

Research Fairness Initiative: Areas for Reporting

Fairness of Opportunity – “BEFORE Research”

1. Relevance to countries or communities – *in which research is done*

Why this is included in the RFI:

- There are many reasons to conduct research – commercial, curiosity, for a degree, military, and many more – but ‘public good’ is not necessarily the main purpose nor is it often made explicit. Fairness implies that communities directly involved by or participating in research should benefit – directly or indirectly. The RFI encourages to be explicit about the public good of research.
- Another reason is that countries and research organisations¹ should have more expertise in conditions that affect them disproportionately. Therefore, an explicit focus on locally, nationally or regionally relevant health or other conditions requiring research is fair as it builds on local capacity and encourages more equality in expertise in partnerships.

Reporting Guide:

1.1. Report how your organisation establishes the research priorities in countries or communities where research is being planned or conducted.

[NB. Research priorities established by a legitimate authority using an accepted methodology and that have been updated in the last 5 years are considered to represent the priorities of the communities in which research is being planned or conducted].

1.1.1. If there is a mismatch between established priorities and research being done, does your organisation have policies, procedures or mechanisms to justify non-priority research?

1.1.2. If there are no or no publicly available research priorities, are there policies, procedures or funding and support mechanisms in place to establish these in future?

1.2. How does your organisation encourage or require its research directors to state explicitly what the (positive and negative) impact for the countries or communities in which research is being planned or conducted?

1.2.1. Does your organisation publish these considerations?

1.3. Report on any future changes planned – anticipated changes and time-table.

NB. Wherever available, attach relevant documents, statements, other materials that demonstrate your actions and intentions.

¹ For purposes of this document ‘organisation’ includes governments, government departments, business, non-profits, funders of research, and any other agency engaging in research partnerships.

2. Early engagement of all partners – *in deciding about aims, methods, implementation*

Why this is included in the RFI:

- Even though many partnerships are not equal – there often being ‘lead partners’ providing the purpose, ideas, financing or key expertise – partnership arrangement will benefit and can be made ‘more fair’ by early engagement of all partners in ways that encourage maximal participation of each. This is in contrast to research where the word ‘partner’ is used in the sense of ‘implementing partner’ or ‘hired hand’. The RFI encourages explicit efforts to create optimal participation of all partners in all key areas of research development.

Reporting Guide:

2.1. Describe policies, procedures or requirements for partnership engagement by your organisation and its research directors – for example, high income country published guidelines for good partnerships with low and middle income countries.²

2.2. Report on any future changes planned – anticipated changes and time-table.

NB. Wherever available, attach relevant documents, statements, other materials that demonstrate your actions and intentions.

3. Making contributions of all partners explicit – *before projects reach a ‘no-return’ phase, ensuring ‘fair value’ for all before, during and after research*

Why this is included in the RFI:

- Countries and organisations anywhere, like individuals, benefit from negotiated and explicit role descriptions in research and partnerships. In particular, all contributions and all possible benefits from research should be considered – before, during and after research programmes or partnerships.
- Fairness of expectation – like all other Areas for Reporting – applies to all sides in a partnership. Funding partners should expect fair budgeting for costs, salaries and equipment, for example, and not to have inflated prices. Partners more focused on implementing research should expect ‘fair returns on their investments’ – whether financial, training, system building or access to products of research, for example. In the case of low income countries, fairness requires an increased return on investment.

Reporting Guide:

3.1. Describe policies, procedures or requirements for creating clarity and agreement on roles, responsibilities, expected benefits and transparency in all of these from research partnership engagement by your organisation and its research directors.

² E.g. the Swiss KFPE http://www.naturalsciences.ch/organisations/kfpe/11_principles_7_questions or Canadian CCGHR guides <http://www.ccgpr.ca/resources/principles-global-health-research/>

3.2. Describe procedures and standards used to prepare research budgets. These can be organisational, sourced from funders where applications are made, or generic guidelines for specific use in low and middle income countries.³

3.3. Report on any future changes planned – anticipated changes and time-table.

NB. Wherever available, attach relevant documents, statements, other materials that demonstrate your actions and intentions.

4. Ensuring that ‘matching’ and other co-financing mechanisms do not undermine opportunities for fair participation of all partners

Why this is included in the RFI:

- ‘Equality’ in partnerships is sometimes defined as ‘equal financial contributions’. Clearly, even in research collaborations that are limited to high income countries, there are tremendous differences in financial ability between funders, between research and academic organisations, between countries, between businesses, and between any of these. The RFI report can help to publish and share how different actors attempt to do this.
- *An example: in the current state of ‘development financing’ including in research, ‘co-financing’ is prominent. A wealthy philanthropic organisation may propose to a middle income country to establish a ‘joint fund’ to spur local researchers to focus on vaccine development. On offer is a 1:1 contribution – even though the currency differentials may be 10, 20 or 100-fold. Such a proposal could well put undue pressure on scarce national or organisational budgets, possibly skewing established priorities to be able to access the additional philanthropic funding. This is not ‘fair’ – as external funding should not decide on national priorities in low income countries, for example.*
- *Another example – ‘from the other side’: some low and middle income countries and organisations ‘accept’ that all research funding is external and have no explicit financial or other resourcing budget to ensure that their contributions to partnerships are ‘matching’ those of other partners.*

Reporting Guide:

4.1. Describe policies, procedures or requirements by your organisation to provide reasonable ‘matching’ contributions to research partnerships - with the aim of creating more shared inputs to be able to agree to more shared benefits later.

4.2. Report on any future changes planned – anticipated changes and time-table.

NB. Wherever available, attach relevant documents, statements, other materials that demonstrate your actions and intentions.

³ e.g. the ESSENCE donor group guides on better costing of research in low and middle income countries: http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/stellent/groups/corporatesite/@sf_central_grants_admin/documents/web_document/wtp057116.pdf

5. Recognition of unequal research management capacities between partners and providing for appropriate corrective measures – *negotiation, contracting, language, financial management systems*

Why this is included in the RFI:

- Inequalities in expertise brought to research collaborations by partners is often matched by similar inequalities in ability to negotiate contracts⁴, understand technical language, manage finances, and comply with complex donor reporting requirements – starting at proposal submission stage. Both fairness and pragmatism dictate that partners would do well to recognize such inequalities explicitly at the start and build in mechanisms to support the research management systems of all partners as part of the collaboration.
- Fairness also demands that funding is used only for which it is given, and that acceptable, transparent accounting is practised or accessed by all partners.

Reporting Guide:

5.1. Describe the due diligence efforts you require your organisation and/or its research directors to conduct on the negotiating and contracting capacities of partners – *particularly where your organisation is the lead partner – and particularly if partners are governments or research organisations in low and middle income countries or economical deprived regions of high income countries.*

5.1.1. Describe how deficiencies are dealt with, including what support is provided to maximize these capacities in the partnership.

5.2. Describe support mechanisms in place to ensure comprehensive understanding of technical documentation to all partners –

- *As lead partner – support to provide translation services where appropriate*
- *As funder – support to ensure sufficient capacity is in place to deal adequately with reporting requirements*
- *As collaborating partner – measures to ensure that all staff involved in management of the project has sufficient understanding to competently manage the project/programmes.*

5.3. Report on the use of internationally accepted accounting standards in your organisation – *or mechanisms to access / hire such expertise for purposes of financial accounting related to research collaborations.*

NB. Wherever available, attach relevant documents, statements, other materials that demonstrate your actions and intentions.

⁴ See for example COHRED's Fair Research Contracting support www.cohred.org/frc or the legal support provided by the Public Interest Intellectual Property Advisors (PIIPA) <http://www.piipa.org>

Fair Process – “DURING Research”

6. Minimizing negative impact of research programmes on health and other systems – divert human and other resources away from essential services and care

[Why this is included in the RFI:](#)

- Although research is an essential component of global health and development, it is not without potential side-effects.
- *Examples: external funding may overwhelm local budgets and, therefore, may become the de facto priority standard; appointing local staff may drain capacity to deliver essential care or services – especially in public sector and therefore especially care or services to lowest income populations; competitive grant awarding may create ‘stop and go’ dynamics that can inhibit organisation building; need for centralised specimen storage may reduce access and the ability of some partners to exercise rights of ownership.*

Reporting Guide:

6.1. Describe the due diligence efforts you require your organisation and its research directors or partners in research partnerships to conduct on the potential for negative and positive consequences on local research, care or other systems – in particular consider implications on staffing, health care systems and national priority agendas in low and middle income countries.

6.2. Report on any future changes planned – anticipated changes and time-table.

NB. Wherever available, attach relevant documents, statements, other materials that demonstrate your actions and intentions.

7. Fair local hiring, training and sourcing - staff, consumables and other support

[Why this is included in the RFI:](#)

- Exposure and involvement to all parts of research and innovation is key to developing organisational and national capacities and systems. Partners that systematically optimize employment and development of staff from areas where research is being conducted, and source other requirements as much as possible locally are, in this sense, more fair than those that rely heavily on external expertise, consumables or infrastructure.

Reporting Guide:

7.1. Describe policies, procedures or requirements by your organisation to optimize the use of local or regional staff and the sourcing of local or regional consumables.

7.1.1. In particular, in the context of low and middle income countries, how are high level human resource requirements met in ways that maximize their availability to country or organisation beyond individual research programmes and collaborations.

7.1.2. If this report is for a low and middle income country government or organisation, report on the requirements in place that increase human resource development – in all spheres of research and research management – as a result of research collaborations.

7.2. Describe governmental and/or organisational strategy in terms of encouraging or facilitating international research collaborations.

7.3. Report on policies or procedures in place in the organisation to reduce or minimize remuneration differentials between partners – particularly in research involving research partnerships in both high and low income populations.

7.4. Report on any future changes planned – anticipated changes and time-table.

NB. Wherever available, attach relevant documents, statements, other materials that demonstrate your actions and intentions.

8. Respect for authority of local ethics review system – possible measures to enhance this

[Why this is included in the RFI:](#)

- Ethics review of research involving human participants is obligatory in health. Even In 'non-health' research, calls for more explicit ethics review of research involving human participants are increasing. International research ethics guidelines encourage review in all countries partnering in research to emphasize ownership by communities of the right to accept or refuse to participate, to share in benefits, to understand risks. Fairness demands that countries or organisations without adequate research ethics review capacity to represent their communities be supported to do so. Experience shows that inadequate attention to giving local communities opportunity to decide increases risk for members of these communities as well as for damage to reputation of business, funders and external partners and, indeed, for scientific activities in general.

Reporting Guide:

8.1. Report on the use of internationally ethics review guidelines used as standard reference by your organisation, its own research ethics review committees, if any, and its research directors.

8.1.1. Are research directors required to provide proof of competence in ethics of research? ⁵

8.1.2. Describe how your organisation provides updates on research ethics guidelines to research directors and internal ethics review staff?

⁵ See for example requirements of the US National Institutes of Health <https://ethics.od.nih.gov/Training/AET.htm> or services by non-profit organisations such as TRREE <http://elearning.trree.org>

8.2. Report on requirement for local research ethics committees to approve research done in their area of jurisdiction – applying to all partnership sites.

8.2.1. Describe how your organisation resolves possible conflicting reviews.

8.3. Describe the due diligence efforts you require your organisation and/or its research directors to conduct on ethics review capacity of partners.

8.3.1. Describe how deficiencies are dealt with, including what support is provided to maximize these capacities in the partnership.

8.4. Report on any future changes planned – anticipated changes and time-table.

NB. Wherever available, attach relevant documents, statements, other materials that demonstrate your actions and intentions.

9. Data ownership, storage, access and use – during and after research

[Why this is included in the RFI:](#)

- The core rationale for engaging in research, science and technology, and innovation is to create new knowledge and use it to develop scalable solutions. “Data ownership”, therefore, is at the heart of equality and fairness in partnerships. This includes having the means to access and analyse data, to produce publications, and develop products, services or other solutions based on the data. Unfair ownership or ownership practices, unnecessary obstacles to access and use, forced relinquishing of rights to access as part of contracting, and more, are common sources of friction in partnerships, and in developing the research competitiveness of all in the partnership. Reporting on organisational and national practices, policies, legislation and means to enable all partners to access and use data is germane to the RFI.

Reporting Guide:

9.1. Report on policies and procedures [and legislation, if this report is done for a government department or national agency] **in place to regulate data ownership, storage and access – in particular if data are stored outside the countries where they were collected.**

9.2. Report on policies and procedures in place on authorship rights for all partners.

9.3. Report on policies, procedures and practices in your organisation that require research directors to publish data –

9.3.1. Related to Clinical Trials

9.3.2. Related to other types of research

9.4. Describe policies and practices used in your organisation, including budget allocations, to ensure comprehensible feedback reporting to countries and communities in which research was done.

9.4.1. Report on journal publication requirements – in particular, is there emphasis on ‘impact factors’ or on ‘locally accessed’ or other publication values?

9.5. Report on any future changes planned – anticipated changes and time-table.

NB. Wherever available, attach relevant documents, statements, other materials that demonstrate your actions and intentions.

10. Encourage ‘full cost recovery’ budgeting and compensation for all partners

[Why this is included in the RFI:](#)

- External grants come with as many different conditions as there are sources of funding. Many do not include or do not sufficiently include compensation for ‘indirect’ and ‘overhead’ costs of partner organisations – expecting all or part absorption of such costs as ‘in kind’ contributions, or simply ignoring the existence of such costs as essential to the research enterprise. At the same time, funders should expect competent budgeting and financial management services so that indirect and overhead costs are not used unnecessarily nor for artificially increasing budget requirements.

Reporting Guide:

10.1. Describe how your organisation deals with ‘full cost recovery’ requirements – both in its capacity as ‘donor / sponsor’ of research and as ‘recipient of funding in partnerships’.

10.1.1. If your organisation has explicit directives for paying or requiring to receive ‘overhead’ or ‘indirect’ or ‘administrative’ costing – report this here.

10.2. Report on any future changes planned – anticipated changes and time-table.

NB. Wherever available, attach relevant documents, statements, other materials that demonstrate your actions and intentions.

Fair Benefit Sharing – “AFTER Research”

11. Research System Capacities - *improvements to ensure local research systems become more competitive, better able to take the lead in future*

[Why this is included in the RFI:](#)

- Partnerships are the only way for countries and organisations to develop their research and innovation systems, services, competitiveness and their ability to become a contributor to global health knowledge and innovation. Fairness means explicit provision for organisational and national research system development potential of partnerships.

Reporting Guide:

11.1. Describe requirements, policies or standards being used to support all partners in research partnerships to optimize their own (national or organisational) research and research system capacities – particularly in collaborations involving both high and low income countries and organisations.

11.1.1. **Report specifically on training**

11.1.2. **Distinguish between ‘research expertise’ and ‘research management expertise’**

11.2. Report on any future changes planned – anticipated changes and time-table.

NB. Wherever available, attach relevant documents, statements, other materials that demonstrate your actions and intentions.

12. Intellectual Property Rights and Technology Transfer – *specific measures to share IP Rights in collaborative research*

[Why this is included in the RFI:](#)

- Intellectual Property Rights is one of the major mechanisms to (financially) reward research achievements and, in principle, to provide investment in future research and development. For that reason, organisational and national IP rules, regulations, policies, strategies and legislation requires its own reporting section in the RFI.

Reporting Guide:

12.1. Describe requirements, policies or standards being used to deal with sharing of intellectual property rights resulting from research partnerships – particularly in collaborations involving both high and low income countries and organisations.

12.2. Report on measures that your organisation takes to achieve levelling of expertise in intellectual property rights negotiation of all partners.

12.3. Report on any future changes planned – anticipated changes and time-table.

NB. Wherever available, attach relevant documents, statements, other materials that demonstrate your actions and intentions.

13. Innovation System Capacities – *Measures to optimize localisation of spin-off economic activities, scaling ability and culture of innovation*

[Why this is included in the RFI:](#)

- Innovation – defined as the creating of scalable products or services that address key human health and other needs – may be complex, non-linear, not even well understood. Nevertheless, the organisational and national capacity to transform knowledge into products and services that satisfy needs and create employment and economic activity is possibly the major long-term outcome of research partnerships. Because of this, supporting the innovation capacity of all partners is given a separate reporting space in the RFI.

Reporting Guide:

13.1. Describe requirements, policies or standards being used to support all partners in research partnerships to optimize their own (national or organisational) to use research results to develop and scale services, products or other solutions – particularly in collaborations involving both high and low income countries and organisations.

13.1.1. Report specifically on encouraging local manufacturing or start-up, on ensuring that ‘innovation system’ or ‘innovation capacity’ increases in partnership sites – especially in economically challenged environments

13.1.2. Provision of funding for product / service development as part of research collaborations

13.1.3. Support to national management capacity of intellectual property in countries in which research is conducted.

13.2. Report on any future changes planned – anticipated changes and time-table.

NB. Wherever available, attach relevant documents, statements, other materials that demonstrate your actions and intentions.

14. Due diligence efforts – *minimizing negative environmental, social and cultural impact; achieving SDGs; increasing women in science*

[Why this is included in the RFI:](#)

- Besides the new knowledge created by research and its transformation into products and services, research as a societal endeavour may also have positive and negative environmental impact, social and cultural acceptability and consequences, and may or may not support achieving internationally accepted development goals or contribute to increasing the participation of women in science, contribute to diplomacy through science, and more. Although operationalized through particular research collaborations focusing on far more narrow topics, organisational and governmental measures implemented to also maximize these wider benefits of research and innovation are often missed. Which is the reason for the RFI to provide for reporting on this area.

Reporting Guide:

14.1. Describe requirements, policies or standards being used to assess environmental impact of research – particularly in collaborations involving both high and low income countries and organisations.

14.1.1. Report specifically on reducing international travel

14.1.2. Report on potential for partnerships to focus on replacement of existing products or services with more sustainable ones

14.2. Describe requirements of policies that assess cultural or social impact of research – particularly in collaborations involving both high and low income countries and organisations.

14.2.1. Report on measures to minimize or compensate for potential negative impact and measures to optimize positive ones.

14.3. Describe requirements, policies or standards used to enhance the participation of women in science through your organisation's research partnerships

14.4. Report on any future changes planned – anticipated changes and time-table.

NB. Wherever available, attach relevant documents, statements, other materials that demonstrate your actions and intentions.

15. Expectation of all partners to adhere to a best practice standard in research collaborations

Why this is included in the RFI:

- There are some attempts to formulate codes of practice for research collaborations – in particular in terms of research partnerships involving high and low & middle income countries. (see the RFI web page). It is assumed that organisations and governments that make adherence to such guidelines a pre-requisite will behave 'more fairly' than those that do not. Seeking out partners that subscribe to the RFI, for example, will greatly increase transparency in collaborations, reduce negotiation time and possibly also conflicts while research is on-going, strengthen trust and resilience, and help develop global best practices and benchmarks.
- *Example: partnerships usually start as collaborations between individuals who build out a working relationship over time. However, it may well be that the policies of their home organisations – for example, on sharing IP rights or paying for indirect costs – put such relationship at risk. Also, changes in principals could mean the end of such partnerships if not backed by an agreed framework. Explicit statements by organisations and governments about adherence to research collaboration frameworks may reduce the negative consequence and create coherence in transitions.*
- *Example 2: considerable improvements in research partnerships may result from funders of (large) partnerships requiring at least the lead agency to use RFI reporting. It provides, without efforts to the funders, a comprehensive mechanism to increase research partnership quality.*

Reporting Guide:

15.1. Describe requirements, policies or standards used by your organisation and its research directors to adhere to public or organisational guidelines aimed at improving quality of research partnerships. ⁶

15.2. Report on any future changes planned – anticipated changes and time-table.

NB. Wherever available, attach relevant documents, statements, other materials that demonstrate your actions and intentions.

This document is produced by COHRED for purposes of its 3rd Global Consultation on the establishment of a Research Fairness Initiative. The Global Consultation takes place during May 2016.

Please consult our website on <http://rfi.cohred.org/get-involved/global-consultation/> or contact us at rfi@cohred.org. We encourage sharing of this document as widely as possible.

⁶ The website of the COHRED RFI has a source page for such documents. We intend to make this listing exhaustive and keep it updated. See <http://rfi.cohred.org>