



Terms of Reference Qualitative Research Consultant

1. Background

The Livestock Data for Decisions (LD4D) Network brings together over 2,000 members worldwide, including researchers, practitioners, policymakers and industry to strengthen evidence driven decision-making in the livestock sector. Through collaboration, knowledge sharing and improved use of data analysis the network mobilises its membership to support more sustainable, inclusive and resilient livestock systems in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

The Centre for Supporting Evidence-Based Interventions in Livestock (SEBI-L), hosted by the University of Edinburgh and funded by the Gates Foundation, serves as the LD4D Secretariat. The Secretariat provides core coordination, communications and strategic support to the network.

LD4D convenes Solutions Groups to bring together experts around a livestock data or evidence challenge to co-develop tailored outputs (e.g. tools, guidelines, analyses). A critical step in this process is the refinement of the problem or challenge i.e. understanding its underlying drivers, the key stakeholders involved, and what types of outputs would be most useful and feasible.

In addition to Solutions Groups, LD4D also organises stakeholder consultations to validate models, datasets and methods as well as enhance evidence synthesis.

To strengthen these processes, LD4D is seeking a Qualitative Research Consultant to design and implement qualitative methodologies for two key areas: refining challenges within the Solutions Group process and conducting consultations that enhance our data and evidence synthesis work.

2. Objective

The overall objective of this consultancy is to define and lead a structured qualitative approach for both Solutions Groups and consultations.

The consultancy will consist of 2 work packages.

3. Scope of the work

Work package 1 - Solutions Groups

The consultant will develop an overall qualitative approach for use across Solutions Groups, focused on the early scoping stage. The approach should include consultations with LD4D experts to refine the problem, establish the basis for a clear problem statement, inform an initial theory of change, map key stakeholders and decision-makers, and identify feasible potential outputs.

A. Design of the Qualitative Research Approach

- Review current Solutions group process
- Develop method for challenge refinement i.e. scoping phase (e.g., desk review, problem-tree analysis, interviews, focus groups).

B. Implementation for Each Solutions Group:

- Collect and analyse qualitative data as agreed in the plan.
- Validate and refine findings with LD4D experts participating in consultations
- Work with the LD4D Secretariat, Strategic Advisor and Head of Gender to:
 - Develop a refined challenge statement.
 - Identify a realistic set of potential outputs and their intended users.
 - Provide qualitative insights for the Theory of Change (problem framing, stakeholders, pathways to change, assumptions, risks).

C. Coordination & Communication

- Work closely with the LD4D Secretariat, Strategic Advisor and Head of Gender to align activities, timelines and gather feedback.
- Collaborate with facilitators to provide input to consultation session design including goals, agendas and session format.
- Participate in regular check-in calls to share progress, emerging insights and any methodological adjustments.
- Provide brief reflections on what worked well / less well in the qualitative process to inform future Solutions Groups and consultations.

Work package 2 – Consultations

The consultant will develop an overall qualitative approach for use across LD4D consultations (outside Solutions Groups), focused on generating actionable insights on models, datasets, and evidence gaps.

A. Data Collection and Analysis Methodology

- Review current consultation process and refine method
- Carry out stakeholder mapping as required in collaboration with SEBI-L researchers
- Provide guidance on how qualitative data should be captured during sessions led by the facilitator or SEBI-L team (e.g., note-taking templates, coding categories, observation prompts).
- Conduct or support analysis of consultation data helping to synthesise perspectives across stakeholder groups.
- Support the production of clear, structured summaries identifying key insights, evidence gaps and user needs, implications for models and datasets or tools under review.

B. Coordination and Communication

- Work closely with the LD4D Secretariat, SEBI-L leads and the consultation facilitator to ensure alignment of approach providing input to session format, goals and agenda.
- Participate in planning calls or check-ins with LD4D Secretariat and SEBI-L team.
- Provide reflections on lessons learned, including recommendations on how to collect participant feedback for future consultations.

4. Deliverables and timeline

Work package 1	
Deliverable	Timeline
Overarching qualitative research approach that can be applied across different Solutions Groups	March-May /2026
Applied qualitative research for the Solutions Group and a report outlining the refined challenge, key drivers, stakeholder landscape and feasible outputs	June-September/2026

Work package 2	
Deliverable	Timeline
Overarching qualitative consultation methodology including data collection and analysis	March-June/2026 (in parallel, building on WP1)
Inputs and support to consultations including qualitative data collection and analysis	September-December 2026

5. Project Period and Time Allocation

The consultancy is expected to run for an initial period of **12 months starting in March 2026 (W/C 30 March)**, with potential for extension subject to performance and funding.

6. Reporting and Management

The Qualitative Research Consultant will:

- Report to the **LD4D Development Manager and TBD**
- Work in close collaboration with LD4D Secretariat, LD4D Strategic Advisor, Head of Gender, SEBI-L researchers, and facilitators

7. Travel Requirements

The consultant will work remotely (home-based). Travel may be requested by SEBI-L if required.

8. Third Party Involvement

No third-party involvement is anticipated for this consultancy. The Consultant will carry out all tasks personally and will not subcontract, delegate or otherwise pass on any part of the work to another individual or organisation without the prior written approval of the SEBI-L Director.

9. Performance Indicators

- An overall qualitative research framework and plan for Solutions Groups is developed and agreed with the LD4D Secretariat within agreed timeframe.
- Refined challenge statements and proposed output(s) for each Solutions Group are completed by the agreed deadlines and endorsed by the LD4D Secretariat / SG leads.
- Written inputs to each Solutions Group Theory of Change are provided within agreed deadlines and are judged by the LD4D Secretariat as useful and appropriate.
- For LD4D Consultations beyond Solutions Groups, a qualitative consultation approach and tools are delivered by the agreed dates, and qualitative analysis support (including support in applying the developed approach/tools) is provided within agreed timeframes.

Person Specification

Essential

- Academic background in a relevant social science discipline (e.g. development studies, political science, international relations, sociology, anthropology).
- Demonstrated experience in livestock development initiatives in LMICs, and a strong understanding of the sector's key challenges.
- Advanced experience in designing and conducting applied qualitative research including participatory research methods to inform policy, project and programme design and implementation.
- Proven track record of translating qualitative findings into clear, practical recommendations for decision-makers (e.g. government, donors, programme managers, industry).
- Extensive experience working with diverse stakeholders (e.g. government, research, NGOs, private sector, producers).
- Experience with programme design tools such as theory of change, logframes or results framework.
- Excellent analytical skills, with the ability to analyse qualitative data and translate qualitative findings into clear, structured recommendations.
- Experience working on projects with a gender, equality and social inclusion focus and/or academic background in gender studies or a closely related field.
- Ability to work independently, meet deadlines and coordinate effectively across different teams.

Desirable

- Experience working with networks, communities of practice or multi-stakeholder platforms.
- Familiarity with livestock data and modelling and/or other quantitative methods and mixed methods approaches.

Expressions of interest

Please submit your application by sending a cover letter, CV and daily rates to ld4d@ed.ac.uk by 28/Feb/2026. In your cover letter, please clearly indicate how you meet the required profile. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.