# Invitation to Tender

## Terms of Reference: The Cost of Politics Research on Inclusive Political Participation and Socio-Economic Development in Nepal

### Summary

Westminster Foundation for Democracy[[1]](#footnote-1) (“**WFD**”) is publishing this Invitation to Tender (“ITT”) in order to commission research services to conduct the research on the **‘cost of politics on inclusive political participation and socio-economic development in Nepal’**. Interested parties are requested to submit their proposal responding to these terms of reference by 9 August 2024.

**Keywords**: research, grant call, grant calls, funding opportunity, research funding.

### Introduction

#### WFD

WFD is a UK public body dedicated to supporting democracy worldwide. Operating internationally, WFD collaborates with parliaments, political parties, civil society groups, and on elections to make political systems fairer, more inclusive, and more accountable.

We are a problem-solving, practitioner-led organisation that offers:

* High-quality and impactful regional and country programmes that support a wide range of institutions in political systems, promoting inclusive political processes, more accountable political systems, protection of rights and freedoms, and more pluralistic societies.
* Specialist analysis, research, and advice through our Centre of Expertise to inform UK policymakers on various democratic governance issues.
* International election observation on behalf of the UK.

#### Aim of this ITT

WFD is seeking an organisation or a team of researchers to submit technical and financial proposals for conducting research on the ‘cost of politics on inclusive political participation and socio-economic development in Nepal’.

### Context

WFD has supported a growing body of research into the "cost of politics." WFD’s approach focuses on the spending of individuals running for political office, rather than that of political parties. It is comprehensive and aims to cover expenditure incurred throughout the election cycle, tracking the money spent from a candidate’s decision to stand for office at the party primary phase to the end of their elected tenure. These costs can be both monetary and 'in-kind'.

The approach seeks to develop a better understanding of the factors driving individual spending on politics. This can help explain discrepancies between stated rules and their implementation, and provide clearer insights into the challenges of regulating, curbing, or better monitoring spending on political campaigns.

WFD collaborates with country experts to conduct cost of politics research that explores the context and unique drivers of parliamentary politics costs in specific countries. The study involves collecting and analysing indicative costs through a nationally representative quantitative survey and qualitative discussions for different phases of seeking and maintaining political office.

The research aims to outline potential solutions to reduce the costs of politics, which increasingly obstruct ordinary, well-qualified citizens from contesting for political office and contribute significantly to the under-representation of women in politics.[[2]](#footnote-2) Generally, female candidates, with less access to financial and political capital than their male counterparts, find themselves at a disadvantage when financial resources are a deciding factor. WFD’s evidence, gathered over nearly a decade of study, highlights the systemic nature of the growing monetisation of politics. In many countries studied[[3]](#footnote-3), women are self-selecting out of politics due to insufficient resources to run a credible campaign. Additionally, factors such as misogyny and violence deter women candidates, leading those who do run to come from a small, elite group, often referred to as ‘networkers’[[4]](#footnote-4) in WFD’s research into women’s political careers in Asia. This exclusion results in a legislature that lacks diversity and fails to represent a broad cross-section of the population, leading to the alienation of under-represented groups.

Recommendations from a cost of politics study in Nepal will focus on identifying opportunities for key actors—such as political parties, the electoral management body, and Parliament—to address these systemic issues and create a more supportive environment for candidates from disadvantaged groups.

Exclusion is a significant impact of the rising costs of politics. Previous studies by WFD have also highlighted how these costs can increase voter disillusionment with elected representatives and drive officials to engage in corrupt or non-transparent activities to recoup the large expenses incurred during elections. By raising awareness among the public and decision-makers about the consequences for democracy and equality, WFD aims to stimulate a thorough discussion on the influence of money in politics and what needs to change. The cost of politics methodology builds on a brief review of relevant literature but primarily focuses on gathering and analysing primary data, both qualitative and quantitative.

### Research objectives

The study aims to comprehensively examine the costs associated with running for parliamentary and provincial assembly seats in Nepal during the most recent elections. The data collected will provide a foundational dataset to deepen insights into electoral incentives, foster national dialogue, inform legal and policy advocacy, and enhance democratic processes in preparation for the upcoming general and assembly elections in 2027. The research will be guided by the following key questions:

* What are the primary social, economic, and political factors driving the cost of politics at both the parliamentary and provincial assembly levels?
* What specific costs are incurred during the electoral cycle at these levels?
* How do these costs influence the participation of marginalised and special interest groups, including youth, women, and persons with disabilities, in electoral politics?
* What impact do these costs have on the socio-economic development of the country?
* What legal, policy, and programming options are available to mitigate or regulate the costs of politics in Nepal?

### Approach

Examining how money is raised and spent during electoral cycles, including identifying beneficiaries and expenditure methods, remains an under-researched area. The "cost of politics" approach addresses this gap by focusing on the financial dynamics of politics, aiming to uncover the beneficiaries, motives, and mechanisms involved.

Central to the "cost of politics" approach is its focus on individual expenditure by political candidates, rather than party-centric financial analyses. This approach encompasses the entire electoral cycle, from a candidate’s efforts to secure candidacy to the end of their elected tenure, which can last several years. Expenditure includes a wide range of items, from cash distributions and in-kind donations during campaign trails to direct provisions of public services like health clinics and infrastructure, which are traditionally the responsibility of the state. Promising access and influence on potential campaign funders are significant aspects of political expenditure. Evaluating these expenses against national economic benchmarks, such as elected officials' salaries and average citizen incomes, offers critical insights into affordability.

The approach also seeks to uncover the underlying drivers behind spending decisions in politics. By examining these factors, it aims to clarify the disparities between articulated regulations and their practical implementation, highlighting obstacles to effective regulation, monitoring, and control of political campaign finances. A key aspect of this endeavour is understanding the various demands, internal calculations, and accountability pressures faced by both prospective and incumbent parliamentarians. These pressures arise from a complex mix of formal institutional frameworks, regulations, and informal norms and cultures, underscoring the comprehensive nature of the "cost of politics" approach in revealing the impacts and dynamics of increasing financial resources on political and democratic processes.

### Research methodology

The proposed methodology will build on a brief review of relevant literature but will primarily focus on gathering and analysing primary data, both qualitative and quantitative. Data collection tools, such as surveys, key informant interviews, and/or regional participatory workshops, should be centred around the key questions outlined above.

The data collection approach should cover different phases of the electoral cycle, namely: getting on the ballot (candidate selection), the electoral campaign (parliamentary and county elections), and the politician’s time in office (allotted term as elected official). To this end, an analytical framework should be developed to fully understand the various practices of the actors involved in election campaigns. This framework can draw on previous studies conducted by WFD in other South Asian countries. The analytical framework should consider the following:

* The legal, policy, and institutional context in Nepal
* The power relations between the three tiers of government
* Citizen perceptions and experiences of electoral politics
* Gender, age, and geographical dimensions

Data collection tools include surveys, key informant interviews, and participatory workshops.

The data collection approach focuses on different phases of the electoral cycle: candidate selection, the electoral campaign, and a politician’s time in office.

Participant selection must capture diversity in terms of gender, location, political party, and age. Efforts should also be made to balance first-time contestants, previously unsuccessful candidates, and those seeking re-election, with the latter group being particularly important for understanding the costs of holding elected office.

Data collection will cover both the House of Representatives and assemblies. Prospective applicants should detail how they will sample parliamentary candidates to ensure diversity in gender, location, political party, and age, aiming to provide nationally representative data. The approach for collecting cost data for candidates aspiring to election to county assemblies should be clearly outlined.

For datasets, there should be a mix of respondents: those who lost in the elections and those who won. Balancing first-time contestants, previously unsuccessful candidates, and those seeking re-election is also encouraged, as this helps in understanding the costs associated with holding elected office.

#### Ethical considerations and risk mitigations

Regardless of the approach and methodology chosen, bids are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the sensitivities of the type of work WFD carries out and clearly outline how the project will adhere to international ethical standards.

Proposals should detail their approach to potential risks and mitigation strategies by adapting the following table (add rows as necessary):

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Risk | Risk level | Mitigation strategy | Residual risk level |
|  | (High/ Medium/ Low) |  | (High/ Medium/ Low) |
|  |  |  |  |
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#### Quality assurance

Proposals should outline quality assurance measures and how they will be integrated into the research. If the researcher nominates a Quality Assurer, the proposals should clearly describe their role in the research.

### Expected deliverables and timeline

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **PHASE ONE - Preparation** | **MILESTONE** | **Timeframe** |
| Contract Date | N/A | 26 August 2024 |
|  |  |  |
| INITIAL EVIDENCE REVIEW  • Incorporation of key questions into  questionnaire | Draft  questionnaire | September 2024 |
| SCRIPTING OF RESEARCH TOOLS  • Checking and approval of scripted  questionnaire by WFD | Draft  questionnaire | September 2024 |
| FIELD TRAINING & BRIEFING   • Training of research assistants  • Piloting the questionnaire | Training report  submitted | September/October 2024 |
| FINALISATION OF QUESTIONNAIRES   • Final modifications to the scripted  questionnaire based on the feedback from  the training and pilot | Approved  Questionnaire | October 2024 |
|  |  |  |
| **PHASE TWO – Data collection and analysis** |  |  |
| FIELDWORK / DATA COLLECTION & QUALITY  ASSURANCE   • Field work starts across all regions  • Execution of data collection & quality control  activities in all the regions  • Participatory workshops/interviews to be held  with key informants across the country | Data set  established | October/November/December 2024 |
| DATA PROCESSING/ANALYSIS   • Data cleaning and processing  • Analysis of qualitative findings  • Drafting of report | Draft report | December 2024 / January 2025 |
| SUBMISSION OF FINAL REPORT   • Validation meeting to discuss draft report  • Incorporate edits and comments on draft  report to produce final paper | Final report | January 2025 |
|  |  |  |
| **PHASE THREE - DISSEMINATION** |  |  |
| PRESENTATION AND DISSEMINATION OF FINAL REPORT   • Launch event to present findings to key  stakeholders | Report and  power point  presentation to  WFD | February 2025 |

#### Reporting

The successful candidate is expected to hold regular check-ins with WFD throughout the project. The exact timing and nature of these check-ins will be agreed upon in partnership with the successful applicant.

#### Funding

This call is subject to funding confirmation. Financial support for the study, pending this confirmation, will be provided by the WFD. The research team is asked to submit a financial proposal in response to these terms of reference.

### Applications and bid process

#### General

WFD invites potentially interested suppliers to express interest in this tender opportunity at their earliest convenience to: Prem Lamichhaneat [prem.lamichhane@wfd.org](mailto:prem.lamichhane@wfd.org), and CC to Archana Ghimire at [archana.ghimire@wfd.org.](mailto:archana.ghimire@wfd.org)

All bids should be submitted by 5:00 PM Nepal Local time, 09 August 2024 in writing, must comply with the requirements of this ITT, and must include the information requested in the ‘Bid Requirements’ below. The bid should be sent electronically and addressed to the above listed email address with the subject line: Response to ITT for Nepal Cost of Politics Study.

By submitting a bid, you agree to comply with WFD’s standard terms and conditions for tendering and key policies, which are found [here](https://www.wfd.org/policy/wfd-general-terms-and-conditions-tendering), and WFD’s [Code of Conduct](https://www.wfd.org/policy/code-conduct).

Please note:

* All bids should be submitted in English;
* All bids should be submitted in electronic form only;
* This ITT and the response may be incorporated in whole or in part into the final contract;
* Only information provided in response to questions set out in this documentation will be taken into consideration for the purposes of evaluating the ITT;
* Bids which are poorly organised or poorly written, such that evaluation and comparison with other submissions is notably difficult, may exclude the bidder from further consideration; and
* Any bids which do not fully comply with the requirements of this ITT may be disregarded at the absolute discretion of WFD.

#### Questions related to this ITT

Questions related to this ITT should be expressed in writing to the email address listed above by 02 August 2024.

**Equal opportunity:** Should any supplier raise a question that is of general interest, WFD reserves the right to circulate questions and answers to other respondents, either via WFD’s website or by email. In this event, WFD will contact all potential bidders who have expressed interest with the contact email listed above; anonymity will be maintained. Therefore, potential applicants are strongly encouraged to express interest via email prior to submitting their bid.

#### Bid timeline

Below is the proposed timescale for the tendering process. Please note that the dates are indicative and subject to change.

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| --- | --- |
| Milestone | Provisional timeline |
| Issue ITT | 26 July 2024 |
| Deadline for questions related to this ITT | 02 August 2024 |
| WFD shares responses to questions raised with suppliers who have expressed interest | 06 August 2024 |
| Closing date for receipt of completed tender proposals | 09 August 2024 |
| Shortlisting of bids | 13 August 2024 |
| Supplier interviews/presentations to tender committee | 19 August 2024 |
| WFD announces preferred supplier | 22 August 2024 |
| Contract finalised and signed | 26 August 2024 |

#### Bid requirements

All bids must include:

* **A narrative proposal**, outlining the proposed methodology and project plan for the research. Please note a 17-page limit applies to all narrative proposals (excluding annexes). Narrative proposals should include the following sections:
  1. **Executive summary**;
  2. **Introduction** **(up to 3 page):** this should introduce the applicant(s) and set out the researcher(s)’ understanding of the assignment, as well as clearly identify any departure from the terms of reference;
  3. **Approach and methodology (up to 4 pages):** this should present and justify the research approach and methods, whilst also clearly noting any limitations. Proposals should clearly describe how they will foster participation during the research and specify draft research questions and approach to quality assurance.
  4. **Research organisation (up to 4 pages):** this should clearly address ethics, risks and quality assurance. Proposals should identify potential ethical, technical and practical risks to the research and propose mitigations using the table included above. This section should detail how the research will integrate a sufficient level of quality assurance and include a schedule of key tasks and activities.
  5. **Qualifications and competence of the expert(s) and/or organisation (up to 5 pages)**: Proposals are expected to clearly nominate a Team Leader or Lead Consultant who will act as the primary point of contact with WFD. If including other roles, proposals should describe how the roles and experience of the team are relevant to this assignment.
* A financial proposal with a full breakdown of costings for the proposed research including separate accounting of VAT and/or any other applicable tax, duty or charge. It should also detail any discount applied in view of WFD’s not-for-profit status. Financial proposals should include a breakdown that specifies tasks lines for each team member(s), with estimates of the number of days per team member, their individual day rate(s) and travel costs (if applicable).

**Annexes** must include:

* **Curriculum vitae for the consultant(s),** and your organisational profile if relevant, highlighting previous research experience and essential criteria outlined above. CVs should not be longer than three pages.
* **Confirmation of acceptance of General Terms and Conditions of Tendering.** By submitting a bid, you confirm acceptance to [WFD’s General Terms and Conditions for Tendering](https://www.wfd.org/policy/wfd-general-terms-and-conditions-tendering) which can be found on our website [WFD, General Terms and Conditions for Tendering | Westminster Foundation for Democracy](https://www.wfd.org/policy/wfd-general-terms-and-conditions-tendering). All bids should include a signed copy of the Confirmation of Compliance form.
* **References**. Please include details of two references relating to similar services provided in the past three years. Please note – referees will only be contacted once Preferred Bidder status is assigned.
* **A link to or copy of your company’s latest audited annual accounts** with the bid (if applicable).

Other information: If there is additional information that has not been requested in the ITT but is relevant to your bid, please include that information as a separate attachment and explain its relevance to this ITT.

**Note**: WFD is particularly keen to receive bids from organisations that are – or are working towards becoming – living wage employers and that have a broadly representative and balanced Board from gender and ethnicity perspectives.

### Assessment criteria

WFD does not provide a mathematical formula by which bids will be assessed, but the procurement committee will usually consider the following criteria to assess the quality, relevance and value of all responses:

* Overall quality of bid document
* Service offer and solution fit to the specifications of this ITT
* Quality of the technical approach and methodology
* Organisation of the research
* Qualifications, experience and competence, including the track record of bidders based on CVs and references
* Value for money and pricing factors

#### Essential criteria

The research team/firm should have experience conducting similar studies in Nepal or South Asia. Team members should have the following qualifications and skills:

* The lead researcher should hold a PhD in political science, public policy, or a related field. Previous experience in managing a research team is essential.
* At least one member should have significant experience working with and analysing large datasets, as well as running quantitative surveys.
* At least one member should have significant experience conducting qualitative interviews with political stakeholders. Experience in running participatory workshops is also desirable.
* Strong writing and analytical skills in English are essential.
* Conceptual and practical knowledge of politics and electoral democracy in Nepal and/or South Asia is required.

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public body dedicated to supporting democracy around

the world. Operating internationally, WFD works with

parliaments, political parties, and civil society groups

as well as on elections to help make political

systems fairer, more inclusive and accountable.

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|  | Westminster Foundation for Democracy  is an executive Non-departmental  Public Body sponsored by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. |  |

1. [Strengthening democracy around the world | Westminster Foundation for Democracy (wfd.org)](https://www.wfd.org/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Rainbow Murray, et all, *Editorial introduction: Gender and political financing,* International Political Science Review 2021, Volume 44, Issue 1, available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/01925121211040961#body-ref-bibr2-01925121211040961>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. WFD Country Studies www.costofpolitics.net [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Aim Sinpeng and Amalinda Savirani, *Women’s Political Leadership in the ASEAN region: Research Report*, WFD, November 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)