forum. The evaluation should assess the added value of the full portfolio of Belmont Forum projects to determine whether the transnational, transdisciplinary collaborations are meeting the Belmont Forum Challenge. This part of the evaluation may require an exploration of what added value is expected from members and partners participating in the CRA, particularly as it relates to leveraged investment, increasing interdisciplinary knowledge, supporting knowledge to action, engaging relevant stakeholders in co-creation, informing decision-making, transforming practice, or contributing to more effective policy.

Evaluation of CRA delivery should also explore whether the funding announcements themselves are being developed thoughtfully and managed efficiently to maximize the potential partnerships, encourage transdisciplinary and transnational proposals, and deliver outcomes. Is the process inclusive, efficient, accessible to new partners, and does the CRA language, publicity, and engagement process elicit the types of proposals that would meet the Belmont Forum Challenge?

### **2. Organizational function**

The second focal area is the function of the Belmont Forum itself. This evaluation should look at the growth of the Forum, its governance, and the efficacy of its structures to deliver on that governance. This area would include an evaluation of internal and external communication, engagement, functional roles, transparency, and longevity.

As mentioned above, the evaluation should address both the current status and provide recommendations for future effort in these two focal areas.

## **III. Expected Deliverables**

The first step in the evaluation process will be to develop a terms of reference for the evaluation in conjunction with the Co-Chairs and Executive Director that clearly outlines the agreed scope of work. The evaluation should utilize both quantitative and qualitative assessment of the focal areas to generate an assessment report and recommendations. As both the membership and funded projects of the Belmont Forum are global, much of the interaction will take place via phone and videoconference and email. The primary opportunity

for face-to-face engagement will be at the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary event (October 21-22, 2019) and annual plenary meeting (October 23-25, 2019). The selectee(s) will be expected to attend these events to engage with members, partners, leadership, the Secretariat, and project participants. The selectee(s) will have access to the plenary's closed door sessions as well.

It is expected that the evaluation process will conclude by the end of Q3 2020. The deliverables will be disseminated in two parts:

1. A preliminary report on area 1 (Delivery of the CRAs) should be made available by the 2019 plenary (October 23-25, 2019). Members will provide comments and input on this preliminary report on area 1 before the end of 2019.
2. A final report encompassing both focal areas will be delivered to the Belmont Forum by a date identified at the point of selection, but before the end of Q3 2020 so that it can be shared in its entirety with the 2020 plenary.

#### **IV. Eligibility**

This request for proposal is open to all organizations with a track record of delivering evaluation of public funding to support research and innovation. As the emphasis in the Belmont Forum is on global partnership, it is recommended that the evaluator(s) demonstrate in the proposal an ability to work with global organizations and capture broad geographic perspectives.

It will also be required that the selectee(s) be able to travel to Taipei for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary event and plenary meeting. Costs for attending the meeting should be included in the budget proposal.

Selectee(s) will be granted access to the BFgo proposal and reporting system to conduct their assessment of project-related queries, except for those documents where there would be a conflict of interest, either real or perceived. All governance documents and meeting minutes will be made accessible by the Secretariat through their gSuite. The Belmont Forum meets GDPR compliance standards, including its BFgo system. We expect the evaluation to be GDPR compliant as well.

#### **V. Application Process**

Proposals will be accepted via e-mail to [erica.key@belmontforum.org](mailto:erica.key@belmontforum.org). The proposal packet should consist of:

- no more than 4 A4 pages detailing your organization and approach to the evaluation
- CV of lead personnel
- an example evaluation output, if it would not break confidentiality rules

- a budget for the evaluation, separated into 2019 and 2020 calendar year requests – the first should address the preliminary analysis of area 1 to be delivered by the October 2019 plenary meeting and associated travel, and the second for the remaining work to be delivered by end of Q3 2020.

All proposal documents should be provided in .pdf format. The deadline for submission is **22 July 2019 at 23:59 GMT**. Late proposals will not be accepted or reviewed.

## **VI. Point of Contact**

For any questions regarding the scope or application documents, please contact Erica Key (erica.key@belmontforum.org) in the Belmont Forum Secretariat.