

Accountability in Science Research

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Funding Overseas Research Projects Hosted by Foreign Research Organisations (1)

- This presentation chiefly relates to a £13m programme commissioned by the ESRC. Funding was split 50:50 between ESRC and the Co-Funder
- Key feature of the programme was to invite bids from any Research Organisation (RO) across the world to address development research
- Key aim to secure research excellence addressing international poverty

Funding Overseas Research Projects Hosted by Foreign Research Organisations (2)

- Co-Funder accustomed to funding overseas research on a consultancy basis – but not longer term peer reviewed research projects
- Standard UK peer review and commissioning processes proved effective
- Variety of outcomes involving projects wholly run by UK or overseas Research Organisations, or working in partnership led from UK or abroad

Funding Framework with Co-Funders (1)

- ✓ Project Team established by ESRC
- ✓ Close Engagement with Finance throughout
- ✓ Checks on 'vires' i.e. powers to fund overseas organisations – DFID and FCO

Funding Framework with Co-Funders (2)

- ✓ Joint Funders Panel – including international members and international NGO representatives
- ✓ Meetings with Co-Funder and Joint Memorandum of Understanding(MOU) drawn up including delegation, payments and reporting
- ✓ Agreement about cash deposits/interest income

Funding Framework - Applicants

- Funding rules broadcast
- Hybrid between UK fEC funding framework and variety of overseas rules
- 100% funding allowed for overseas participants – applying co-funder moneys (ie working outside Research Council funding constraints)
- Agreed handling of indirect costs/overheads

Assurance Framework (Overseas Research Organisations (1))

- Risk Management approach adopted
- Assurance re: overseas Research Organisations (ROs)
- Other funders able to provide based on previous successful research work
- Standard eligibility checks for UK bodies modified to allow for overseas bodies
- Accounts and Reports called in and examined

Assurance Framework (Overseas Research Organisations (2))

- Overseas ROs asked for details of costing systems and overhead policies
- Founding Statutes requested and reviewed
- Information/Assurance sought about modus operandi – where HQ's based in operational terms
- Professional status of RO Finance Directors - Checks

Assurance Framework (Researchers)

- ❑ Assurance re: research teams also important
- ❑ Again as with ROs the knowledge base of other funders may be valuable
- ❑ Peer review also an important feature
- ❑ Important to ensure that PIs in global context are checked off on basis that have proven capability to act as project managers on complex research projects

Financial Controls (1)

- ❑ Variety of risk based features – developed from normal risk based mechanisms
- ❑ Six monthly financial reports/preceding release of funds
- ❑ Annual Claims – signed by Directors of Finance
- ❑ Auditors Certificates at end if required

Financial Controls (2)

- ❑ Retention of funds to end of project
- ❑ Emphasis on ability to vouch all overseas fieldwork costs – local staff/workers/expenses
- ❑ Cash flows managed to avoid unnecessary risks re exchange loss etc

Contractual Controls

- ✓ Standard RC terms and conditions quite workable
- ✓ Tendering requirements
- ✓ Sub contracting rules/pre-funding prohibition

Summary

- ESRC successfully managed a global commissioning process through modification of standard procedures
- Governmental funds historically used on short term consultancies successfully directed to blue skies research
- Effort put into constructing robust framework with co-funder paid off
- Funding structures including financial controls adjusted as appropriate
- *assurances built up from variety of sources to cover overseas organisations and researchers