

TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToR)

Consultancy services for digital and data transformation: overhaul of ICIMOD web properties

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 frontline 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 organisation established in 1983, that is working to make this critical region greener, more inclusive and climate resilient. For more information, read our [Strategy 2030](#) and explore our [website](#).

Objective

An overhauled digital presence that

1. clearly communicates the story of ICIMOD, its portfolio of work, and its impact
2. improves the quality, range, accessibility, and reach of ICIMOD's data, tools, knowledge products (including video), and online training
3. highlights its Regional Member Countries (RMCs), partners, and experts.

Vision

The vision of this task is to have an inspiring, user-engaging, mobile-first, data-driven, accessible web presence, with content available in English and, as much as possible, in the official languages of ICIMOD's RMCs.

Background

ICIMOD is setting out to transform how users access our data, knowledge, and services by vastly improving the range, uptake, and quality of our digital presence, tools, and services. Following the completion of a comprehensive digital and data discovery and audience needs analysis in 2024, which included the development of research and audience analysis, and draft wireframes for the main ICIMOD.org domain, ICIMOD now seeks a consultancy firm to design and execute the digital overhaul.

ICIMOD is seeking to make it easier for its diverse users, communities, and audiences to discover and access its work by streamlining the organisation, the processes, and the functionalities of its web properties, improving the visuals and storytelling, and implementing strategies to improve access to content and web traffic. ICIMOD wants to streamline its web offering into four broad categories – publications, data, tools, and online training.

Goals

- To create a contemporary website space, in line with the latest technologies, by rebuilding ICIMOD's core WordPress properties, organising content and processes to increase discoverability, accessibility, maintainability, and security.

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- To increase the outreach of our knowledge products through increased web traffic, and rapid updating possibilities through, e.g. quickly designing compelling visual stories, integrating content, and improving search following a user-tested design.
- To have a robust, enterprise-grade hosting solution that maintains a fast-loading website and mitigates security and downtime risks.
- Highlight ICIMOD's uniqueness, its Regional Member Countries, experts, partners, networks, information services and tools.
- To provide insight on our achievements, outcomes and impacts by bringing our Results Dashboard and annual progress reporting online.
- Build the ICIMOD staff's capacity in Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), content creation, and user interface/user experience (UI/UX).

Activities and Deliverables:

As part of this ToR, the vendor will conduct the following activities:

- **Content revision, design, and curation:** Successfully lead content revision sprints with ICIMOD staff so that the programme content is up to date and old content is archived. Deliver a content design and architecture that gives equal emphasis to ICIMOD's four key digital products and services: **publications, data, tools, and online training**.
- **User Journey and navigation:** Enhance the user experience by designing intuitive navigation pathways that facilitate the discovery of essential products and services offered by ICIMOD, and where feasible, our partners. This includes implementing clear call-to-action and other relevant activities within the institution's website. Simplify the navigation structure and organise content into logical taxonomies to ensure consistency and ease of use. Provide solutions to taxonomy complexities and changes with organisational changes.
- **Comprehensive design revisions:** Coordinate with ICIMOD leadership and key stakeholders to review, revise, and expand the initial designs to ensure that they accommodate the needs and content of ICIMOD's web offerings (full list below) that includes the main website, blogs, articles, events, digital library, science tools, and data portal. Initial [wireframes](#) and [mockups](#). The design is to be mobile-first.
- **Design and design integration of e-learning platform:** Design and integrate the design of the front-end of the e-learning platform to be based on a popular Learning Management System (LMS) WordPress plugin.
- **Server migration and configuration:** Provide recommendations for selecting a new server and assist ICIMOD in configuring the new server in areas such as performance, security, scalability, backup, staging, and version control.
- **Set up a robust WordPress system and migrate content:** Set up a WordPress system in multisite in order to support flexibility in creating multiple language sites and campaigns. Migrate existing content to this new system while retaining existing permalinks.
- **Development of internal search:** Develop an internal cross-site search mechanism where the search results are aggregated from ICIMOD's WordPress sites, digital library, and data portal.

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- **Ensure functionality of existing APIs:** Ensure the functionality of existing APIs that integrate with icimod.org. For example, one API from our digital library system allows us to embed one or a series of publications.
- **Develop client-API for PowerBI dashboards:** Develop the client-API so that the dashboards built using PowerBI can be properly integrated and displayed in WordPress web pages. Currently, these are being embedded using [iframe](#).
- **Draft a new content/SEO strategy:** By identifying relevant, high-traffic, and low-competition keywords for the website's niche and target audience. Provide recommendations and set up the appropriate technical solutions to optimise the web property's search engine performance, and to set, measure, and track overall website performance. The new strategy is to include recommendations to increase user engagement, improve content discovery, increase citations or media mentions, and overall growth in global audience reach.
- **Designs of web elements:** Create complete designs of web elements that might not appear in the current web, such as pop-up notifications, interactive forms, image and video galleries. It must also include a set of infographics.
- **Collaboration with in-house staff for science tools design implementation:** Collaborate closely with the in-house development team to implement the new designs resulting from this ToR work.
- **Conduct content and design sprints:** Conduct a minimum of 4 x 2-day content sprints with the communications professionals at ICIMOD to build capacity for better content and SEO. Conduct two to four design sprints with the staff at ICIMOD to build capacity for better visuals.
- **Training and documentation:** Provide training to the ICIMOD web team on the use of website features and content publication workflows, designs, and accessible content. Provide proper developer and user documentation for the codebase, deployment, and use of the site.

WordPress requirements

- The site shall be run as a WordPress multi-site network, with posts shared across the network.
- The site to utilise WordPress' core block editor or have a block-based page builder for faster templating requirements.
- The site must have multi-language support, including right-to-left (RTL) languages and the option to redirect traffic via browser language or GEO-IP. The consultant is to recommend global best-practice approaches for translation.
- The site must follow best practices for performance, including image optimisation, pre-loading, and lazy-loading of non-essential assets.
- The site should utilise WordPress core practices as closely as possible, and where possible, proven plugins in the ecosystem should be selected for use rather than the development of custom code. Any custom code and plugins should be developed or selected to

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maximise compatibility, security, and maintainability for the future growth and development of the platform.

Server/ Hosting requirements:

- The hosting solution must be optimised for and be fully accessible across the globe, especially across ICIMOD's regional member countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan.
- The hosting solution must include automated off-site backups and a solution to restore from backup.
- The hosting solution must have class-leading security measures.
- The hosting solution must include both staging and production environments.
- The site must integrate with a Content Delivery Network for fast worldwide access.
- A carbon-neutral hosting solution is preferred.

Workflow requirements:

- The site is to accommodate the creation of user roles and publishing workflows based on the organisation's needs and hierarchy.
- The site is to have Single Sign On from Microsoft 365.
- The site is to provide a seamless environment for authors and editors to collaborate on the publication of their content, such as revision control, revision compare, and email notification on changes.
- The publishing workflow must facilitate the cross-linking of related content from both within and outside the WordPress property (by using existing APIs).
- The site must maintain logs for all back-end activities, including an audit log of post changes.
- The site must have a post scheduling facility to publish and unpublish content.
- The site must include post versioning to allow for the restoration of previous versions.
- The site must either retain existing permalinks or have 301 permanent redirections for any content that is moved or retired.
- The site must have a file management system to efficiently manage a large volume of media attachments.
- The site must be able to establish cross-linking of content, such as an event linked with a program, etc. It should also cross-link ICIMOD staff profiles, thereby enhancing the visibility of our staff members.
- The site must have a solution to effectively represent staff's designation changes, and also a solution to represent ex-staff.
- The site is to be able to use 'advanced embedding' of ArcGIS StoryMaps.

Design Requirements:

- The designs should present ICIMOD's portfolio, people, region, issues, and wealth of knowledge and content in an accessible, user-friendly manner, and facilitate the discovery, understanding and sharing of data and content.
- The design should be accessible across different devices (mobile, tablet, desktop) and browsers.
- The designs should also be compatible with all languages of ICIMOD's regional member countries, including RTL languages. The languages include Bangla (Bangladesh), Burmese (Myanmar), Chinese/Mandarin (China), Dari/Farsi (Afghanistan), Dzongkha (Bhutan), Hindi (India), Nepali (Nepal), and Urdu (Pakistan). The RTL languages are Dari and Urdu.

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- Data visualisation should be deployed, wherever relevant, to communicate ICIMOD's mission and impact.
- The designs must be compliant with modern accessibility standards like the WCAG2 AA.
- The content design must have a clear content taxonomy and templates that organise all forms of content produced by ICIMOD, including, but not limited to, blogs, news, events, reports, datasets, science tools, staff, projects, and initiatives.

Analytics and SEO requirements:

- The site must follow best practices for SEO and social media integration, such as the use of meta tags and social cards.
- The site must include integration with ICIMOD's web analytics suite and suggest and facilitate the tracking of key goals and site performance.
- The site must help ICIMOD capture key metrics regarding the balance between portfolios of work and regional diversity.

Internal Search requirements:

- The site must have a robust search functionality that collates results across ICIMOD's key web properties, including Himaldoc (<http://lib.icimod.org>, Invenio) and RDS (<http://rds.icimod.org>, custom). The search functionality must also include possibility for integration with future separate WordPress installs.

Forms requirements:

- The solution must include a means for ICIMOD to create, publish, and administer forms within the ICIMOD site, and provide form-specific permissions to various users to view and export form entries.
- Forms to have all popular features, similar to those found in widely used form plugins.
- Forms to be able to accept appointments and time slot bookings.
- A separate, hourly incremental backup solution for forms must be implemented so that data can be restored in case of outages.

Other requirements

- The vendor shall approach project management following a dynamic approach that allows for adjustment and reprioritisation of requirements and in response to user testing and feedback from key stakeholders.
- Site development shall be managed via version control (e.g. git) and the codebase shall be available to ICIMOD throughout the implementation of this ToR.
- The use of any proprietary software or 3rd party services must be pre-approved by the ICIMOD team.

List of Core WordPress properties of ICIMOD for reference:

- icimod.org
- blog.icimod.org
- regional.icimod.org (multi-language site)
- saveoursnow.earth
- hkh.icimod.org/hi-wise
- forms.icimod.org

List of other web properties of ICIMOD for reference:

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Data:

- Data portal: rds.icimod.org
- Plants database: lml-database.icimod.org

Tools:

- Science applications:
 - tethys.icimod.org/apps (23 tools total)
 - energydss.icimod.org/apps
 - hkhssprings.icimod.org
 - icimod.org/mountain-hazards/?p=glof
 - rds.icimod.org/capacitybuilding
 - Apps under geoapps subdomain:
 - geoapps.icimod.org/kbis
 - geoapps.icimod.org/ikpp
 - geoapps.icimod.org/hichap
 - geoapps.icimod.org/BhutanForestFire
 - geoapps.icimod.org/TshoRolpa
 - Apps under Nepal-spatial:
 - Nepal.spatialapps.net/gcf
 - Nepal.spatialapps.net/nap

Notes on in-house developers:

ICIMOD has in-house developers and consultants who are responsible for the development of the web-based science applications, digital repository, and digital library. If required, the vendor is expected to work in close collaboration with them.

Vendor qualifications

The vendor must meet the following qualifications to be eligible for this TOR:

- Demonstrated experience delivering high-quality code and website design for non-profit or multi-lateral organisations, based in the Global South.
- Demonstrated experience delivering production WordPress properties for similar organisations.
- The vendor must be comfortable working with the complexities of a large-scale organisation working across multiple countries
- The vendor must have experience in visual and data-driven digital storytelling.
- The vendor must have experience working on web-based data-centric and data-driven visual tools.
- The vendor must have experience in delivering a good user experience (UX) and making sites accessible, and know-how on reaching target users and increasing web traffic.
- The vendor must demonstrate a competitive balance of cost, quality, and innovation, ensuring optimal return on investment. Vendors are encouraged to highlight cost-effective solutions without compromising functionality, user experience, or long-term scalability.

Consortium/collaborative bid (optional):

This ToR permits submissions from consortia. However, only one lead organisation shall be responsible for contractual and administrative obligations, including financial transactions. All

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consortium members must be explicitly listed, along with their roles, responsibilities, and contributions. We encourage consortia comprised of Global North and Global South partners.

Legal name and brand name:

Please note that the name of your organisation (with which you make the submission) must match the name on your organisation's registration document and bank account. If your brand name is different from your legal name, please mention it clearly in your submission.

Contract Duration:

31 July 2025 to 31 December 2026.

Development & Launch: The selected vendor must deliver an overhauled website, tested and ready for launch, within 6 months of project commencement. A detailed timeline must be included in the proposal.

Post-Launch Support: The vendor is required to provide ongoing support and maintenance post-launch, until 31 December 2026 including but not limited to:

- Bug fixes and troubleshooting
- Minor updates and adjustments
- Performance optimisation
- Security patches

Support terms (response times, SLAs, costs, etc.) should be outlined in the proposal.

Remuneration & payments

- The consultant will receive payment in 4 instalments, according to completion of deliverables.
- Foresight of any delay of tasks must be communicated prior to ICIMOD.
- Income and other taxes are the responsibility of the consultant according to the rules and regulations of their respective country.

Termination

Either party may terminate this contract upon 30 days' prior written notice to the other if it considers termination justified on the grounds that no further purpose would be served by continuing with the activity. In the event of such termination, the consultant shall be compensated for the actual amount of work performed on a pro rata basis. Such notice of termination will only be given by either party after full discussion with the other party of the reasons for the proposal to give such notice.

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.

Confidentiality:

All information regarding the contract and data obtained from ICIMOD, including credentials, must be treated as confidential and may not be disclosed to other parties without the prior written consent of ICIMOD.

Ethical consideration:

The Consultant 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. The Consultant also needs to adhere to the in-country regulations while executing the project.

Our commitment to 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, 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.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- **Relevant Experience:** Proven track record in similar assignments.
- **Methodology:** Soundness and feasibility of the proposed approach.
- **Timeliness:** Ability to meet the proposed timeline.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Reasonableness of the proposed fees in relation to the scope of work.

Method of application:

The bidder should submit the following in three separate files:

File 1: Financial proposal (XLSX)

- Provide the financial quote with the breakdown of all the costs, and include the tax in the [budget template](#).
- Include in the financial quote:
 - Breakdown of the experts needed, number of days required, quantity, and rate.
 - Breakdown of other costs, unit, quantity, and rate.

File 2: Technical Proposal (PDF)

- Executive summary: A brief overview of the proposal that highlights the most important aspects, such as the proposal along with objectives, expected outcomes, and deliverables intended to achieve.
- Technical approach and methodology: This section should explain the understanding of the objectives of the assignment, the approach to the services, the methodology for carrying out the activities and obtaining the expected output, and the degree of detail of such output. The applicant should explain the technical approach they would adopt.

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- Work plan and timeline: The applicant should propose the main activities of the assignment, their content and duration, phasing and interrelations, deliverables, and delivery dates. The proposed work plan should be consistent with the technical approach and methodology, along with a detailed timeline.
- Organisational capacity and experience: This section highlights the capacity and experience of the organisation submitting the proposal. It should provide information on the organisation's history, its mission and values, and its track record in implementing similar projects. It should also describe the organisation's governance structure, financial management, and monitoring and evaluation processes.
- Personnel qualifications and experience: This section describes the qualifications and experience of the key personnel who will be involved in implementing the project. It should outline their relevant education, skills, and experience, and highlight any relevant professional certifications or affiliations.

File 3: Supporting documents (PDF)

- company registration certificate
- tax registration certificate (i.e. VAT/PAN registration)
- tax clearance of the last 3 years.

Dates:

- Submission deadline: **30 June 2025, 11:59 pm, Nepal Standard Time (UTC+05:45).**
- **Pre-bid Q&A meeting with vendors:** 18 June 2025 ([register here](#) to express your interest in this meeting)

Email to (send to this email only):

- **consultancy.int@icimod.org**