

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

RESEARCH TITLE	Sustainability of the Australian Red Cross Community-led Resilience Team project, funded by the Australian Government under the Northern Rivers Recovery and Resilience Program (NRRRP).
COMMISSIONING AGENCY	Australian Red Cross
TIMELINE	Draft report due: 31 August 2025
PURPOSE	To better understand successful mechanisms for CRT sustainability and have the tools/strategies to action these mechanisms.
KEY CONTACTS	Cate Martinez (Lead – Emergency Services, Northern NSW), Mark Ludbrooke (Senior Manager Programs NSW/ACT), and Rachel Christie (Head of Data & Insights)
PROPOSAL SUBMISSION	Please send proposals to Rachel Christie: rachristie@redcross.org.au by Wednesday 15 January 2025. Please aim to keep proposals to about four pages

1. Background and Context

1.1 Program Summary

Australian Red Cross's (Red Cross's) community disaster resilience projects are guided by an overarching program that combines research findings from disaster resilience and recovery, psychology and community development as well as Red Cross's domestic and international experience. Interventions are informed by the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*.

In response to the damaging floods caused by Tropical Cyclone Debbie in 2017, Red Cross Community-led Resilience Teams¹ (CRTs) were initiated in Northern NSW to support communities to prepare for, and to recover from, emergency events. Through these CRTs, Red Cross staff and volunteers support communities to identify and address local preparedness and recovery priorities, and work with community leaders to link them with local councils and emergency services, as appropriate. This community-led "all hazards" model has been applied to various emergencies, including fires, floods and pandemic. Red Cross has been funded for two years by the Australian Government to deliver CRT activities in 70 communities at risk of flood across the 7 Northern NSW LGAs (Clarence to Tweed).

Red Cross currently has 114 CRTs either established, in the early stages, or planned as part of the NRRRP project (some of these have been running for over 5 years). Seventy new CRTs are being planned and mentored through the current project. The opportunity exists to consider the success factors and barriers for communities that have established CRTs, and the needs of newly established groups, to build sustainability longer term.

Please note: A summative evaluation of the CRT Program will occur concurrently by an external evaluator.

¹ <https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms-assets/documents/emergency-services/red-cross-community-led-resilience-teams.pdf>

1.2 Program Goal

For this research, we wish to focus on understanding and assessing what is needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the CRT model for communities in NSW.

The overarching goals and expected outcomes are captured in the Red Cross Emergency Services Theory of Change (ToC). We wish the research to draw from the ToC and the Red Cross *Emergency Services Monitoring and Evaluation Framework* as a foundational document. The **key intended outcomes** relevant to this research are:

- Communities are taking localised, community-driven action to build resilience and recover from disaster.
- People can cope with the psychosocial impacts of disasters and changing climate.
- People have increased resilience to disasters.
- People collaborate to share information, strengthen community connection, and support resilience and recovery.

2. Terms of Reference

2.1 Purpose of the Project

In the final year of the program, this research aims to:

- review existing systems and processes designed to deliver sustainability,
- understand and assess what is needed for the sustainability of the CRT approach to community disaster resilience, and
- to strengthen the project's legacy via the development of additional strategies, tools, and resources that will support CRT Leaders' capacity to grow their locally-led teams into the future.

We want to understand what works (in terms of systems, processes, governance and other factors) to support capacity in communities to lead the ongoing development of their CRTs beyond the life of the current NRRRP project; and what else could be done or improved to support sustainability. This includes drawing from the CRTs' experiences—especially for those CRTs that were established early in the program—as well as drawing from the literature around good practices in sustainability of similar community-led initiatives.

As a result of this project, we want to be equipped with strong evidence of what works, as well as strategies, tools, and resources to enable CRT sustainability after Red Cross steps back.

The **key research questions** ask:

- 1) What contributes to sustainability of community-led disaster resilience approaches?
- 2) What systems, governance and processes need to be in place for the sustainability of CRTs?
- 3) What tools, resources, connections and mentoring are needed to support CRTs to achieve sustainability?
- 4) What is needed, after the end of the Program, to grow resilience in the CRT communities?
- 5) What lessons learned can be gleaned from Red Cross's CRT work generally in terms of longer-term sustainability?

2.2 Scope and approach

We would like the researcher/s to outline a proposed methodology and design suitable for this study as part of the tender process.

It may be that the researchers will draw from the literature on community-led disaster resilience as well as a previous evaluation of the CRTs to form a theoretical framework for the research before conducting fieldwork with established CRTs.

A possible fieldwork approach could include examining some established CRTs as case studies, considering current processes/systems and then working with CRT leaders to co-design strategies, tools, and resources for sustainable community-led disaster resilience. Participatory action research could be a useful methodology for this study.

While we are flexible on research design and are excited to see what new methodologies you might deem appropriate, it is important that the research focuses on the experiences and perceptions of community members to assess their own needs in terms of sustainable community-led disaster resilience post the Program.

We anticipate that this research will include fieldwork including site visits and discussions with community members and other stakeholders. The Red Cross NRRRP project includes work in several First Nations communities, and First Nations' experiences and needs should also be considered in the research design.

In your proposal, please outline the proposed research methods and the expected number of participants/respondents.

2.3 Conditions and guiding principles

Our *community disaster resilience framework* links resilience to four *adaptive capacities*: knowledge, connection, security, and wellbeing. This framework posits that strengthening each of these adaptive capacities will result in resilience. All of Red Cross's emergency services work is underpinned by psychosocial principles, which highlight the importance of supporting people to feel safe, calm, connected, hopeful, able to help themselves and others, and able to access the services and support they need following a disaster or other significant event.²

Australian Red Cross uses the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) Framework for Evaluation (2011)³ to guide the design of research and evaluations. Red Cross requires that the research be conducted in accordance with professional and ethical standards such as the AES Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations (2013) and with respect to Red Cross's duty of care to community members, staff and volunteers. This research will involve fieldwork with community members, including First Nations communities, who may have been disaster affected and who may be suffering from traumatic responses. Deep consideration of ethics and careful adherence to the guidance of Red Cross field staff is vital throughout this research process.

3. Deliverables and Activities

The expected outputs of this project are:

1. a **final report**
2. a **suite of strategies, tools, and resources** for maintaining community-led disaster resilience

² <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/ajem-july-2023-australian-red-cross-psychosocial-approach-to-disaster-preparedness/> This paper provides an overview of our approach to preparedness/resilience.

³ <https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/IFRC-Framework-for-Evaluation.pdf>

The **Final Report** will bring together a literature review, data, analysis, and findings against the specified research questions. It will also include a sense-making session with the Red Cross key contacts and possibly with research participants, followed by a draft for our review prior to finalisation. We expect the final report to be designed and formatted in a professional manner that would allow it to be public facing. Alongside the final report, we would like the researcher/s to present the findings and recommendations back to Red Cross staff, CRT leaders, and other stakeholders beyond the core group involved in the research in up to three short (c.1hr) online dissemination meetings.

We expect to meet online with the researcher/s regularly (e.g. monthly) to discuss and support progress. While not part of this proposal or the budget, we are open to collaborate with the researchers to publish the results in a peer reviewed academic outlet, to be discussed after the research is completed.

As well as the report, this project is expected to **create a suite of strategies, tools, and resources** as deemed appropriate throughout the fieldwork and co-design process. These outputs will be determined during the project but may include short training modules, fact sheets, processes, governance documents, and outlines of suitable light-touch support that could be provided by agencies such as Red Cross. We would also like a concise ‘sustainability tool’ or similar that provides guidance for how communities can propel sustainable CRTs. Preferably, this would be a short and visually appealing document accompanied by a 1-page well-designed infographic. Ideas for outputs are all up for discussion with the Red Cross key contacts for this research and the participating community members.

#	Task	Timeframe*
1.	Receive proposals	15 January 2025
2.	Recruit consultant and organise contract	January 2024
3.	Deliver a detailed research design and methodology, including appropriate ethical review	February 2024
4.	Conduct research	February– July 2025
5.	Conduct sense-making session/s with Red Cross key contacts and research participants (as appropriate)	~ July 2025
6.	Deliver draft final report and accompanying outputs for our review	Early to mid-August 2025
7.	Present findings and recommendations in up to three 1-hour online dissemination sessions to broader Red Cross staff and CRT leaders	September 2025
8.	Deliver final report incorporating additional feedback	23 September 2025

*All timeframes subject to negotiation except for final delivery date

4. Budget

This research and its outputs have an indicative budget of up to \$250,000 including GST and all other expenses. While this is the upper limit, potential suppliers are encouraged to provide your best possible price that represents value for money, which will be a consideration in the assessment process. We would like the proposal to show a breakdown of the budget and payment milestones.

5. About your Proposal

Please provide a proposal **by 5:00 pm (EST) on Wednesday 15th January 2025** outlining your demonstrated experience and capacity. Proposals should not exceed 5 pages and should include a concise description of:

- The proposed approach and methodology.
- Content knowledge and previous experience, including key personnel who would be involved in the evaluation team.
- Capacity to deliver to the timeframes and milestones listed above.
- A quotation with the breakdown of costs for each deliverable/milestone.
- Key contact for the proposal – name, position, telephone, and email address;
- An example of previous work and two referees.

The following selection criteria will be used to compare and evaluate all proposals. A shortlist of Applicants will be invited for a short virtual interview. The successful applicant will be based on the strength of the proposal against the selection criteria and the additional information provided in the interview.

- Appropriateness of proposed approach
- Demonstrated experience and content knowledge
- Organisational capacity
- Value for Money

6. Key Risks and Limitations

Potential Risk	Mitigation strategy
Budget issues	Confirm budget before commencement of research.
Stakeholders concern about confidentiality	Provide potential participants with privacy and confidentiality agreements, inclusive of the option to be involved anonymously.
Stakeholder lack of engagement	Clear, concise and timely communications before and during research. Barriers known to be addressed prior to research and any identified throughout to be discussed and addressed with Red Cross key contacts.
Stakeholders too busy to attend	Ask stakeholders how they prefer to be engaged at the start of the research and where possible find flexible ways of working with them, e.g. Over the phone, online surveys, face to face, email correspondence.
Stakeholder trauma	Ensure fieldwork is designed to minimise harm and discomfort. Conduct trauma-informed research and mitigate risks (e.g. careful research questions, easy opt outs, gentle methods). This includes awareness and consideration of impact on First Nations and recently disaster affected communities.
Appropriate data collected	Plan developed at start of research and any changes required to be discussed, and decisions made, by Red Cross key contacts.
Accuracy of data	Ensure data and interpretations sense-checked and signed off by key contacts Mark Ludbrooke, Cate Martinez and Rachel Christie before submission of final report.
Default on timeframes	Set timeframes at the start of the research and regularly review to ensure timeliness.
Intellectual property	Ensure contract clearly outlines that Red Cross holds the copyright for intellectual property produced as a result of this research.