AAAS Workshop on Responsible Professional Practices in a Changing Research Environment

Collaborative International Research – Planning to Avoid Pitfalls

February 14, 2013
Boston, MA
Outline

- **Context** – presentation perspective
- **Principles and Factors** – influencing international collaboration success
- **Challenges** – limiting success
- **Strategies** – underlying success
- **Pitfalls** – only some avoidable
- **Planning** – pitfall prevention or response
Context - Personal

- Health Diplomacy; International Research and Service Delivery Program Management
- Policy, Planning, and Oversight
- U.S. Government and Multilateral Agency Perspective
  - DHHS – NIH, CDC, OS
  - State Department
  - U.S. Overseas Missions
  - USAID
  - OMB
  - DoD
- **Not** Academic Institution or NGO Perspective
NIH/NIAID: Large public institution with clear mandate

- Pursuit of knowledge to improve health through basic, clinical and translational health research
- Respond to health threats
- Supports domestic and international academic and government scientists through merit-based awards to institutions
- Facilitate communication to advance science and public understanding
- $30B/year budget (NIAID - $4.5B)
Collaborative Global Health Research

- Host Country Governments/Ministries
- G8 and Other Wealthy Countries
- Academic/Research Institutions
- Industry
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Global Organizations/Philanthropies

New/Improved Drugs, Vaccines, Diagnostics

Courtesy of Anthony S. Fauci/NIAID
NIAID Global Health Research

NIAID Funding for International Research, 1980-2011

Countries with NIAID-Funded Activities, FY 2011 (n = 107)

Dollars in Millions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$3M</td>
<td>$106M</td>
<td>$371M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NIAID International Funding, FY 2011

- Sub-Saharan Africa: 47%
- Americas and the Caribbean: 17%
- East Asia/Pacific: 18%
- South/Central Asia Region: 5%
- Europe/Eurasia: 12%
- Middle East and North Africa: .5%
- Other: .8%

Total: $371.2 Million
Collaboration focus should address missions of partner institutions

Scientific focus should relate to investigators’ shared interests and respond to local priorities

Collaborators, institutions, research participants/communities should derive benefits

Research should be informed by best available information and shared understanding of the field

Result should have potential to be “significant”

Research meets highest possible ethical and regulatory standards
Factors that Influence International Research Success

- Shared scientific interests and objectives
- Clear and mutual benefits to researchers, mentors, and their institutions
- Host government support
- Community involvement
- Trust among the research team and involved institutions
- Investment in capacity
- Commitment to sustainability
Challenges that Limit International Research Success

- Intense time commitment
- Expensive and difficult to maintain over time – facilities and relationships
- Balancing focus when there are demands outside the core mandate/purpose
- Effective communications – technical, cultural, temporal and linguistic
- Meeting unrelated institutional objectives and academic requirements
- Domestic vs. international perceived dichotomy
- Ineffective problem solving
- Bureaucracy, delay, corruption
Strategies that foster International Research Success

- Conscientiously seek support at all levels
  - government, community, professional associations, institution
- Develop local leadership
- Know your colleague’s “context”
- Collaborate with multiple stakeholders
- Invest in capacity enhancement
  - human capacity – training
  - institutional capacity – often requires partners
- Commit to long-term investment of time and resources
- Access complementary resources and expertise
International Research Collaboration
Pitfalls and Responses

- Only some can be avoided
- Vary depending on type of research: basic vs. clinical vs. translational
- Change over time
- Addressed in three ways:
  - Establish a strong foundation
  - Thorough contextual analysis
  - Careful planning
Key Pitfalls – Internal

- Either partner too busy to meet commitments
- Unusual demands on scientists – operational challenges
- Sharing of data and biological material
- Weak science management – SOPs and fiduciary
- Language and comprehension
- Staff incompetence
- Poor exit strategy – can “poison the well” for future
Key Pitfalls - External

- Surprises – staff or space loss; unexpected demands; government instability
- Delays – sometimes mysterious
- Outright graft – dangerous on many levels
- Legal and regulatory delays/uncertainties
- Bad press – especially with clinical research
- Unreliable utilities – threat to research output/quality
Addressing Pitfalls:

I. Establish a Strong Foundation

- Find a partner you can trust, respect…and talk to
- Understand your partner’s personal and professional needs, capabilities, expectations
- Share your needs and expectations directly
- Ensure partner or has ability to resolve issues or add to team someone who can
- Assess level of institutional support
- Make mutual commitment to rigorous planning and joint management
Addressing Pitfalls:
II. Thorough Contextual Analysis

- Understand foreign partner’s context
  - invest in a thorough situational analysis
  - culture, competencies, governance, regulatory

- Understand funding organization
  - policies, procedures and expectations

- Understand partner organization
  - identify supportive leadership
  - administrative and fiduciary management capacity
  - open to transparency and foreign cooperation

- Identify potential allies and assistors
Addressing Pitfalls: III. Careful Planning

1. Describe all partners’ responsibilities and anticipated benefits
2. Strategy to identify and engage allies
3. Analysis of legal and regulatory needs/obligations
4. Scientific and financial monitoring plan, including accountability and repercussions
5. Plan to meet technical, logistic and personnel requirements
6. Internal and external communications plan
7. “End-of-Project” plan
Thank You

Best wishes for success in your international collaborations

handleyg@niaid.nih.gov