

## Science Council of the CGIAR

### Criteria for Assessing Challenge Program Proposals Phase III of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle

November 2007

In the selection of CP full-proposals in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle of CP selection, the SC is using a set of selection criteria revised from the 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle full-proposal selection. The revisions reflect the current CGIAR research policy on implementation of CGIAR-approved System Priorities for Research (SPs). The CPs must be aligned with the SPs, but they may contribute to one or more Priorities.

The SC strongly encourages the proponents of the CP proposals to take into consideration the comments and critique presented in the SC's commentary on the pre-proposals.<sup>1</sup> The SC also encourages the proponents to consider the experiences from the current CPs.<sup>2</sup> The SC emphasizes that the CPs were intended to take on global challenges building on the core competencies of the CGIAR but going beyond that and engaging partnerships among a wide range of institutions.

#### **In the assessment, the SC will put particular importance on the following aspects:**

- The proposal addresses a global challenge with significant involvement of external partners:
  - Clear identification of the researchable challenge and plans for delivering results within a clear time-frame.<sup>3</sup>
  - Strong partnerships building on CGIAR and external competencies and detailed elaboration of the collaborative arrangements and the partners' comparative and complementary advantages
- Clear evidence of consistency with the System Priorities, and relevant Framework Plans where available.
- A persuasive case on why and how the expected results can be uniquely obtained through a Challenge Program as opposed to other CGIAR research channels, Center core programs and systemwide initiatives.
- A convincing case that there are impact pathways that offer a reasonable prospect that the research outputs will lead to outcomes and impacts related to the goals of the CGIAR.
- A clear exit strategy that will follow from an appropriate positioning of the CPs outputs to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts beyond the life of the program.

The full CP proposal, including a business plan, should not exceed 50 pages in length, excluding appendices. The suggested general outline is as follows

1. Project summary (not to exceed two pages)
2. Table of contents

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sciencecouncil.cgiar.org/publications/pdf/SC%20Commentary%20on%20CP%20pre-proposals%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sciencecouncil.cgiar.org/publications/pdf/Lessons%20learnt%20from%20CPs%202007%20rev.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> CP proposals are expected to be no more than ten years. Poor mid-term reviews could lead to termination at five years. Only in the most exceptional circumstances will extension beyond 10 years be considered.

3. Project description
4. Business plan
5. References cited
6. Budget; current and pending support
7. Biographical sketches of main participants and their formal commitment (Appendix)
8. Facilities, equipment, and other resources (Appendix)

The quality of the proposal will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

**A. Relevance and Quality**

**1. Relevance of the expected outputs:**

- a. The proposed research program aims to deliver outputs that very significantly enhance the objectives sought by the CGIAR, namely poverty reduction, food security, and sustainability of resource use
- b. The proposed research has focus on the scope and goals of one or more of the System Priorities for CGIAR Research
- c. The expected results can uniquely be obtained through a Challenge Program as opposed to the other CGIAR research channels (e.g. Systemwide initiatives and Center core programs)
- d. The expected outputs are clearly defined and are achievable within the proposed time frame and budget

**2. Quality of science and qualifications of the research team:**

- e. The research hypotheses are clearly specified in relation to the proposed challenge, and the proposed research methodology is directly relevant to the outputs sought
- f. The research is based on state of the arts knowledge in the domain, and the proposal explicitly builds upon the most recent advances in the field
- g. The research itself is likely to lead to important advances in science and knowledge
- h. The core parties in the program are the best qualified in terms of research expertise and prior research achievements to carry on the research and deliver the benefits

**3. Strategy for utilizing and applying results:**

- i. The research proposal is accompanied by an explicit plan for delivery, communication, and dissemination of results and outputs, to maximize benefits to CGIAR stakeholders
- j. The research proposal addresses not only the fundamental scientific aspects but also the applied and adaptive stages of the research, in a realistic manner, and the uptake of research outputs in order to produce high impact outcomes

**4. Collaborative arrangements and beneficiaries involvement in research:**

- k. The CP involves at least two CGIAR Centers, two NARS from the South and two ARIs. In addition, contribution of other institutions from the North and South to address specific program components or projects shall be described. CPs should engage in novel research that builds on the CGIAR's competence. CPs should involve the most appropriate institutions from the North and the South that can contribute to

solving the problem, mobilizing science with consequences on CGIAR and NARS's research overall and in the long term. The institutions from the North should preferably bring significant resources of their own to the consortium

- l. The proposal provides clear evidence that consultations have been held with proposed research partners, in particular in the regions of relevance. The synergies and benefits arising from partnerships are clear and evidence of formal institutional commitments to the collaboration are evident.
- m. The rationales for using commissioned / competitive grants are clearly elaborated with respect to the program plan. Tendering of research components in response to competitive research schemes should be on the basis of a previously developed and clearly described research plan with expected outputs specified.
- n. Participatory research, use of beneficiaries' knowledge and experiences, and means of enhancing the beneficiaries' interest in the research subject are outlined and pursued by the CP from the planning stage

## **B. Governance and budget**

### **1. Governance and management:**

- a. Governance and management arrangements are defined explicitly in the joint venture agreement and in the Business Plan. They are flexible and adaptable to the specific needs of the CP and the structures are appropriate to the size and nature of the program
- b. The CP is to be coordinated by an "independent" manager, operating on behalf of the core parties with clearly defined reporting responsibilities. The Coordinator is to be appointed for a fixed term under the terms and conditions of an agreed core party
- c. The arrangements for administrative support (to be provided by one of the core parties) are satisfactory. The Board of each core party is accountable for the resources and delivery of agreed outputs of that core party
- d. There are clear lines of accountability and clear institutional arrangements spelling out roles, responsibilities, rules of operation, and conflict resolution in a formal agreement signed of at the appropriate legal level by each core party or CP associate party
- e. There are clear and satisfactory arrangements for handling legal responsibilities and there is full adherence to the CGIAR's IPR policy

### **2 Performance evaluation and impact assessment:**

- f. Internal peer review mechanisms for quality and relevance and for performance evaluation are present and sound
- g. Procedures are in place for the continuing monitoring and evaluation of progress and adjustments of the program (as needed) in the course of implementation
- h. Indicators are identified and benchmark information is available from the outset to measure project outcomes and impact
- i. The CP proposal should include an internal three-year work plan specifying stages and indicators of progress, with intermediary deliverable products

### **3. Budget and finance:**

- j. The business plan outlines a strategy to mobilize new resources (in cash and in kind), considering equity in the relation between benefits and costs of the program, and the need to balance contributions between North and South
- k. The proposed budget and its allocation are appropriate
- l. Preliminary contacts confirm that there is sufficient donor willingness to commit funding for the first 2-3 years of the program.