

DFAT to consult on aid benchmarks, ACFID makes its pitch

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The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has this week released a [Consultation Paper](#) [PDF] on developing benchmarks for the aid program and has begun seeking meetings with key stakeholders.

Benchmarks have [long been cited](#) as an aid priority by the Coalition and Foreign Minister Julie Bishop.

The open-ended consultation paper states that benchmarks could be created at the whole-of-aid-program level, program level, partner government or implementing partner level, or at the project level. It also implies that performance against benchmarks should have implications for aid budget allocations at the overall program level as well as at the country and project level.

Written submissions can be sent to development.results@dfat.gov.au no later than Thursday 20 February.

Some in the sector are already well prepared.

Following the Coalition's [announcement](#) of where the current year aid cuts would fall ([our analysis here](#)) on the weekend, the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) [released](#) a paper outlining its recommendations for aid program benchmarking.

ACFID's paper, titled [Benchmarks for Effective and Accountable Australian Aid](#) [pdf], makes recommendations for benchmarks in eight areas, including: a comprehensive policy statement; inclusive growth; environmental sustainability; peace, security and governance; effective partnerships; civil society and people-to-people links; predictability, transparency and accountability; and expertise, evidence and innovation.

Interpreting the call for benchmarks broadly, the paper puts forward a wide-ranging reform program for Australian aid. Among specific recommendations, ACFID calls for the Office of Development Effectiveness to be made fully independent, for the main program (the ANCP) which funds Australian development NGOs to be quadrupled, and for a Parliamentary Committee or Subcommittee on Development Assistance.