FUNDING ETHICALLY

PUTTING PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

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Wellspring Philanthropic Fund

SVRI sexual violence research initiative

This document depicts the 'principles into practice' section from SVRI's 'Funding Ethically' Guidance . It provides practical suggestions and considerations for 'better funding' at each stage of the research funding process

STEP 1

PRE CALL

Key recommendations to funders include consideration of what the field, existing literature and local communities have identified as research priorities and developing a deep understanding of the local contexts within which the call must be disseminated.

STEP 2

THE CALL

Key recommendations to funders include creating and reviewing the RFP bearing in mind issues related to increasing the diversity of the applicant pool and creating a process that is as fair and equitable as possible.

STEP 3

THE APPLICATION

Key recommendations to funders include setting specific priorities, so that they are accounted for by researchers in proposals. For example, include budget items that address partnership development, capacity sharing, research uptake-frameworks, dissemination of research products.

STEP 4

DUE DILIGENCE AND REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS

Key recommendations to funders include ensuring diversity and local expertise on review committees as well as an approach that emphasises flexibility, negotiation, and collaboration.

STEP 5

POST AWARD- DEVELOPING A SHARED UNDERSTANDING

Key recommendations to funders include making an effort to build relationships based on trust and open communication.

STEP 6

IMPLEMENTATION

Key recommendations to funders include providing support by amplifying the work grantees are doing, being willing to adjust when things go wrong and putting a trust-based partnership into practice.

STEP 7

CLOSING THE PROJECT

Key recommendations to funders include considering 'transition funding' that would enable grantees to conduct advocacy based on their research findings, reinforcing the linkages made throughout the project and being flexible regarding end of project reporting requirements and deadlines if necessary.

STEPS 1-3:

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

PROCESS STAGE

1. PRE-CALL

During this stage, key aspects include consideration of what the field, the existing literature and local communities identify are research priorities and developing a deep understanding of the local contexts within which the call must be disseminated.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Involving diverse voices and localised approach:

- Consult with multiple stakeholders including advisers from LMICs and non-academics to inform research priority setting.
  The GSRA can play a critical role here.
- Conduct a situation analysis - ensure understanding of local contexts where you are planning to fund including:
  - potential threats to security (e.g. in conflict zones/political instability)
  - availability of infrastructure and communications technology
  - funding regulatory obstacles such as restrictions on organisations being able to receive foreign funds
- Plan the eligibility criteria for your grantmaking according to what is learned from the above processes. Does it consider the priorities of the people most impacted by the issues being addressed?

Thinking about flexible, adaptive, and long-term funding:

- Consider moving from funding intermediaries (where possible) and rather directly funding local partnerships and collaborations.
- Discuss funding timelines and consider longer, more flexible options – including necessary activities at the beginning and the end of a research journey. This would include a phase to develop an inception report as well as build relationships and come to agreements on research uptake. See step 4 below.

STEPS 1-3:

PROCESS STAGE

2. THE CALL

Key aspects include creating and reviewing the RFP bearing in mind issues related to increasing the diversity of the applicant pool and creating a process that is as fair and equitable as possible.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

REVIEW THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) CONSIDERING ISSUES SUCH AS:

Increasing the diversity of those that can apply:

- Construct the call in a way so that a diverse range of stakeholders / organisations can apply, with preference or significant weighting given to local organisations and researchers with in-depth knowledge of local realities.
- Consider an open call
- Ensure that eligibility criteria are clear and transparent including:
  - Who can apply?
  - Who should not apply?
  - On what basis have these decisions been made?
- Disseminate the call in multiple languages (depending on the local context /regional context) and allow grant applications to be submitted in different languages.
- Utilise appropriate technology such as screen readers and sign language interpreters for videos and webinars related to the call- so that applicants with audio and visual disabilities can access the information.

Including different approaches to research and hierarchies of knowledge:

- Address this explicitly by making sure the funding criteria provides flexibility for innovation in research design including research protocols that include mixed method approaches.

Ensuring that potential applicants understand the call:

- Use different mediums to explain the call and account for diverse audiences, for instance a short video, question and answer sessions or webinars (with translation).
- Define key terms that are relevant to the call.

Encouraging partnerships with non-academic stakeholders:

- Make collaboration a part of the application process. Ask for bids that include non-academic actors as partners and co-investigators so that these relationships are embedded from the start of the project lifecycle.
- Ask applicants to describe the relationships in the consortium and who is responsible for what to avoid research imperialism.
- Request applicants provide a research uptake plan in the proposal.

STEPS 1-3:

Ethics:
- Ask applicants to outline ethical issues that might arise during the research and address how they will respond to them to mitigate risk to research participants.
- Ensure that applicants are aware of the requirement for ethical review and stipulate where ethical review will be sought.
- Ask applicants to explain why the research is necessary and address whether the same information could be collected in a different way.

Accounting for time management:
- Value grantee partners time-think about the length of the application form/proposal required and what data is being asked for. Is the form asking only for information that is really needed?
- Where possible, provide between 60-90 days for the development of proposals in recognition that short notice calls can be detrimental for researchers and the research being funded.
- Consider a two-step process (depending on internal capacity) wherein a shorter outline of a proposal or concept note is submitted and reviewed before a full application is requested. This can lessen applicant burden.
- Online application forms may promote transparency and fairness -however this must be balanced against accessibility issues in terms of electricity and internet availability.

Communicating the review process:
- Make sure the call includes a description of the review process - this should be transparent to all stakeholders, with clear timelines and criteria and accessible language. Make sure non-negotiables are also clearly communicated.

PROCESS STAGE

3. THE APPLICATION

Key aspects here include promoting the values funders wish to include by asking that they be included in planning and budgets

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

ENSURE THAT SPECIFIC BUDGET LINE ITEMS REFLECT THE PRINCIPLES IN THIS GUIDE

Funders can set specific priorities, so that they are accounted for in proposals. For example, include budget items that address:
- Partnership development, capacity sharing and development activities.
- Self and collective care practices for grantee partners.
- Research uptake - provide framework for this and ensure that beneficiaries and community stakeholders are involved. Communications support and dissemination of findings to community and other important stakeholders.
- Equitable allocation of salaries.
- Researcher safety/accounting for vicarious trauma including provision for:
  - Emotional support and workload management for researchers
  - Safe spaces to stay during the research process
  - Safety and security of field research teams
- Ethics approval processes and issues, e.g., setting up essential services (with local partners) in situations where services are constrained, if it would be unethical to carry out research without these in place.
- Organisational overheads

"Please ensure that funding, contracting, budgeting, planning processes all include a senior GBV research technical advisor involved in decision-making, otherwise funders often impose unrealistic, and therefore unsafe and unethical expectations for research priorities, scope, timeline and deliverables on research teams. Critically ensure longer timelines, and financial, technical, time, and space resources for preventing secondary trauma and stress management for GBV researchers." (Response from Online survey, September 2021)

STEPS 4-5:

REVIEWING AND AWARDING THE GRANT

PROCESS STAGE

4. DUE DILIGENCE AND REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS

Key aspects during this stage are flexibility, negotiation and establishing a collaborative approach.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Who is reviewing the applications?

- Is there a diverse review panel including those with expertise in research on VAW and VAC, ethical considerations, policy making and understanding of local/regional context? This will help ensure that contextually relevant, ethically well-planned projects with feasible uptake plans get awarded.

Affirming approach

- Approach the project from the starting point of "what can we do to make this work"? Offer the necessary support to ensure its success.
- Can we invest more (time/support/resources) to make a promising project work?
- Recognise power imbalances between funder and grantee and actively work to address these.

Assisting with barriers and obstacles

- If there are ethical review board issues can the funder help with extra funding or technical support?
- Is there a pool of funding available for fine-tuning and ensuring that the planning of the research is supported?
- Are the non-negotiables in terms of what is expected of the grantee clear, and have they been well communicated?

STEPS 4-5:

PROCESS STAGE

5. POST AWARD: DEVELOPING A SHARED UNDERSTANDING

Key aspects during this stage are to ensure that a trusting relationship is built so that the research journey can be based on trust and open communication.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Developing a relationship

- Plan opportunities to meet with grantees
- Conduct a meet and greet round table that includes researchers as well as local implementing partners and use this to highlight roles, and responsibilities for the project.
- Develop a shared understanding of the key issues, current literature, ethical issues, research methods and tools etc
- Facilitate the development of agreements on co-authorship, publishing and sharing from the outset. Provide templates that partners can use to put these agreements into place.
- Emphasise a learning approach that focuses on whole-team reflection on their learning through the project, as opposed to senior researchers only conducting capacity strengthening.

Share and discuss guiding principles

- Use a guide/this guide to ensure that all parties share/understand fundamental principles underlying the approach

Encourage regular internal and external communication

- If feasible, designate a point person to coordinate communication between the various partners and to ask questions or discuss challenges that are arising.
- Emphasise open communication with grantees about changing needs through the life cycle of the project.
- Support knowledge exchange activities by offering extra funding pots for innovative communication activities that develop during the project's duration.

Fund collaboration and sharing

- Create linkages between grantees doing similar work, encourage communication and reduce duplication.
- Plan for resources to fund annual meetings designed to link organisations from different regions who can learn from one another.
- Widely share useful resources that are relevant to the project.

STEPS 6-7:

THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

PROCESS STAGE	KEY CONSIDERATIONS
6. IMPLEMENTATION	**Amplifying the work** • Plan funding for cohorts to attend relevant international events together to meet and learn from each other as well as to network with other donors and policy makers. • Assist grantees to build on the legitimacy of being funded by facilitating access to other funders and sharing what you have learned with other funders. • Share the work of grantees widely and amplify it to the field - for instance by asking them to speak on panels (in-person or online) or by disseminating and publicising their work, where relevant. • Use the communication networks and resources available to you to link projects and people where relevant. • Factor in funding for innovative non-academic dissemination outputs **Flexibility** • Know that things might not go according to plan – adjusting the plan, timelines and methodology might be necessary to ensure that a project can continue. Be open to these adjustments where possible. **Trust based partnership** • Promote and encourage new ways of working that are kinder for the environment as well as an opportunity to promote empathy and understanding. For instance, shift monitoring visits to virtual meetings and reduce the number of updates and reports required. • Use reporting requirements or visits to emphasise the affirmative/ partnership approach - emphasise learning from the work and providing support for challenges faced. • Provide ongoing support throughout the project for: - Communications. - Self and collective care. - Sharing and engaging with topical issues in the field both in grantees own countries and globally.

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STEPS 6-7:

7. THE END OF THE PROJECT	Closing and continuity
	• Consider 'transition funding' that would enable grantees to conduct advocacy based on their research findings (for specific projects). • Continue to examine the resources and connections that could be made to enable new partnerships to emerge that can sustain and develop the research that has been done. • Reinforce the linkages made throughout the project – especially considering future goals. • Be flexible with end times and outcomes – they may change over time. • Celebrate the end of each research project!

[Click here to see the Executive Summary]
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