

# Clarification questions: research on the intersections of conflict and climate

The XCEPT Research Fund is commissioning research on the intersection of conflict and climate. The request for applications opened on 5 July 2024. An information session was held on 22 July 2024. The deadline for clarification questions was 26 July 2024.

Below you will find all the clarification questions asked – both during the Q&A and via email – and our responses (in blue). The answers to these questions take precedence over what is written in the original RFA documents.

This document is updated as new questions are answered.

**Last updated: Friday, 02 August 2024**

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## Applying for both the research funding and the Fellow opportunities

1. Can you apply for both the research funding and the Fellow role?
  - Applications may be submitted for both the research project and the Research Fellow opportunities. The evaluation panel will take into account potential conflicts of interest that could arise in this circumstance, and may request applicants adjust their proposals to ensure that the XCEPT Research Fellow is positioned to support advising and quality assurance of XCEPT Research Fund outputs.

## Budget

2. Can potential grantees include indirect costs on the budget template or can you only apply for direct research costs (i.e. salaries of researchers & their travel costs etc.)? How should indirect costs be accounted in the budget?
  - Applicants can include indirect costs. If overhead costs are a percentage (i.e. included in labour daily rates), please describe how it has been calculated in the budget notes (column H). If the overhead cost is a flat rate, please include it in the materials section of the budget template, and please describe how it has been calculated in column (H). We would encourage you to include as much information as possible in the budget notes column (H).
3. Could you share your overhead rate?
  - Applicants should follow their organisation's established rates.
4. Are pilot interventions considered an eligible expenditure?
  - As a research project we do not typically fund interventions.
5. The RFA asks for a budget for the project to be submitted which contains a detailed outline for all three phases. However, the phases are supposed to build on one another, with phase two responding to the REA and phase 3 implementing the project designed under phase two. Can you please elaborate, in how far there will be flexibility in reallocating the initially submitted budget and/or if it is possible to indicate the specific budget positions for phases 2 and 3 along rather general budget lines, instead of detailed positions?
  - You are only required to submit a detailed breakdown of costs for the completion of the Phase 1 "REA" and the Phase 2 "Design of research projects", covering, where applicable: staff costs, including day rates; equipment; travel and accommodation; event costs; administration and overhead costs. Budget lines should be broken down to show the various costs under each heading. The Phase 1 REA and Phase 2 research project design is expected to cost a maximum 10% of the total value of the award.
  - A detailed budget is not required for Phase 3 "Implementation of research projects". However, at this proposal stage you should provide an indication of how much time each of the proposed core team members is expected to spend on the project, along with their day rates. Please also include indicative budget line items for materials costs such as data collection and uptake-related expenses.



- Beyond your core team, you can include more general budget lines for the Phase 3 budget, as it is just indicative at this stage, and we expect that it will change in light of the plans put forward in the Phase 2 inception report.
- A detailed budget for the Phase 3 research will not be required until the Phase 2 inception report.

## Eligibility

6. Are previous and current awardees eligible to apply?
  - Yes, previous and current XCEPT Research Fund awardees are eligible to apply for this opportunity.
7. Can an NGO from Yemen apply to this opportunity?
  - Yes, NGOs based in Yemen are eligible to apply, provided they comply with the eligibility requirements described in Section 3.4 of the RFA – *Eligibility and prerequisites for applications*.
8. Are Yemen research organisations eligible to apply?
  - Yes, research organisations based in Yemen are eligible to apply, provided they comply with the eligibility requirements described in Section 3.4 of the RFA – *Eligibility and prerequisites for applications*.
9. Could you please define the term “research organisation” in the context of this request for application? Is an NGO or social enterprise with extensive experience in the required activities eligible to apply?
  - NGOs or social enterprises are eligible to apply for this opportunity, provided they comply with the eligibility requirements described in Section 3.4 of the RFA – *Eligibility and prerequisites for applications*.
10. Could you clarify if entities from countries which are neither the UK nor Global South countries can submit an application as lead applicant?
  - The lead organisation can be based anywhere in the world, they do not need to be based in the UK or in the Global South. However, researchers and research organisations based in the Global South are strongly encouraged to apply, independently or in partnership / collaboration with researchers or research organisations based in the Global North.
11. Are applications from Limited Private companies (LPC) accepted?
  - We expect to award a grant agreement. However, if the lead organisation is not eligible to receive a grant then we can discuss a different contracting mechanism.
12. Is the contract suitable for consulting firms? Can a consulting firm partner with national/local research groups in the Global South for this bid?
  - See previous answer.
  - Any proposed partnerships should clearly outline roles and responsibilities, with a focus on ensuring equity within the project.



13. Is it possible for applicants to apply with their current affiliations but move the project to another institution (listed as the official host institution) if the grant is awarded?

- Please provide more detail about why this would be required. We expect that the organisation applying at the proposal stage will remain the lead organisation throughout.
- Chemonics will only make an award to one organisation. If applying as part of a consortia, the lead organisation will be responsible for contracting and managing downstream partners if selected.

## Partnerships

14. Will you issue a separate agreement as part of this award?

- Chemonics UK, which manages the XCEPT Research Fund, will issue an agreement with the lead organisation. If applying as part of a consortium, the lead organisation will be responsible for contracting downstream partners.

15. Do you welcome consortia of academics and NGOs? Or is this limited to policymaking stakeholders?

- We are open to a variety of consortium models, including consortia of academics and NGOs. You should demonstrate in your application you're your proposed research team have a strong track record in delivering high quality research in their field.

16. Would you expect the lead organisation to conduct fiduciary assessments of all downstream partners? Would Chemonics conduct any fiduciary risk assessment before selecting winning consortia?

- During the selection process, XCEPT will review the lead organisation's governance and internal control processes, financial management, ability to deliver, and due diligence/management of downstream partners as laid out in Annex A: Self-Assessment Form. We would expect for the lead organisation to be able to manage their downstream partners, which includes doing relevant risk assessments or fiduciary checks. However, given Chemonics experience, we can provide support in specific areas on a case-by-case basis.

17. Should the lead researcher work for the lead organisation?

- Not necessarily, it depends on how you choose to structure your team.

18. The geographies highlighted as potential intervention areas are, to a significant extent, controlled by different armed actors which are not internationally recognised as states (Non-State Armed Groups). In order to conduct research on the policies and practices of such groups, it might be necessary to cooperate with such groups and work with consultants who are either affiliated or associated with such groups. Is there any impediment to cooperate and publicly display such cooperation between the research team and armed actors under the XCEPT research programme?



- In accordance with the UK Terrorism Act of 2000 and all subsequent regulations pursuant to this Act, the lead organisation will assure that any funding provided under this award, including financial assets and economic resources, are not made available, either directly or indirectly to, or for the benefits of persons, groups or entities listed in accordance with European Council Regulation EC/2580/2001 (as amended) and/or the Terrorism (United Nations Measures) Orders 2009 of the United Kingdom, or contravene the provisions of those and any other subsequent applicable terrorism legislation.
- The lead organisation must ensure that neither it, nor to the best of its knowledge any personnel, servants, agents or sub-contracts, or any person acting on their behalf, have at any time prior to the start date and/or during the term of the award appeared on the Home Office Proscribed Terrorist Organization List.
- In addition, the lead organisation or any of its employees, servants, agents or sub-contractors, or any person acting on their behalf, must ensure that any funding provided under this award, including financial assets and economic resources, are not made available, either directly or indirectly to, or for the benefits of persons, groups or entities named on any list of suspected terrorists or blocked individuals maintained by the U.S. Government, including but not limited to (a) the Annex to Executive Order No. 13224 (2001) (Executive Order Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions with Persons Who Commit, Threaten to Commit, or Support Terrorism), or (b) the List of Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked persons maintained by the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

## Intellectual property / editorial process

19. May I ask if the Intellectual Property Rights and the Copyrights will be with the Lead Organization or XCEPT?
- Any project-specific Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) created under this award shall be owned by the awardee / lead organisation.
20. What is the editorial process like? Will the proposing organisation have editorial control or is XCEPT involved in those decisions? Is branding of the outputs under XCEPT or co-branded?
- XCEPT is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all outputs meet XCEPT research standards. As such, XCEPT will review all deliverables for completeness and quality standards, while preserving the autonomy and integrity of research conducted by the awardee.
  - Any project-specific Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) created under this award shall be owned by the awardee.
  - Where the applicant has in-house capacity to manage the editorial process (copyediting, typesetting, etc.), we encourage them to handle this



themselves. If the applicant does not have this capacity in-house, then XCEPT can support as needed.

- We expect that outputs developed under this award will be co-branded with the XCEPT logo and the UK International Development logo, in addition to the logos of the lead organisation and any other partners, as appropriate. and your own logo.

## Geographic Scope

21. Can the region of study be just one region/country, or does it have to include several focus geographies? Is there a minimum number of countries do you wish to see in proposals for this research?

- XCEPT is a cross-border conflict research programme, our focus is on conflict-affected borderlands and how conflicts are connected across borders and regions. As such, we would expect proposals to be looking at more than one country, but we do not set a minimum or maximum number of countries that should be covered.

22. Limiting the study of the Middle East to ODA-eligible countries will remove the Arab countries on the Persian Gulf and Israel from the equation – is that correct and your intention?

- XCEPT is funded by UK International Development. As such, our spending must comply with ODA rules. ODA can only be spent on activities which have the economic development and welfare of an eligible country as the main objective. Secondary benefits to non-ODA eligible countries, including the UK, are acceptable only if the activity primarily benefits developing countries.
- Given this, you could propose research that focuses on ODA-eligible countries but includes non-ODA eligible countries in a secondary way, for example as comparison case studies.

## Ideas for new research projects and ‘complementary’ projects

23. How many research projects are you expecting to be outlined in the application form as part of the “ideas for new research projects”.

- Based on the gap(s) identified in the literature review, you should propose a package of research to be implemented by the core team.
- This can be one project or multiple projects.
- You may also consider including ideas for complementary research – to be funded by the XCEPT Research Fund – contributing to additional expertise or analysis not present within the core team.

24. Please can you explain more about the "complementary research". Are these additional research questions we think of but are beyond our capacity? Or



additional geographic regions that we see as potentially helpful but beyond our teams reach?

- It could be either. XCEPT has a flexible research commissioning platform through the XCEPT Research Fund (XRF) that can fund additional research projects. Applicants will be able to propose 'complementary' research projects beyond the £500,000 available through this award to be commissioned by the XRF. For example, you might identify issue sets that complement your research but are beyond your team's expertise, or that cannot be researched within your budget. Or you might want to extend your research to other geographic areas but cannot do so within your budget. Or you might want to bring on specialist expertise in satellite data and analysis. In such cases, we offer the opportunity for you to work with the XRF to bring on new partners to carry out these complementary projects. It is up to you to decide how involved you wish to be in these complementary research projects: from designing research questions and scopes of work, to evaluating proposals, to quality assuring deliverables during project implementation.
- Complementary projects would be funded separately from this award; however, any time spent by the core team contributing to the design and oversight of these projects would draw down on the total budget for this award.

25. Under Phase 2, there are two types of research projects anticipated, one of which are 'complementary research projects'. Does this mean that the main research project shall be accompanied by other, additional research projects? If so, can you please provide an indication about the amount of funding and the duration of such complementary projects?

- See previous answer for more detail on the complementary research projects.
- There is flexibility in terms of the funding available for these projects and the timelines. However, we would generally expect these projects to be comparatively small (max. £20-50,000). Complementary projects would be funded separately from this award.

## Research Methods

26. Is primary data collection anticipated in this contract?

- Given the funding available, we would expect the winning project proposal to include an element of applicant to conduct primary data collection, though projects leveraging existing data sets for new analysis are also eligible.



## Deliverables/outputs and timelines

27. What emphasis will you place on outreach/dissemination plans when evaluating proposals? Can we suggest multimedia (i.e., a short movie/video) as part of project dissemination?

- In Section 3 of the Technical Proposal (Ideas for new research projects), please describe your proposed outputs and briefly describe your approach to outreach and dissemination. This section will be scored partly based on your dissemination approach. We encourage applicants to be creative and consider the mix of outputs that will have most impact.

28. Can you provide more clarity on the solutions or the solutions-oriented aspect of the call?

- One of the objectives of XCEPT is to draw lessons from interventions to prevent, stabilise and resolve conflict in order to inform more effective policy and programme responses. It is important that we answer the “so what?” question in our research.
- This RFA recognises that much research to date on climate change and violent conflict focuses on analysis of the problem; whereas we are seeking proposals that instead focus primarily on analysis of solutions, to help inform policy and programming responses.
- Note that the research should seek to move beyond recommendations for specific programmes, institutions and local contexts to draw bigger picture lessons about generalisability (or not) and on what works and what doesn't.

29. How many overall outputs are you expecting for the project? What is the time frame of the project itself?

- The outputs for Phases 1 and 2 are described in the RFA.
- Beyond these, applicants are free to propose a mix of outputs that include high-quality, academic-level research papers, alongside outputs geared towards policy and public audiences. The mix of outputs should prioritise achieving research impact.
- The proposed outputs should be included in Section 3 of the Technical Proposal (*Ideas for new research projects*).
- The timeframe for this project is provided in the RFA. We are expecting Phases 1 and Phase 2 of the project to be completed four months after award kick-off.

30. Is there flexibility in the Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) timelines?

- We expect the REA to be delivered in the timeframe specified in the RFA.

31. If we are thinking about implementing multiple projects, would we need the Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) for each of the projects? What are the outcomes envisioned, i.e. article publications of the rapid evidence assessment's materials gathered?

- We are only expecting you to produce one REA, but if you feel you need to do more than one you can include that in your proposal and provide a justification. The purpose of the REA is to establish the gaps in the research





in the area you have chosen to explore. The package of research that you design should respond to the gaps identified.

- The expected outputs for the first two phases of the project are listed in the RFA document.

