

Process and Guidelines for Developing and Implementing Challenge Programs

A five-phase process is used for the development and implementation of all Challenge Programs (CPs) :

Phase 1: Idea Generation

Idea Generation would be through an open book process, with free competition among all stakeholders. The output would be a short (two-four page) description of the concept for a Challenge Program.

Phase 1 Criteria: The CP

- addresses an issue of overwhelming significance. Issue addressed can be global, regional or sub-regional in importance;
- fits within the CGIAR mission and goals; and,
- is likely to generate significant outputs and impact.

Phase 2: Development of Pre-proposals

Development of pre-proposals would be de-linked from idea generation, in that, once the CP theme is identified, pre-proposal development would be an open, competitive process. This would be open to anyone, not only to those who may have contributed the initial ideas. The objective would be to generate a variety of meaningful pre-proposals (10-15 pages) on each selected theme, not to pre-select institutions to submit pre-proposals.

Phase II Criteria: The CP:

- is time bound and clearly defined in terms of research outputs as well as the potential impacts on CG clients;
- has clearly defined mechanisms for the delivery and dissemination of research outputs;
- is based on science that is both excellent and relevant, often requiring logical integration of multiple disciplines to address issues of great complexity;
- employs a mode of operation that enhances efficiency and effectiveness of the CGIAR System, with demonstrable contribution to CGIAR goals;
- involves both CGIAR centers and their partners and is based on the core competence and comparative advantage of collaborating partners;
- adds value to existing research and produces synergies between existing core competencies of the Centers' and the partners;
- is co-operative and collaborative in nature; with no overwhelming dominance by a single institution;
- gives evidence of stakeholder involvement in problem identification and link to bottom-up priority setting mechanisms;
- requires significant levels of up-front funding to achieve its objectives;
- there is clear evidence that donors are willing to commit significant up-front funding;

- involves active participation of NARS from the South and contributes to capacity building of NARIs from the South.

Phase 3: Development of Full Proposals

On decision by the Executive Council, the Science Council would ask the parties involved for the further development of the pre-proposals into a full research program proposal. The CGIAR could provide some funds (up to US\$200 thousand) for the development of full proposals. The program proposal, including a business plan, would be about 30-50 pages in length.

Phase III Criteria:

- Outputs of the proposed program:
 - a. can be captured by the intended beneficiaries;
 - b. are achievable within the proposed time frame.
- Quality and relevance of the science and research:
 - c. the proposed research is directly relevant to the outputs;
 - d. the research is likely to lead to important advances in economic, social and environmental condition of the beneficiaries; also in science;
 - e. the research is feasible, the science appropriate and the outputs achievable;
 - f. the research capability of the CP Coordinator and the team of senior scientists adequate to the task and their time allocation is sufficient.
- Strategy of utilizing and applying results:
 - g. the Business Plan addresses, in a realistic manner, the uptake of the outputs in order to produce high impact outcomes.
- Collaborative arrangements:
 - h. the CP involves at least 2 CG Centers and at least 2 NARS from the South. In addition other institutions from the North and South are slated to handle specific program components or projects; CPs should involve the best institutions from the North and the South that can contribute to solving the problem. The institutions from the North should preferably bring their own resources to the consortium.
 - i. the core parties in the program are the right ones to carry on the research and deliver the benefits;
 - j. the synergies, value adding and mutual benefits are clear;
 - k. the core parties are obviously committed in terms of the resources, time and knowledge-sharing;
 - l. there is clear lines of accountability and clear institutional arrangements spelling out roles, responsibilities, rules of operation and conflict resolution in a formal agreement signed off at the highest legal level by each core party or CP associate party.
- Governance and management:
 - m. governance and management arrangements are determined in an explicit way by the Business Plan and joint venture agreement;
 - n. governance and management arrangements are flexible and adaptable to the specific needs of the CP and the structures are appropriate to the size and nature of the program;
 - o. there is clear evidence of genuine cooperation and commitment of the core parties;

- p. the CP is to be headed by an “independent” Coordinator operating on behalf of the core parties with clearly defined reporting responsibilities;
- q. the Challenge Program Coordinator is to be recruited from a core party or from outside, and appointed for a fixed term under the terms and conditions of an agreed core party;
- r. there are clear and satisfactory arrangements for handling legal responsibilities;
- s. the arrangements for administrative support (to be provided by one of the core parties) are satisfactory;
- t. the Board of each core party is accountable for the input resources and delivery of agreed outputs of that core party.
- Intellectual property:
 - u. the treatment of intellectual property is appropriate.
- Performance evaluation:
 - v. internal performance evaluation mechanisms are adequate.
- Budget and finance
 - w. The program creatively mobilizes new resources (cash and in-kind), considering equity, or the need to balance the contributions between the North and the South. It is expected that expenditure on each CP would be in the \$8-12 million range, per annum for the initial five years (including the in-kind contribution of partners). The business plan should outline a clear resource mobilization strategy;
 - x. the budget and its allocation are appropriate;
 - y. the mechanisms for reallocation of the resources are appropriate;
 - z. there are sufficient donors willing to commit funding for the first 3-5 years.

Phase IV: Program Implementation

Implementation of the Challenge Program would be the responsibility of the consortium (joint venture) selected by the CGIAR. There would be no “fixed” management model for the consortium. The model selected would depend on the circumstances of the CP and the core parties and would become evident through the elaboration of the Business Plan where it would be spelled out as part of the full proposal. The robustness of the Business Plan would be indicated by the response to criteria w - z (Budget and Finance, above). An important element of the competition between full proposals (and indeed the peer review by stakeholders and donors) will be evidenced by the indication that there are sufficient donors willing to commit funding. There could be several component projects or sub-projects for which partner institutions have not yet been identified. Institution(s) to conduct these could be selected competitively on the basis of a traditional “competitive grant” scheme.

Phase V: Program Evaluation

The core parties making up the consortium would plan and implement monitoring and evaluation procedures as called for by the business plan. In addition, the CP would be subjected to rigorous peer review by the Science Council. Impact assessment would be built into the business plan for the CP, ensuring the collection of necessary base data from the start of the program.