

Technical and Editorial Support for Development Aid Professionals

PRINTABLE VERSION OF KEY TEXTS miniAID.com WEBSITE

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Note: Only key texts are reproduced in this document. Please refer to the website for additional texts

On-Line Support for Development Aid Professionals

- *Need a hand with your document?*
- *A quick check for howlers?*
- *A second opinion on a proposal you are drafting?*
- *Struggling with indicators?*
- *Perhaps you want the layout improved, or the formatting sorted out?*

Whether you are working on a report or a proposal, a project document or a concept paper, a logframe, a budget, a thesis, a press release, a letter, a manual, or even a book, I am ready to help.

If you want fast proofreading, substantial editing, and/or help with technical aspects, formatting, structure or layout, just let me know.

Whether you are starting out in the development sector or highly experienced, whether you are a

native English speaker or struggling with the language, don't be shy. Get in touch.

Let me be your hidden helper.

With more than 20 years overseas experience behind me, and nothing but positive feedback from satisfied miniAID clients over the last five years, I am well-placed to help you, all in the strictest confidence. No one need ever know that you have a hidden helper from afar.

From Ms. A, regarding the preparation of a booklet for her: Dear Chris, You are just a precious gift, suddenly coming in the middle of the storm, and I will definitely remember your support.... Your booklet is exactly what I wanted It's just perfect: it's pertinent and fun, very accessible and practical, close to (the local) culture... Sincere thanks and congratulations. ...

From Mr. O, following assistance with a project document: Hi Chris, Thank you very much for taking time to review the prodoc. You put a lot of efforts and thoughts into it, and many of your comments and suggestions are extremely useful. Had I realized that your support would actually include programmatic recommendations I would have sent you the prodoc much earlier ... Thanks again and best regards

From Mr. T, regarding editing and proofreading of a collated report: Excellent, Chris! You really did a good job in a surprisingly short time ... All your comments are well taken and I have accepted all changes you proposed. You also spotted the repeated footnote and some missing words (sometimes the word "not"). ... Overall, well done.

From Mr. E, regarding technical and editorial advice on a draft project document: Hey Chris, I haven't properly expressed my thanks for your help in this process. I really enjoyed your style and how you explained things to me. I have missed that part very much earlier in the process. I am happy to spread the word about your services to my colleagues here. I am sure this could be very helpful for them as well.

From Mr. G, regarding a feasibility report (not development related): Chris, Largely thanks to you, my report was accepted, and we'll soon be moving forward with the work. You did great. Thanks again.

From Ms. F, regarding a funding proposal: Hi Chris, Thank you so so much for this fantastic assistance. I agree with you on the changes or additions you made on page 3...it looks much better that way. ... And thank you very much for all your encouragements! ... I have been very fortunate to have this valuable service from you! ...

Services Available

There are three kinds of support available:

- **Docu-Doctor:** Editing and Technical Support
- **Howler-Checker:** Proofreading
- **CV-Boost:** Helping you market yourself effectively for employment

A. Docu-Doctor (Editing and Technical Support)

You are drafting a document. An evaluation report, perhaps, or maybe a project document. Perhaps it's a press release, or an internal report; maybe a letter, maybe a book.

Time is running out, and you could do with a hand...

Through the Docu-Doctor service, I will help you improve your document, as per your requirements. You might like me to do any or all of the following:

- To comment on **technical aspects** arising from your document
- To improve **clarity** and **conciseness**
- To make the language more **appropriate** for your target readership
- To improve the **structure and logical flow**
- To alert you to **inconsistencies** or **ambiguities**
- To sort out **acronyms and abbreviations**
- Where **finances** or **statistics** are involved, to check the maths
- Where **results frameworks** are involved, to help define clear, relevant and realistic outputs, outcomes, baselines, targets, indicators etc.
- To improve the **language, spelling** and **grammar**

- To make the **layout** more attractive, and the **formatting** consistent
- ... **Anything else?** Let me know!

The process is very straight-forward:

Experience shows that a back-and-forth approach works well, something along the following lines:

1. **Check my availability.** Send me an email stating what help you are seeking, and the approximate size of your document. If you need a fast response, back it up with a supporting SMS text or phone call to my mobile (refer [contact details](#)).
2. **Email me your draft**, along with **your instructions**, including, if you wish, the maximum amount of time you wish me to spend on the work. **Attach any key documents** that will help me, e.g. your Terms of Reference (TOR) if you have one, specific to this document, and any key background material. **Advise me of any deadline** you are working to, of your **contact details**, and any key requirements.
3. I will read through, and, based upon your instructions, I will make **suggestions for improvement**. I can identify areas needing clarification or correction, and, unless you request otherwise, will make changes to the document, using the [track-changes](#) facility on Microsoft Word, so you can see what I have done. I will send it back, with explanatory covering email. If you like, we can also discuss on the phone.

4. You will have the opportunity to **accept or reject any edits** I have done, and to work further on the document, before returning it to me for further editing. And so on, back and forth. Finally, I can help with **formatting, layout, proofreading**, etc.
5. For longer documents or books, we can work section by section, chapter by chapter. In such cases it is helpful if you share with me a skeleton structure of the work, e.g. a draft contents page, so I can understand where a section or chapter falls within the greater scheme of things.
6. Where we have agreed that I am paid by the hour, I will keep you regularly **updated on time spent to date**, and I will ensure that I don't charge for exceeding any maximum you have set.

This is one way of operating. I am very flexible, and would be pleased to try out new methods of collaboration.

Experience shows that working to-and-fro on e.g. a project document, including technical aspects, editing, formatting etc. might take a total **chargeable time of 3 or 4 hours intensive work**, spread over a number of days, or even weeks. Of course, it all depends on the length, complexity, and the quality (including standard of English), of your document.

I always welcome your comments and feedback, so I can improve my service. Indeed, if you are not satisfied with my work, please don't wait until after the work is completed, but let me know as soon as possible so I can take corrective measures.

By sending me a document to work on, you are accepting the [Terms and Conditions](#); please read these.

Docu-Doctor Payment Options

A) Pay per hour or per day - the easy and flexible options

- **Per hour:** US\$72 (= approx £46 or €54)
- **Per day:** US\$445 (= approx £280 or €330) - minimum of three days
- **Discount:** available for repeat clients, and for new clients - see [details](#)

I **only** count the hours and minutes spent **actually** working on your document, editing, proofreading, writing comments and advice on the document itself or in a covering email, and time spent discussing substantive issues on the phone.

I do not count time spent on administration, on initial enquiries, or on discussions regarding our working methods.

B) Fixed Charge Option

If you prefer, we can agree a fixed charge in advance, with the amount fixed in US Dollars, Pound Sterling or Euros.

For this option, we need to be especially clear, from the start, exactly what will be required of me: you must provide me clear written instructions and/or a detailed Terms of Reference (TOR). Although I will try to accommodate any changes you may introduce to the original instructions, I reserve the right to refuse alterations, or to adjust the amount payable where additional expenditures or time will be required, or where deadlines are brought forward.

B. Howler-Checker (Proofreading)

Save your reputation, or even your job. Get your document cleared of those most embarrassing spelling or grammatical mistakes - what we call 'howlers'.

Choose from the following services: **Economy** (7-day), **Standard** (48-hour), **Fast** (24-hour), **Super-Fast** (< 24-hour), or **Reserved Super-Fast** (< 24-hour, and reserved minimum 1 day in advance).

Howler-Checker is a quality proofreading service for documents written in 'reasonable' English, i.e. with an average of no more than 50 significant errors per thousand words.

For as little as \$10 + \$0.85 per hundred words (or even less if you take advantage of the [discounts](#) on offer), I will remove the howlers from your document. Where possible, I will highlight also any paragraphs or sentences that are badly unclear or ambiguous, and suggest substitute text.

The process is very straightforward (especially if you have already [registered](#)):

1. **Check** (a) that your document will not exceed the maximum size for the time you will give me, and (b) that the likely cost is OK for you. (see [price calculator](#))
2. **Confirm my availability** by sending me an email stating the service you have chosen and the size of

TIP: In Microsoft Word, you can easily know the size (number of words) in your document: go to TOOLS, and click WORD COUNT. Or, you can go to FILE, and select DOCUMENT PROPERTIES, and select STATISTICS.

your document; if you need a fast response, back it up with a supporting SMS text or call to my mobile.

3. **Send me your document** as an attachment by email. Give any special instructions or requests in your cover email, along with your name, the country you are in, and whether and when I can phone you, in case I need to contact you regarding the document.
4. **If your deadline is tight, text (or phone) me** on my mobile +44 7798 577 296 telling me to check my email. The clock starts ticking from NOW... (If you choose not to text or phone me, the clock starts when I open your email).
5. **Receive my acknowledgement.** I will respond to your email, and advise you the amount that will be payable.
6. **The corrected script will land in your in-box.** If, through no fault of yours, I fail to return the corrected document to you by the deadline agreed, I will refund you any advance you paid upfront plus another 25% as an apology.
7. **Any balance due** is to be paid within 21 days of completion.
8. By sending me a document for proofreading, you are accepting the [Terms and Conditions](#); please read .

Howler-Checker - Summary of Options

Option:	Economy	Standard	Fast	Reserved SuperFast	SuperFast (not reserved)
Turn-Around time (max.)	7 days	48 hours	24 hours	you set the deadline	you set the deadline
Advance notice required	None*	None*	None*	24 hours minimum*	None*
Max. size of document	200,000 words	80,000 words	40,000 words	4,000 words per hr, max. 40,000 per 24-hrs	4,000 words per hr, max. 40,000 per 24-hrs
Availability night-time 10 p.m. to 8 a.m., UK time	No	No	No	Yes, but surcharge and deposit payable	No
Cost:					
~ Fixed Charge	\$10	\$25	\$40	\$50	\$125
~ Charge per Word	0.85 ¢	1.00 ¢	1.35 ¢	1.50 ¢	2.45 ¢
Refund Policy	In case of failure, 125% refund of all payment received, i.e. full refund + 25% as apology: see Terms & Conditions				

* 5% discount applies if notice is given at least 7 days prior to start time

C. CV-Boost (Helping you market yourself effectively for employment)

Choose from any or all of the following services:

- **CV-Enhancement**
- **Application-Support**
- **Interview-Support**

CV-Enhancement

Let me help you improve your standard CV. After confirming my availability, simply send me your draft CV (stating your response-time requirement), and I will email you back with suggestions for improvement, including proposed edits, restructuring, deletions, or information to be added. You then send me a revised draft, which I will proofread, edit as required, and, if you wish, I will revise the format and layout for you as well.

\$175 (standard, 7-day response) or \$195 (3-day response) or \$235 (urgent response, max. 24 hours). Response time excludes the time waiting for your emails.

Application-Support

Let me help you modify your CV, and draw up a quality covering letter, so that you can more effectively market yourself for a specific post. After confirming my availability, simply send me details of the post you are applying for (advert plus any further details obtained, e.g. Terms of Reference), plus your draft CV (or standard generic CV) and covering letter, and advice on the response time required of me. I will email you back with suggestions for improvement, including proposed edits, restructuring, deletions, or information to be added. You then send me revised drafts, which I will proofread, edit as required, and, if you wish, I will revise the format and layout for you as well.

*\$225 (7-day response) or \$250 (3-day response) or \$295 (urgent response, max. 24 hours). **Discount of \$100** if I have already helped you with your CV, whether through CV-Enhancement or Application-Support. Response time excludes the time waiting for your emails.*

Interview-Support

Let me help you market yourself more effectively at interview. After confirming my availability, send me the details of the job you are applying for (advert plus any further details obtained, e.g. Terms of Reference), plus your CV and covering letter, and any other documents you will send (or have sent) with your application.

Give me your Skype ID or contact telephone number, the name of the country you are in and, if you know it, the time zone (+ or – from GMT). Suggest a date and time when I can phone you (or, if you prefer, when you will call me).

At the agreed time, I will give you the practice interview (usually approx. 20 minutes), followed shortly after by a feedback session (also usually 20 minutes). If you wish, I can also follow it up with a short written summary of your performance at interview, with suggestions for improvement.

Further practice interviews can be arranged as required.

\$225 for the first practice interview, and \$175 for each subsequent interview (for the same post), plus any phone charge payable. Where I am to phone you, I will choose the cheapest option available to me. I will advise you the actual per-minute rate that I will be billed, and will calculate the total additional payable based on 40 minutes talking time.

Combined Package

Let me help you with your application for a specific post, plus a practice interview (where we may discover skills or experience that you have failed to mention in your written material), **all for just \$375.**

For tips on getting the job you want, check out 'I am a Top-Class Motorcycle - How to Market Yourself for Employment', a guidance manual I was asked to write for volunteers in India.



By sending me a document to work on, or by seeking my assistance with interview, you are accepting the [Terms and Conditions](#); please read these.

Money Matters

Currencies: Fees are quoted in US Dollars for the convenience of the majority of clients, and will be invoiced in this currency unless you request otherwise. If you choose to pay in another major convertible currency, the exchange rate used will be the mid-market rate applicable at the date of invoice. If you prefer, we can fix rates, in advance, in the currency of your choice. If you fail to settle your account within 21 days, you may be liable not only to an interest charge, but also, a recalculation of the amount due, if the exchange rate has changed in your favour.

Payment can be made by bank transfers, sterling (UK) cheques, Western Union transfer, or online with debit/credit card through PayPal. In all cases, please inform me of any payment you have made, so I can confirm safe receipt.

- **Transfers and Cheques:** If you wish to transfer funds through bank transfer, Western Union money transfer, or with a regular UK pounds-sterling cheque, contact me about your proposed means of payment, and I shall provide the necessary details.
- **PayPal:** PayPal enables credit- or debit- card payments to be made safely online. Your card details would not be revealed to me, as they are known solely to PayPal. Simply click the [PayPal](#) button, which will guide you through the process.

NOTE: By sending me a document to work on, you are accepting the [Terms and Conditions](#). It is therefore important that you read these first.

Contact Details

Email: chris@miniaid.com

Mobile Phone (phoning or SMS texting):

- from overseas: **0044 7798 577 296**
- from inside the UK: **07798 577 296**

Pls. note that I switch my mobile off overnight

Skype ID: miniAID - please add message when requesting contact, so I can know it is not spam

Postal address: Chris Whitehouse, Highclere, Mount, Bodmin, Cornwall, PL30 4EX, United Kingdom

Discounts available

- ✓ **10% discount for repeat clients**, where a total of at least \$250 has been paid for work completed within the last 24 months.
- ✓ **\$75 "TRY-ME" discount for first-time clients**, off the cost of the first docu-doctor or howler-checker assignment(s) you give me. Open to new clients who [register](#) now. This allows you to try before you buy...
- ✓ **10% discount for repeat clients**, where a total of at least \$250 has been paid for work completed within the last 24 months.

Note:

These discounts do not apply where we have negotiated a fixed price for a specific non-standard assignment.

Terms and Conditions

I am sure we can resolve any disputes amicably, but the following is the way I believe we should work, and it will be understood that, in requesting my services, you accept and agree to this way of working.

Copyright: copyright for all text being worked on by me will remain with you. I will have no rights to share the document(s) with any other person, nor to publish in any way, except with your express permission.

Liability: although I shall endeavour to maintain the highest of standards, I cannot and will not accept responsibility for any delays, errors, omissions or other failings in my work, regardless of cause, nor for any consequences arising from any weaknesses or failings in my work.

Confidentiality: I shall ensure to the maximum extent possible that the fact that I am working for you is known only to me and you, and undertake not to share this information with anyone, unless required to do so by law. Furthermore, I will ensure to the greatest extent possible that all documents are kept secure, and will alert you in the event that I become aware that this security may have been compromised, e.g. through theft or loss of my computer, or through someone breaking into my e-mails. I will also try to ensure that my own computer is protected from worms and viruses, and subscribe, and will continue to subscribe, to a reputable anti-virus programme. However, I cannot and will not accept liability for the consequences arising from any failures in the above-mentioned aspects.

Data Protection: As with any documents you send, any personal data (name, e-mail address, phone numbers, bank details, etc.) that you provide may be kept by me in hard copy and/or electronically. In all cases, care will be taken to ensure the safety of this data, with hard copies locked, and soft copies password-protected. I will not sell or otherwise pass on any personal data to any third party, except if required so to do by law, nor will I use the data for any purposes other than to carry out the administrative functions required for carrying out my work, and for maintaining contact with you on an occasional basis thereafter.

My Commitment to You: I am making a commitment to carry out, to the best of my ability only, the work I have accepted to do, within any specified deadline, and in accordance with your instructions. Just as a restaurant cannot guarantee that a fish is free of bones, so also I cannot guarantee that a proof-read document is free of all errors. Where I am paid by the hour, I shall keep you regularly updated regarding progress, the hours worked to date, and the balance due (or balance of advance remaining). However, for all work that I do, in the event of some 'force majeure' (i.e. event beyond my control) that prevents me meeting my obligations, such as severe illness, stoppages to electric power supply or internet connectivity, computer failure, strikes, outbreak of war, etc., I will not accept responsibility for late- or non-completion of the work, nor for any consequences arising therefrom. I will undertake only to carry out the tasks to the maximum extent possible given those circumstances.

Your Commitment to Me: By engaging my services, you agree to pay for services according to the processes explained in the website. In some instances, full payment in advance is required; in some, a deposit is payable prior to start of work, with the balance payable upon successful completion of the work assigned; and in others no advance is required. In all cases, you must settle any bill within 21 days of presentation to you of an invoice.

If, after you receive a communication from me in which I advised you of the time worked to date and/or of the amount payable for work done, and you do not challenge it within seven days, then this will be understood to be your acceptance of this status). It is your responsibility, also, to advise me of any concerns you have about my outputs. So, for example, if you feel I am going into too much detail, or am not going into sufficient detail, in reviewing a document, you must tell me at the earliest opportunity. Complaints at the end of the whole process will not be entertained, if you failed to make suggestions or complaints when first you came to know of my failings.

Rescheduling work: Where circumstances have arisen such that you need to prepone or postpone planned work, and notice of this is given less than 48 hours from agreed start time, then the following shall be the guiding

principles. If I can accommodate the preponement or postponement without difficulty, then we shall adjust our contract accordingly. However, if it is difficult for me to accept the change in timing, I reserve the right to cancel the contract, or to impose a surcharge.

Cancelling work: if you need to cancel the work altogether, no penalties are incurred, if the cancellation is given at least 48 hours before start-time. If the notice is less than 48 hours before start-time, I reserve the right to charge compensation of 20% of the total amount due (regardless of whether any or all of the total has been paid in advance) for this work (or this part of the work). I may waive this right if the cancellation is clearly due to a force majeure over which you could have had no control (e.g. civil strife, war, natural disaster etc.).

Refunds of advances:

1. Where you have paid an advance, and I have failed to work the full hours paid, whether due to ineptitude, laziness on my part, or some force majeure affecting my performance, you may request me to keep this balance for some future assignment, or you may ask me to refund you for the unworked hours. If a refund is requested, I will be bound to refund you this amount in full, subject to your providing me the necessary details for me to make the transfer to you. It should be understood that exchange rates will change, and the amount I will send you will be exactly the amount that I received for those unworked hours, and although I will bear the banking transaction and other administrative costs, I will not accept liability for any exchange rate fluctuations, nor for charges made by financial institutions at your end.

2. Where you have paid an advance, and you have then chosen to reduce the number of tasks to be done, or to cancel the work (with more than 48-hours notice), you may request me to keep this balance for some future assignment, or you may ask me to make a refund for the unworked hours. If a refund is requested, I will refund you this amount, but only after deducting a fee to cover transaction costs. And again, I will not accept liability for any exchange rate fluctuations.

3. For howler-checker (proofreading) assignments only, if I fail to keep to the deadline we have agreed, and it is not due to some force majeure (as defined above), then I am obliged to refund you 125% of any advance you paid me for this work, this being a full refund plus an apology.

Money Matters: Rates (current standard rates, discounts and surcharges) and payment schemes are given in the website. These rates are subject to change, and the applicable rate will be the one published on the date at which an assignment begins, or the applicable advance is paid. Payment can be made by debit/credit card through PayPal, by bank transfer, through Western Union, or by UK sterling cheques. If you choose to pay in a currency other than US dollars, the exchange rate used will be the mid-market rate applicable at the date of invoice. Alternatively, if you prefer, we can agree and commit to prices fixed in your choice of currency. In all cases, in the event you fail to settle your account within 21 days of date of invoice, I reserve the right (1) to charge compound interest for late payments at the rate of 1% per calendar month, or at double the equivalent Bank of England Base Rate, whichever is the larger, for each month after those first 21 days, and/or (2), to recalculate the amount due if the exchange rate has changed in your favour.

Receipts and Invoices: For each payment, I will, unless requested otherwise, email you a PDF-format invoice, and for this I will require full details of your name (as individual or as institution) and address, and the currency (Euro, Pound Sterling or, as default, US Dollar). Since it will be sent electronically, it will not have an original signature. Receipts will only be emailed if specifically requested. Originals of either can be posted to you if required, at no additional charge.

Accepting or Refusing Work: I will only consider working on documents which are written in the English language, and are of reasonable (i.e. comprehensible) standard. Although my priority is to work on documents related to aid and development, I may be willing to assist with documents unrelated to this sector. Note, however, that for all documents, I reserve the right to accept or refuse work for any or no reason, and without explanation.

Chris Whitehouse, June 2009

About your Hidden Helper

I am Chris Whitehouse, native British, in my forties, now enjoying a quieter and more sedentary lifestyle in the sun-kissed southwest of England.

Having spent nearly all my working life overseas, I find myself less excited now at the prospect of packing, flying, settling, working, packing, moving again, and flying again... It was an excellent life, very fulfilling, highly challenging, and I learned a great deal from the experience of coming face-to-face with so many different cultures... I would recommend it. But enough was enough.

Long term postings have taken me to Kenya, Turkey, Singapore, Thailand, Zambia, Nepal and most recently Bhutan. Shorter-term assignments and consultancies have seen me work in Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, and Maldives. I have a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Philosophy, and a Master's in Development Studies. All told, I have more than 20 years experience working overseas, of which over 8 years were with UNDP's United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme.

Through my work, I became well conversant with the mechanics of programme management and monitoring, and became particularly interested in results-based logical frameworks and the challenges faced by those involved in devising the logframes. My work also enabled me to deepen my understanding in a range of fields, from governance to HIV/AIDS, from poverty to microhydro. I learnt about needs and rights, about early childhood learning, about organic farming, about web development, about community mobilisation, about youth crime, about appropriate technology, about refugee management... the list is endless. It seemed that every day I would learn something new about something different!

I have always loved writing, whether articles, press releases, discussion papers, or more academic papers, such as the one I presented at the international conference held in Bhutan on Gross National Happiness. I have edited newsletters in Thailand, Zambia, Nepal, and Bhutan, and contributed articles to others.

I feel it is important to question how we do things, even if (or perhaps particularly if) we have done them this way for a long time. My latest publication questions a long-

established principle of development: that any good project or programme should aim for a single objective. The article, *TVs and Tomatoes*, draws on real-life examples to argue in favour of multiple-objective projects.



out-of-the-box thinking from your
hidden helper, Chris Whitehouse

The dissertation I wrote for my Master's, subsequently published as an Occasional Paper by the University of Bath, sought to assess the extent to which human rights were inherently universal, or were universalisable. Subsequent (unpublished) papers have included a challenge on the meaning of volunteerism, and a plea for evaluations to be evaluated. There was more than a ripple of discussions in the Monitoring and Evaluation community following my challenge to the use of indicators in results-based management, in my paper entitled *The Ants and the Cockroach*, with the response from colleague Dr. Thomas Winderl, both of which were selected for inclusion in a book of selected articles, edited by S. Cummings, entitled *Why did the Chicken Cross the Road?*

Now settled back in my native England, I continue to be interested in, and to be healthily sceptical of, the wonderful world of aid and development. The idea of offering support to development professionals through this website emerged from the recognition that many working in the field are 'doers' more than 'writers'. In particular, the much maligned consultant often faces enormous difficulty meeting clients' sky-high expectations within extraordinarily optimistic deadlines.

Many have already benefited from the services I offer through miniAID, and as word gets out, there will no doubt be more joining them.

Go to www.miniaid.com/helper/publicn.html for links to all publications