

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Market Survey: Immersive Emergency Training Solutions – Exploring the Feasibility and Demand for a Gamified and AI-supported Immersive Training Platform

1. Background

In an era of increasingly complex, frequent, and compounded humanitarian crises, effective emergency preparedness and response capacities are more essential than ever. At the same time, the sector is undergoing a shift toward more localised models of humanitarian action, in which a growing number of actors — including local NGOs, national coordination structures, and government entities — are called upon to lead responses in volatile contexts.

However, access to relevant, high-quality, and contextualised training remains unequal. Traditional approaches to emergency preparedness — including large-scale simulation exercises (SIMEX) — are often costly, logistically demanding, and difficult to scale. Even large international NGOs face growing challenges in funding and delivering adequate training to their staff, and local responders often face even greater limitations in time, funding, and access.

In this context, innovative, flexible, and scalable training tools are urgently needed to reach a wider range of responders, particularly at the local level, and to support them in navigating the full emergency response cycle.

To respond to these challenges, our team is exploring the feasibility of developing a gamified, immersive emergency training platform. This platform would leverage VR/video game-style simulations, AI-supported characters, and post-simulation coaching to help individuals and teams build real-world response capacities in a safe and accessible environment. It would be designed to complement—not replace—existing training systems and be adaptable to different user needs and technological realities.

This market survey aims to assess the demand, relevance, feasibility, and potential models for such a platform within the humanitarian sector.

2. Objectives of the Market Survey

The consultant will carry out a market survey to:

1. **Identify key training gaps** in the humanitarian sector and specifically in emergency preparedness and response.
2. **Map and analyse existing platforms/tools** (or those under development) that provide humanitarian training services
3. Assess how a VR/video game-style platform could offer **unique or complementary added value** over existing humanitarian training modalities (i.e. in-person, e-learning, or digital).

4. **Understand user needs and expectations** for this type of platform, including the types of trainings or learning objectives that would be most relevant (e.g. coordination, decision-making, soft skills, leadership, etc.).
 5. **Test and refine our conceptual approach** to assess whether these features/ideas meet sector needs, proposing adapted alternatives as appropriate. Concepts to include in the reflection should include:
 - Multiplayer, real-time VR or game-style simulations covering the full emergency response cycle
 - AI-powered characters and a live human facilitator for coaching and evaluation
 - Shorter, modular and buildable training formats using immersive technology
 - A post-training “pocket assistant” that helps teams in real-time response situations.
 6. **Identify key user groups** for this kind of tool (e.g. INGOs, local NGOs, first responders, government actors, cluster/sector teams, etc.).
 7. **Propose a viable economic model**, including:
 - Comparative cost of development and maintenance
 - Feasibility of open-access vs cost-recovery or subscription models
 - Learning from both humanitarian and private sector approaches
 8. **Recommend funding options** for full platform development and piloting (build and scale phases), based on both traditional donor channels and alternative financing mechanisms.
 9. **Estimate the cost and development timeline** required to create and launch a working version of the platform.
 10. **Identify technical and operational requirements** for ensuring accessibility of the platform, especially in low-connectivity or low-resource settings, to ensure it can be adopted by a wide range of actors globally.
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3. Methodology

The consultant is expected to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including:

- Desk review of current training approaches, digital tools, and comparable innovations
 - Key informant interviews with humanitarian stakeholders (NGOs, local actors, donors, training institutions, etc.)
 - Comparative analysis of similar tools or platforms (humanitarian and private sector)
 - Mapping of user needs and constraints (accessibility, language, infrastructure)
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4. Deliverables

- **Inception report** with methodology and work plan (Week 1)
- **Research and interviews** with identified key interlocutors (Week 2-4)
- **Draft analysis report** with preliminary findings (Week 5-6)
- **Presentation** of key findings to the project team
- **Final report** (max. 25 pages + annexes), including:

- Summary of findings by objective
 - Strategic recommendations on viability and next steps
 - Executive summary for donor/internal communication
 - Outline a potential stakeholder engagement process for a SimEx, from initial needs assessment to final evaluation and learning stages.
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5. Timeline & Level of Effort

- **Start date:** As soon as possible
 - **End date:** Target: 30 June 2025 (potentially negotiable for end of consultancy reporting)
 - **Estimated LOE:** Up to 30 working days
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6. Key Interlocutors During the Consultancy

- **ACF ERRU (Emergency Readiness and Response Unit- and humanitarian and learning lead for the platform) project team**
 - **ACF IT Department**
 - **ACF Learning Department Lead**
 - **XR Ireland (technical developer of the platform) project leads**
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7. Consultant Profile

Required:

- Fluency in **English and French** (written and spoken)
- Strong experience in the **humanitarian sector**, ideally in emergency preparedness/response, training, or simulations
- Proven experience conducting **market surveys or feasibility studies**
- Excellent writing, analytical, and communication skills

Preferred:

- Experience with **gamified learning** or immersive/new/digital technologies (VR, simulations, serious games, etc.)
 - Familiarity with AI or tech solutions for capacity building
 - Experience working across/with both **international and local humanitarian organisations**
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8. Application Process

Interested consultants should submit:

- A short technical proposal (max. 3 pages) outlining their understanding of the assignment, methodology, and timeline
- CV
- 1–2 examples of similar previous work
- Financial proposal (daily rate and estimated LOE)

Applications should be submitted by **10th of May 2025** to errurequest@actioncontrelafaim.org