

TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToR)

Retainer contract: consultancy firm for digitisation of e-courses



ToR

About ICIMOD

The Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region stretches 3,500km across Asia, spanning eight countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. Encompassing high-altitude mountain ranges, mid-hills, and plains, the zone is vital for the food, water, and energy security of up to two billion people and is a habitat for countless irreplaceable species. It is also acutely fragile and vulnerable to the impacts of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss.

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), based in Kathmandu, Nepal, is an international knowledge organisation focused on the HKH region, working since 1983 to deliver greener, more inclusive, and climate-resilient development. Our work is guided by our [Strategy 2030](#), [Medium-Term Action Plan V \(2023–2026\)](#) and the associated Results Framework, and our various [policies](#). Learn more on our [website](#).

Background

ICIMOD is developing a series of e-learning courses aimed at building knowledge and capacity among diverse audiences, including policymakers, practitioners, researchers, students, and community stakeholders across the HKH region. Substantial subject-matter content exists in the form of institutional reports, presentations, training manuals, videos, and reference materials. These resources require systematic pedagogical transformation and digitisation to function as effective, learner-centred e-courses that can be delivered at scale across ICIMOD's target geographies.

To address this need, ICIMOD is seeking a qualified **consultancy firm/company** to support the digitisation of its e-learning content on a **retainer basis**, ensuring that courses are interactive, accessible, and aligned with international best practices in online learning.

Consultancy overview

ICIMOD shall provide all substantive content for the e-learning courses, including reports, presentations, training materials, videos, and interview clips from regional experts, to enable the consultancy firm to design and develop engaging digital modules. The consultancy firm will be responsible for transforming this content into fully digitised, interactive e-courses using Articulate Rise 360, Articulate Storyline 360, or a WordPress-based Learning Management System (LMS) as appropriate to the scope and complexity of each course. Assignment orders will be issued by ICIMOD on a rolling basis as courses are ready for development, with timelines and deliverables agreed upon for each assignment.

The final e-courses will be uploaded to ICIMOD's e-learning platform, <https://learn.icimod.org/>, or designed directly on a WordPress-based LMS in adherence to the platform's quality assurance requirements and packaged in LMS-compatible formats (SCORM) for deployment on Moodle.

Objectives

The primary objective of this consultancy is to produce e-courses that adhere to the quality assurance requirements of ICIMOD's e-learning platform. ICIMOD will request the consultancy firm's services as and when a specific e-learning course needs to be developed.

The specific objectives are-

- i) To review the e-learning course content and develop a comprehensive e-learning strategy for each e-course.
- ii) To digitise course content into engaging, learner-centred e-learning courses.
- iii) To apply digital pedagogy and instructional design principles to enhance learning effectiveness and knowledge retention.
- iv) To produce courses that are interactive, inclusive, accessible, and ready for deployment in the ICIMOD e-learning platform.
- v) To ensure alignment with international best practices in online learning and open educational resources.
- vi) To closely collaborate with the ICIMOD programme and communications team to adhere to the quality and programmatic requirements.

Scope of work

To achieve the objectives, the consultancy firm will undertake the following key activities in close coordination with ICIMOD.

1. Content review and pedagogical analysis

- Review all course materials and develop a comprehensive e-learning strategy with a clear outline and approaches to align with ICIMOD's programmatic needs and comms requirements, incorporating best practices in digital pedagogy to enhance learner engagement and outcomes.
- Identify content gaps, redundancies, and opportunities for learner engagement.
- Prepare a content analysis report with recommendations prior to course development.

2. Instructional design and digital pedagogy

- Develop course structures, learning pathways, and learner-centred frameworks aligned with the course objectives.
- Define and align learning outcomes with content and assessments based on established taxonomies.
- Apply digital pedagogy principles including active learning, spaced repetition, and formative assessment.
Develop detailed storyboards and design specifications for ICIMOD review and approval before production.

3. Content digitisation and Multimedia development

- Convert existing textual and static materials into engaging digital formats.
- Develop or edit multimedia elements, including:
 - Instructional and explainer videos
 - Infographics and visual summaries
 - Interactive elements such as drag-and-drop, hotspots, scenarios, branching exercises, and simulations.
- Apply ICIMOD and other relevant partners' branding or acknowledgement and ensure visual identity consistency throughout the e-course content.
- Apply accessible design standards (WCAG, widely used versions and minimum level or equivalent) to all digital content.

4. Assessment and learning evaluation design

- Design quizzes, assignments, and self-assessment tools aligned with learning outcomes.
- Incorporate feedback mechanisms and reflective exercises to support learner engagement.

5. LMS packaging and technical integration

- Package courses in LMS-compatible formats as required.
- Ensure compatibility with ICIMOD's e-learning platform.
- Configure course settings, including sequential learning rules, completion criteria and certification logic.
- Liaise with the ICIMOD web team during testing and troubleshooting at the time of LMS upload.
- Conduct user acceptance testing (UAT) before course launch.

6. Quality assurance and user testing

- Conduct thorough quality assurance (QA) reviews at each production stage.
- Test to ensure the functionality and compatibility of the e-course modules across various browsers and devices.
- Facilitate user testing with representative learners and incorporate feedback.
- Address any bugs, errors, or inconsistencies identified during testing.

7. Knowledge transfer and documentation

- Provide comprehensive documentation of the development process, tools, and file structures.
- Coordinate with ICIMOD staff and conduct knowledge transfer sessions to enable future updates and maintenance.
- Deliver all source files, assets, and editable project files to ICIMOD upon completion.

- Provide ongoing support during the initial one-month launch phase and handover process.

Deliverables

The specific deliverables and timeline will be finalised based on the complexity and duration of each course. However, they will typically include:

- i. Content analysis and gap assessment report
- ii. Detailed storyboards and instructional design plan
- iii. Draft course modules (all content, multimedia, interactions)
- iv. Revised modules incorporating ICIMOD feedback
- v. SCORM packaged course files, LMS-ready
- vi. Assessment instruments
- vii. QA and UAT report
- viii. All source files and editable assets
- ix. Knowledge transfer and documentation report
- x. Provide three-month course maintenance and upgrade support

Competencies

Qualifications

- Registered legal entity with a minimum of five (5) years of operational experience in e-learning development or digital learning.
- Proven portfolio of at least 10 e-learning courses or digital learning products delivered for academic, professional, or development-sector clients.
- Demonstrated expertise in instructional design and the application of digital pedagogy frameworks.
- Technical proficiency with Articulate Rise 360 and/or Articulate Storyline 360 and/or WordPress-based Learning Management System (LMS).
- Experience with LMS platforms, particularly Moodle.
- Experience in SCORM packaging and LMS deployment.
- Experience developing scenario-based simulations is desired.
- Prior experience with international development organisations, UN agencies, or research institutions is desired.
- Familiarity with WCAG accessibility standards and inclusive design.
- Experience with WordPress-based LMS is desirable.

Team composition

Applicants should indicate the key personnel proposed for this engagement. At a minimum, the team should include:

- Project lead/Instructional designer
- Multimedia developer/Graphic designer
- E-learning developer (Articulate Storyline/Rise)
- LMS technical specialist

Reporting and supervision

The consultant will work closely with ICIMOD’s programme and the web team. All deliverables will be reviewed and approved by the intervention manager and the web team before finalisation.

Technical evaluation criteria

The technical proposal will be evaluated on a 100-point scale. A minimum score of 60% is required to qualify for financial evaluation.

Criteria	Max score	Details
Quality of proposal and approach	20	Clarity and structure of the proposal; understanding of e-learning digitisation and instructional design; robustness of the proposed methodology; and approach to content analysis, storyboarding, and course development.
Organisational experience	20	Demonstrated experience in digitising academic or professional training content; portfolio of e-learning courses developed using Articulate 360; experience with LMS platforms including Moodle; and experience delivering similar projects for international development organisations or research institutions.
Human resources	20	Qualifications and depth of experience of proposed team members listed above.
Proposed deliverables	20	Clarity of milestones and deliverables per assignment order.
Management and operational plan	20	Clarity of project management and coordination structure; approach to quality assurance and user testing; revision and feedback management process.

The consultancy will be selected based on the highest cumulative scores obtained in the technical and financial proposals using the following formula:

- Technical score = Score obtained based on technical proposal (total 100).
- Financial score = Score obtained based on financial proposal (total 100)
- Total weightage score = 60% of technical proposal + 40% of financial proposal

The consultancy that scores the maximum weightage based on the criteria will be selected. However, the service provider must score at least 60% in the technical proposal.

ICIMOD reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal or to annul the selection process entirely at any time, without assigning any reason and without incurring any liability to the affected bidders.

Financial proposal template

Applicants are required to submit a financial proposal alongside their technical proposal. The financial proposal must be submitted as a separate document and include all cost components in the template below. As this is a retainer contract, pricing is set as unit rates per course, applied to individual assignment orders.

Course scope	Number of modules	Estimated duration (hrs)	Level of interactivity	Unit rate (USD)
Basic – Linear content, minimal interaction	1-3	1-2	Low	
Standard – Moderate design, some interactivity	4-6	2-6	Medium	
Advanced – Rich multimedia, complex interactions	7+	6+	High	

Terms of payment

There will be no upfront or monthly/annual payment for this retainer arrangement. Payments will be made upon satisfactory completion of deliverables for each e-course as follows:

Milestone	Payment (%)
Approval of the Inception report, detailed work plan, and storyboards for e-course	30%
Final delivery of the fully packaged course and documentation	70%

Method of application

The completed proposal should be submitted through email to consultancy.int@icimod.org by 16 August 2026 (11:59 pm Nepal Standard Time, UTC+05:45).

Two separate files of technical and financial proposals should be submitted along with the valid legal documents as follows:

- Legal registration and renewal certificate
- Tax registration certificate (e.g. TPIN/PAN/VAT certificate issued by the relevant statutory authority in the country where the organisation is legally registered.
- Institutional profile and other relevant documents related to the nature of procurement
- CVs of all major team members
- Tax clearance or annual tax return of the last fiscal year
- Audit report of the last three (3) years including audited financial statements

As per ICIMOD's policy, English is the official language for all agreement documents. Therefore, all required documents must be submitted in English. If any certificates or supporting documents are issued in a national or local language, a certified English translation must accompany the original document.

For further inquiries or to submit proposals, please contact:

consultancy.int@icimod.org | ICIMOD | Kathmandu, Nepal.

ICIMOD's core values

Our core values are integrity, neutrality, relevance, inclusiveness, openness, and ambition. These values are an expression of our culture and are central to the guiding beliefs and principles of our work and behaviour. Our core values will lie at the heart of ICIMOD operations and delivery. They will underpin everything we do and frame how we work with our partners. They reflect our founding intentions and the balances we seek to hold, while equipping ourselves for the future.

Ethical consideration

The consulting institutions/firm will be required to take all the necessary actions to handle the collected data responsibly (see [ICIMOD Responsible Data Policy](#)) to ensure data privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality.

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and safeguarding

ICIMOD's consultant selection process is based on the qualifications and competence of the applicants. As an employer, ICIMOD is committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, and offers equal opportunities to applicants from all backgrounds and walks of life, including but not limited to gender, age, national origin, religion, race, caste, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or social status. ICIMOD strongly encourages applications from all eligible applicants, especially women, from all parts of the HKH region.

ICIMOD is dedicated to establishing and upholding a safe and nurturing work environment, where all its employees can participate fully and meaningfully without fear of violence, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Any type of abuse or harassment, including sexual misconduct (including child abuse), by our staff, representatives, or stakeholders is not condoned or tolerated.

Commitment to the prevention of sexual harassment

ICIMOD is committed to prevention and redressal of sexual harassment at the workplace and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults and expects all staff, consultants/consulting firms, volunteers to share this commitment. We will do everything possible to ensure that only those who are suitable to work within our values are selected to work for us.

Confidentiality/non-disclosure

All material issued in connection with this ToR shall remain the property of ICIMOD and shall be used only for the purpose of this procurement exercise. All information provided shall be either returned to ICIMOD or securely destroyed by unsuccessful applicants upon completion of the procurement exercise.

During the performance of the assignment or at any time after expiry or termination of the Agreement, the consulting institutions/firm shall not disclose to any person or otherwise make use of any confidential information which s/he has obtained or may during this agreement relating to partner organisation/ICIMOD, the respondents or otherwise.

The consulting institutions/firms will be required to sign a non-disclosure/confidentiality agreement as part of their undertaking of this work.

Intellectual property, copyright, and ownership of all prepared information

The consulting institutions/firm shall retain all rights to pre-existing (background) intellectual property or materials used by the firm in the delivery of this study. All arising intellectual property, ideas, materials, processes, or processes formed in contemplation, course of, or as a result of this study shall be passed to ICIMOD without restriction.

The consulting institutions/firm shall warrant that all arising intellectual property, materials and/or products produced in pursuit of this study shall be original and shall not infringe on any third party's claim. All technical or business information, in whatever medium or format, originated, collated, or prepared by or for the consulting institutions/firm in contemplation, course of, or as a result of this assignment shall be transferred to ICIMOD without restriction on completion and shall not be used by the firm for any other purpose without express written permission of ICIMOD.

Copyright of all arising documents, data, information, or reports produced by the consulting institutions/firm under this agreement shall belong to ICIMOD and will be passed to ICIMOD without restriction. Such documents, data, information, and reports shall not be used by the firm for any other purpose other than in conjunction with this

assignment, without the express written permission of ICIMOD's Head of Communications.