



MARKET CONSULTATION

ONE OR MORE CONSULTANTS TO CONDUCT A COMPANY SURVEY COMPONENT OF A STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS CONDUCT ON BUSINESS RESILIENCE DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Submission deadline for proposals: 10 May, 2021

Proposals should be submitted to: Benjamin.KATZ@oecd.org

The OECD Centre for Responsible Business Conduct is seeking consultant(s) with expertise in market intelligence to support a survey and interview activities targeting businesses. The goal of these activities will be to generate information as part of a study on the extent and nature of companies' use of responsible business conduct practices during the COVID-19 pandemic and related outcomes for business resilience.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

I. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The COVID-19 pandemic has had disruptive impacts worldwide on enterprises. The consequences of their decisions on workers and communities involved, including those in their supply chains, present unprecedented challenges. This context is testing confidence in the durability of the globalized economy, and by extension the norms and institutions that support it.

Responsible business conduct (“RBC”) sets out an expectation that businesses contribute to economic, environmental and social progress, while avoiding and addressing adverse impacts of their activities, including throughout their supply chains. Risk-based due diligence – a process through which businesses identify, prevent and mitigate their actual and potential adverse impacts and account for how those impacts are addressed – is a key element of RBC. RBC expectations are affirmed in international principles and standards, as well as increasingly in national legislation. The OECD is home to a range of instruments on RBC including the [OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises](#) and related [due diligence guidance](#), and provides the Secretariat of the Network of [National Contact Points](#) for RBC.

In addition to the positive impact that RBC can have on people, the environment and society in general, implementing RBC principles and standards can also bring direct benefits to businesses, such as improved risk management, employee retention or brand value, and make commercial sense. In the context of COVID-19, adopting an RBC approach to government and business responses to the crisis has the potential to generate short-term and long-term gains such as increased resilience, a fairer and more inclusive distribution of benefits from recovery measures, and a stronger contribution to sustainable development. While initial evidence suggests that businesses that implemented RBC principles and standards were better equipped to deal with the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, further research is needed to understand the extent to which businesses have taken an RBC approach in the design and implementation of their responses, as well as the outcomes of these approaches.

The study to be carried out through this project is intended to enhance understanding of several dimensions of RBC practices during periods of severe commercial disruption due to a global crisis. In particular, the study will report on companies’ perceptions relating to such practices, and the reasons for, and perceived results from, undertaking them, such as:

- The extent to which businesses embedded RBC principles and standards in the design and implementation of their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and how they did so;

- The nature and scope of benefits that businesses can gain from implementing RBC principles and standards in times of crisis;
- The role of RBC, in building (or not) companies' resilience to future disruptions, and practical challenges for doing so;
- The role of government policies and measures related to COVID-19 on companies' RBC-related practices. This would include both government measures supporting RBC practices and those relaxing applicable regulations, e.g. on labour or environmental safeguards.
- Where relevant and feasible, the nature and scope of impacts on people, the environment and society stemming from RBC practices and RBC-related responses by business to the crisis.

The aim of the study is to capture some initial qualitative and indicative trends on RBC practices in relation to business responses to the COVID-19 crisis in a highly dynamic environment to serve as a foundation for further research. The results of the study will provide a basis that the OECD can use to inform and advise policymakers and enterprises on the commercial and other benefits that implementation of RBC principles and standards bring (or not) in times of disruption, particularly with regard to issues such as worker retention, productivity, supply chain security and forecasting, equity value and market capitalisation, accessing emergency or other government funds, and mitigation of other operational, legal or market risk, including related to preparedness and capacity to resist future shocks.

The research project will rely on qualitative and quantitative research methodologies including a desk review, a survey and possibly in-depth interviews, in addition to a stakeholder consultation on the results. The OECD Centre for RBC is looking for one or more consultants to support the survey and interview activities of the project. The consultant will be expected to work closely with researchers commissioned by the OECD and to conduct the project activities in coordination with the OECD Centre for RBC.

II. ACTIVITIES

The consultant will i) support the development of survey questions and ii) disseminate the survey to approximately 250 businesses and business associations. As referenced in Section I above, the consultant may include in-depth interviews as a complementary activity to the survey. Those submitting proposals are also welcome to propose alternative but related research methods to surveys that they consider would meet the objectives of this component of the project.

For this activity, the consultant will be able to rely on desk research and methodological considerations developed by the OECD in coordination with researchers commissioned for this study, which will clarify the parameters of the project, the research scope, methodology, sectors, and principal thematic focus, and include initial hypotheses. Research hypotheses will also draw from the OECD policy note [COVID-19 and responsible business conduct \(with special attention to pp. 8-12, section entitled "From risk to resilience – the role of RBC in business and government responses to the Crisis"\)](#).

Specifically, the consultant will:

- a. Provide inputs to the development of survey questions based on an existing desk research and methodological considerations to ensure that the survey questions generate data suitable for analysis to meet the overall project aims. The consultant will be expected to work in close coordination with the OECD and researchers commissioned by the OECD.
- b. Disseminate the survey to approximately 250 businesses and business associations, ensuring appropriate distribution and sample size of respondents per sector, size, and other factors, considering that :
 - Survey respondents will primarily include business and industry associations active in supply chains and, in particular, multinational enterprises, brands and retailers.
 - The research should include, where possible, both companies that have thrived and those that have encountered significant operational challenges and financial distress during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis; and both companies with high and low performances on RBC issues as evaluated through existing benchmarking studies.
 - The research will cover multiple geographies with a likely focus on Asia, Latin America, and OECD countries and include a particular emphasis on the minerals (electronics), agrifood, automotive, construction and infrastructure, and garment and footwear sectors.
 - Surveys will be expected to be disseminated in relevant local languages.
- c. Analyze the survey results using quantitative and qualitative analysis, and produce a presentation and summary of the findings of the survey, including salient conclusions and relevant charts, tables, and graphs (the summary is not a narrative or final report and may be delivered to the OECD as slides).

The following indicative set of issues will be relevant in the creation of these survey questions:

- i. What types of RBC-related challenges have businesses encountered during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis? This may include, for example, remuneration of furloughed workers; innovative alternatives to retrenchment; solutions for income security and other social protection for employees and workers in the supply chain; and health and safety in the workplace; as well as arrangements for handling orders in supply chains and loan financing to assist supply chain partners.
- ii. Which aspects of businesses' RBC approaches (such as supply chain traceability and due diligence, industrial relations and social dialogue, disaster planning, disclosure) are considered to be most important to addressing the challenges brought about by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and which aspects have been difficult to implement during the crisis?
- iii. To what extent, if at all, and in what ways have the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (MNE Guidelines) and related OECD sectoral due diligence guidances informed the design and implementation of business responses to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis?
- iv. How do businesses define RBC and/or similar principles to which they refer?
- v. Have businesses conducted RBC due diligence (including the full range of due diligence activities and approaches, stakeholder engagement and remediation) to identify potential and actual adverse impacts on people, the environment, and society before, during, and (if relevant) after the COVID-19 crisis? If so, what specific processes have been undertaken and what have been their outcomes, even if preliminary?
- vi. What benefits do businesses that have applied these RBC approaches perceive have accrued to their enterprises through the use of such approaches? What responses

appear to have had little or no discernible benefit, have failed or have made it more difficult for enterprises to cope with the crisis?

- vii. What RBC responses, related benefits and challenges do businesses consider applicable or relevant to building resilience and planning for other types of crises and global disruptions?
- viii. What trade-offs have businesses encountered while applying RBC principles and standards during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, to what extent do businesses attribute them to pre-crisis business factors, and how have they dealt with such trade-offs?
- ix. In what ways have other actors like governments, civil society organisations and competitors influenced the use of RBC practices as part of businesses' responses to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis?
- x. How has the availability of national and international public emergency financing for businesses during the crisis affected their willingness and ability to implement RBC approaches?

The consultant is expected to assist the OECD and commissioned researchers with compiling a list of policymakers, unions and labour federations, investors and funds, and civil society representatives to be consulted on the survey findings. The consultant shall also be available to attend such stakeholder consultation(s) and provide comments on any links and discrepancies between the results of the consultation and the findings of the survey based on their in-depth knowledge of the survey data.

III. PROJECT DELIVERABLES AND PAYMENTS

The deliverables are to be submitted for review and comment by the OECD Centre for RBC within project timelines:

- 1) Full survey data results in Excel format
- 2) Presentation and summary of the findings of the survey component including key conclusions and relevant charts, tables, and graphs (the summary may be presented in the form of slides or PDF. A narrative report is not required.)

The OECD will make payments to the selected contractor(s) according to the following schedule: 50% upon receipt of survey data and 50% upon receipt of summary of survey findings

IV. ESTIMATED TIMETABLE

The estimated timetable for the research project is 6-9 months from start date, contingent upon the time necessary for completion of the desk review and other methodological preparation by the researchers commissioned by the OECD. The consultant will provide a detailed timeline indicating the delivery of intermediate outputs as well as the final deliverables.

V. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Candidates and/or team members proposed to lead the project by prospective contractors must demonstrate the minimum requirements listed below:

- Extensive experience in carrying out projects using robust research methods for market intelligence and/or academic endeavours
- An advanced university degree or equivalent in economics, business, econometrics, statistics, social sciences or related field
- Proficient English language skills

VI. PROPOSAL DOCUMENTS

To participate in this market consultation, interested bidders are requested to provide the following information **no later than Monday, 10 May 2021, 6pm Paris time by email to:**

benjamin.katz@oecd.org:

- Proposal including:
 - Summary of methodology and approach
 - Presentation of different options in terms of geographic and sectoral scope and depth of survey activities with associated costs for each option
 - Summary of relevant experience and qualifications of those proposed to work on the project and their respective roles in project implementation
- Completed budget (table in Section VII below) for one of the above options the prospective consultant recommends. This should include the fee per deliverable in EURO
- References

In cases in which consortiums or sub-contracting arrangements are proposed, the qualifications of all individuals planned to work on the project should be included. Please also note that the OECD will only sign one contract for this component of the project with the lead consultant, who will have to make arrangements with possible partners or subcontractors him/herself. In case of consortia bids, the lead entity or individual needs to be clearly identified.

VII. ESTIMATED DAYS AND BUDGET

The consultant should submit a budget at proposal stage using the format below (add / delete lines as appropriate). Please note that all costs related to intellectual services must be included in the budget as additions cannot be included once the contract has been drawn up. Travel should be covered in the budget proposal, in compliance with OECD rules and procedures.

BUDGET				
Consultant / Activity	# of days	Cost per day EURO	Sub-Total	Total EUR
Fees for intellectual services				
a) Survey data				
b) Summary of survey findings				
TOTAL FEES			EUR	

Prospective consultant/s should provide accurate estimates of the number of days required to complete the project based on their concept note. **Please note that the final contract will be drawn against deliverables, and not against the number of days spent by the consultant on the project.**

VIII. SELECTION CRITERIA

All proposals complying with the minimum qualifications will be assessed on the basis of the following evaluation criteria:

- 40%: Relevant qualifications in the areas of surveying, research methods, market and financial intelligence
- 30%: Familiarity with relevant topics such as supply chain due diligence, responsible business conduct, business and human rights, or business performance on non-financial issues
- 20%: Financial Proposal
- 10%: Demonstration of sufficient resources and availability to carry out the project within the necessary timeframe