



ALLIANCE *for* AFRICAN
PARTNERSHIP

Partnerships for Innovative Research in Africa (PIRA) Grant Program

Q&A and Grant Proposal
Development Workshop



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Welcome & Overview of AAP

Tony Milanzi

AAP Consortium Members



Africa Network of
Agricultural Policy
Research Institutes
Zambia



Egerton
University
Kenya



Lilongwe
University of
Agriculture and
Natural Resources
Malawi



Makerere
University
Uganda



Michigan State
University
US
*(initiator of the
consortium)*



United States
International
University-Africa
Kenya



Université Cheikh
Anta Diop de
Dakar
Senegal



Université des
Lettres et des
Sciences
Humaines de
Bamako
Mali



University of
Botswana
Botswana



University of
Dar es Salaam
Tanzania



University of
Nigeria, Nsukka
Nigeria



University
of Pretoria
South Africa

AAP Team



Jose Jackson-Malete
*Co-Director
US Office*



Derek Tobias
Program Manager



Ann Allegra
*Proposal and
Capacity
Strengthening
Administrator*



Wakissa Matemanga
*Administrative
Assistant*



Amy Jamison
*Co-Director
US Office*



Justin Rabineau
Program Manager



Timicka Rice
Office Assistant



Abraham Mamela
*Communications
Coordinator*



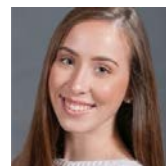
Melissa Zulu
Program Assistant



Richard Mkandawire
*Director,
Africa Office*



Tony Milanzi
*Assistant Director,
Africa Office*



Karah Lothschutz
Fiscal Officer



Jayden Hewitt
*Communications
Intern*



AAP Background

VISION

To transform lives through co-created, research-driven initiatives that address shared challenges

MISSION

To initiate and support innovative, sustainable and equitable partnerships among African institutions, MSU and other collaborators

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Accountability
Equity
Inclusivity
Sustainability
Transparency

OUR APPROACH

To transform lives through co-created, research-driven initiatives that address shared challenges



Building Bridges

Bringing people and organizations together to work toward common goals.



Transforming Institutions

Guiding institutions toward sustainable partnerships, enhanced resources, and increased capacity.



Transforming Lives

Turning research into real-world impact that improves African lives and livelihoods.

PRIORITY AREAS



Agri-food
Systems



Water,
Energy &
Environment



Culture &
Society



Youth
Empowerment



Education



Health &
Nutrition



Science,
Technology &
Innovation

GENDER AND INCLUSION

How to Connect with AAP

Email

- aap@msu.edu
- US Office
 - Derek Tobias – tobiasde@msu.edu
 - Justin Rabineau – rabinea1@msu.edu
- Africa Office
 - Richard Mkandawire – mkandaw2@msu.edu
 - Tony Milanzi – tony.milanzi@affiliate.msu.edu



AAP Bridge – our digital platform to connect with researchers across the consortium and beyond

aapbridge.com

Facebook / LinkedIn
[@aapmsu](#)

Website – aap.msu.edu



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PIRA Grant Overview & Context

Amy Jamison

Partnerships for Innovative Research in Africa (PIRA) Grant Program

PIRA is designed to cultivate and support multidirectional, collaborative research partnerships

Teams are expected to

- cultivate equitable partnerships from conception to closeout of the project
- involve local stakeholders throughout the project
- take an adaptive approach that is responsive to the local context.

Teams may apply to either tier of funding

- Planning grants (up to \$50,000)
- Scaling grants (up to \$100,000)

aap.msu.edu/funding/pira



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Eligibility

- Teams must include PIs from
 - MSU
 - AAP African university
- Teams can include other partners
 - Other institutions globally
 - Private sector, governments, civil society organizations, and Pan-African/global institutions
- Individuals who were PIs or co-PIs on grants from the previous round of PIRA or AAP's 2017 strategic partnership grants are not eligible to lead proposals but may participate as team members.
- MSU ISP staff are not eligible to lead proposals

What is needed to apply

- Application form (completed online through Qualtrics)
 - Names, institutional affiliations, titles of all PIs
 - Brief project summary (about 100 words)
- Proposal narrative (max. 5,000 words with an appendix for references)
- Budget and Budget narrative (in provided templates)
- CVs/Resumé of PIs (1-page maximum)
- Letters of support from each partner's department, institution, or organization

Selection criteria

- Evidence of AAP partnership principles (accountability, equity, inclusivity, sustainable, transparency)
- Alignment of proposed activities and program goal(s) to AAP's **three pillars** and **seven research priority areas**
- Potential for impact in disciplines/fields AND people's lives
- Potential for leveraging additional external funding
- A thorough MEL plan
- Diversity and inclusion integration



Building Bridges



Transforming Lives



Transforming Lives

AAP Partnership Principles

- A research team structure and project design that reinforces **accountability** and is **equitable**
 - Shared vision – mutual benefit, mutual capacity building
- A proposal that is **inclusive** in its approach
 - Diversity and inclusion reflected on the research team and in the project's design and approach
- Collaboration must be **sustainable** beyond the initial grant cycle, with a view toward long-term collaboration
 - The proposal should also reflect sustainable effort at addressing a problem and transforming lives
- A proposal development process that is **transparent** with all partners engaged from the beginning
 - Objectives, activities, resource mobilization, and resource allocation plans are developed jointly



Ineligible expenses

- Indirect costs (IDC) for all institutions
- Equipment exceeding \$5,000
- Construction-related costs
- Regular MSU salary is ineligible (summer salary is allowable) Salary is an allowable expense, but total salary across all institutions cannot exceed 30% of the total project budget. MSU salary does not require fringe.



Deadline

The Application Deadline is
Wednesday, August 14 at 11:59 PM EST

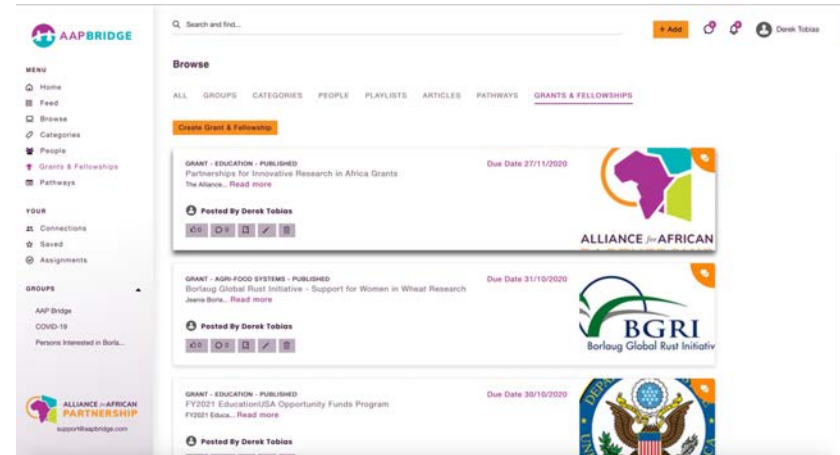
Awards will be announced
Early October 2024

Implementation is expected to begin between
November 20, 2024-January 22, 2025



Accessing the PIRA CFP

- Find the PIRA call for proposals under Grants & Fellowships on AAP Bridge to learn more
- You can also indicate your interest and find potential partners
- The PIRA call for proposals is also available on AAP's website aap.isp.msu.edu/funding/pira



The screenshot shows the AAP Bridge website interface. On the left is a navigation menu with options like Home, Feed, Shows, Categories, People, Grants & Fellowships, Pathways, and a 'YOUR' section with Connections, Saved, and Assignments. The main content area is titled 'Browse' and has a search bar at the top. Below the search bar, there are tabs for ALL, GROUPS, CATEGORIES, PEOPLE, PLAYLISTS, ARTICLES, PATHWAYS, and GRANTS & FELLOWSHIPS. A 'Create Grant & Fellowship' button is visible. The main content displays a list of grants, each with a title, due date, and a 'Posted By Derek Tobias' indicator. The first grant is 'GRANT - EDUCATION - PUBLISHED: Partnerships for Innovative Research in Africa Grants - The Alliance...' with a due date of 27/11/2020 and the logo for ALLIANCE for AFRICAN. The second grant is 'GRANT - AGR-FOOD SYSTEMS - PUBLISHED: Borlaug Global Rust Initiative - Support for Women in Wheat Research - Jeanne Bure...' with a due date of 31/10/2020 and the logo for BGRI Borlaug Global Rust Initiative. The third grant is 'GRANT - EDUCATION - PUBLISHED: FY2021 EducationalUSA Opportunity Funds Program - F2021 Educa...' with a due date of 30/10/2020 and the logo of the U.S. Department of Education.



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PIRA Proposal Development

Derek Tobias

PIRA Proposal Elements

- **Cover sheet:** Including project title, PI names and titles, institutional affiliations, and a brief (~100 words) project summary
- **Proposal narrative:** Max 5,000 words, with one appendix for references cited.
 - Description of the partnership: a) **Capacity statements**; b) **Description of the past or ongoing partnership**; c) **Rationale** for partnership and evidence it will create or cultivate equitable partnership
 - Problem statement, theory of change, and relevance to AAP's themes and pillars
 - Clearly defined objectives of the proposed partnership
 - Program activities, and a logical framework connecting these activities with their intended outputs and outcomes
 - Timeline of the project and activities
 - Brief MEL plan outlining proposed indicators and data collection methods
 - Any potential sources of additional funding
- **Line-item budget and budget narrative:** Use template provided. **Discussed in more detail later in the session.*
- **Letter of support from each partner** (department/institution): Use template provided.
- **CV or resume of each PI:** One-page max for each.

Problem statement and project development

- Things to consider when drafting the **problem statement**: What is the pressing problem your team is addressing? How do you know it is important? Why is your team uniquely suited to conduct the project? Outline any previous work you have done that lays the foundation for the project and how the work might continue after the project.
- Project design and drafting the **logic model**.
 - **Goal(s)** are what you hope to accomplish, your vision; not very measurable
 - **Objectives** are specific things that you will be accomplishing, measurable; closely tied to your methods of carrying out the project
 - **Inputs** are resources needed for program implementation (e.g., staff time, facilities, equipment)
 - **Activities** are processes/actions/tasks that are an intentional part of program implementation
 - **Outputs** are direct products of activities (example: a training workshop was held for 30 participants)
 - **Outcomes** describe changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors, etc. you expect as a result of your project. Good outcome statements are specific, measurable, and realistic. (example: as a result of a workshop, participants increased their skills and knowledge to track crop prices via a cell phone app)



Questions to ask yourself and your team when drafting your PIRA proposal



- Does our project align with one of AAP's three pillars? Does our project address at least one of AAP's priority areas?
- Is there potential for the project's deliverables to contribute to academic, technical, or technological field(s)?
- Does our project have the potential to create innovative models of community engagement that positively impact people's lives?
- Is there potential for our PIs to attract or leverage external funding? Does the team have any ideas for potential funding sources?
- Do we demonstrate how we integrate gender, equity, and inclusion in all stages of the project?
- Do we link activities to outputs and outcomes? Did we include a timeline?
- Do we describe the MEL tools that we will use, and the indicators to monitor progress and success? Did we describe a timeline for evaluation and reporting?

Budget development and its impact on the project and the partnership

Start the budget early. Why starting early is important:

- **Insight into team dynamics:** Are colleagues keeping everyone in the loop? Is the leader leading? How is your input on the project and the budget received? Who gets listened to during these conversations?
- **Knowledge of how project is taking shape:** When the budget has been roughly sketched, it needs a more detailed plan. For example, if you are doing fieldwork, planning out the additional details are important, such as the dates, location, number of participants, duration, travel, etc. The answer to these are directly related to and impact activities, budget, etc.
- **Who is doing what:** Is everyone clear on project roles and responsibilities?
- **Build your knowledge about the project:** Is the project and scope clear? This will help you know what is possible, and what is needed for the project to be successful.
- **Inputs and activities** are tied to costs in the budget.



Common Reasons for Declined Proposals

- Applicant missed the due date
- Guidelines for proposal content, format, and/or length were not followed
- Proposal area did not fit the funding call
- Project plan is unclear or vague and not presented in concrete detail
- Proposed method(s) did not seem applicable and may not yield results
- Applicants need more effective approaches to address the community need/problem; problem/project more complex than the applicants realize
- Project appeared to be beyond the capacity/experience of the applicant
- Budget was unrealistic or unclear



Submitting your PIRA proposal

Remember to:

- Specify if you are applying for a **planning grant** or a **scaling grant**
- Number pages of the proposal narrative and check the word count (5,000 word maximum)
- Ensure proposal narrative includes all information listed in the PIRA call
- Use the templates provided in the call (on AAP's website) for the budget and letters of support
- Ensure all required proposal elements are included: cover sheet, proposal narrative, budget and budget narrative, PI CVs, and letters of support

Good luck! And please reach out to myself or Justin Rabineau if you have questions on developing the proposal.



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Incorporating Research Communication and Engagement

Abraham Mamela

TRENDS THAT INFLUENCE RESEARCH

There are many trends and factors that influence how knowledge in general is consumed, research/science knowledge included.

Such trends and factors could be:

Political trends, business trends, cultural trends, religious beliefs, societal traditional perspectives, group/associations interests and many others.

ALL THESE CAN INFLUENCE THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF RESEARCH FOR IMPACT



Challenges Facing Effective Communication of Research

- Scientific research content/ knowledge is technical and can be less appealing to many despite its importance to advance innovation and transform lives and economies.
- There is some level of myths, misconceptions and mistrust of research and scientific solutions by societies, likely seen or known as just theory.
- Exclusive processes within research and lack of participation by societies
- Lack of or little understanding on the importance of research and how it can benefit stakeholders.

Challenges Facing Research Communication, cont.

- Little or no investment in communication
- Unequitable partnerships within research projects between scientists and stakeholders
- Fast moving trends in politics, business and culture, research cannot keep up with trends
- Researchers/ scientists are often seen to be in ivory towers, representation of power with research culture

Research/ Science Communication & Engagement



WHAT IS IT?

The processes of effectively sharing scientific knowledge, discoveries, and concepts with diverse audiences in a way that is accessible, engaging, and relevant. It involves bridging the gap between the scientific community and the general public, fostering understanding, interest, and dialogue about scientific topics, and encouraging active participation in scientific activities, discussions, and decision-making processes.



THE PIRA ADD ON

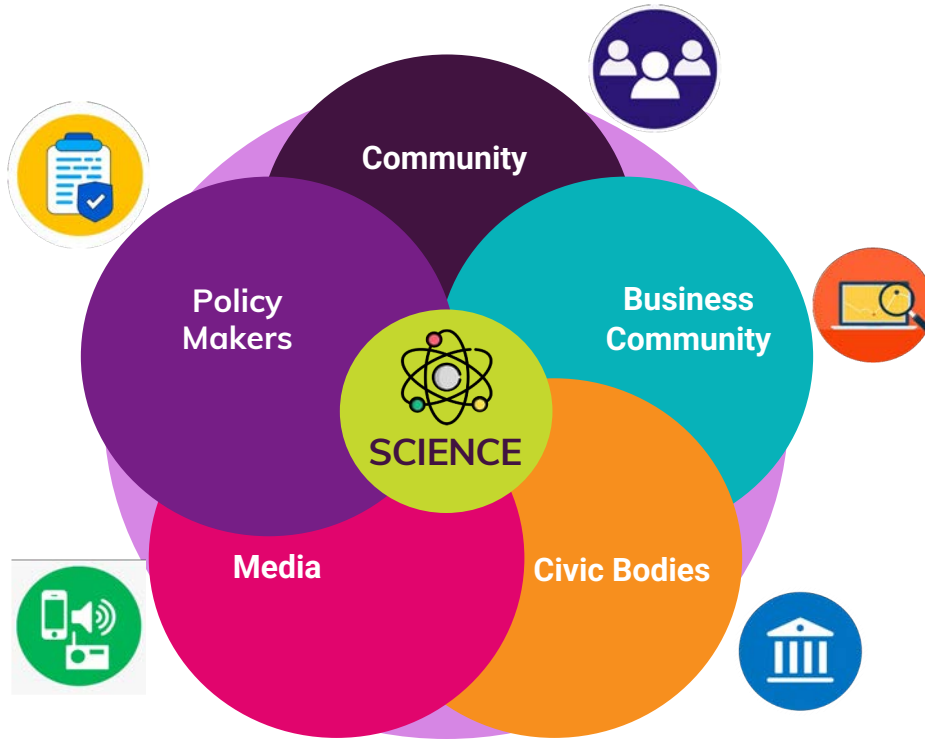
Communications and Engagement

10% of the total requested funds must be earmarked for communication and engagement efforts.

For example, if a team is requesting a scaling grant for \$100,000, at least \$10,000 of that must be budgeted for communication and engagement efforts, such as developing creative projects that translate the research, engagement workshops and developing and utilizing dissemination tools such as video production, creation of digital resources, community engagement activities, etc.



Research/ Science doesn't exist in a bubble.

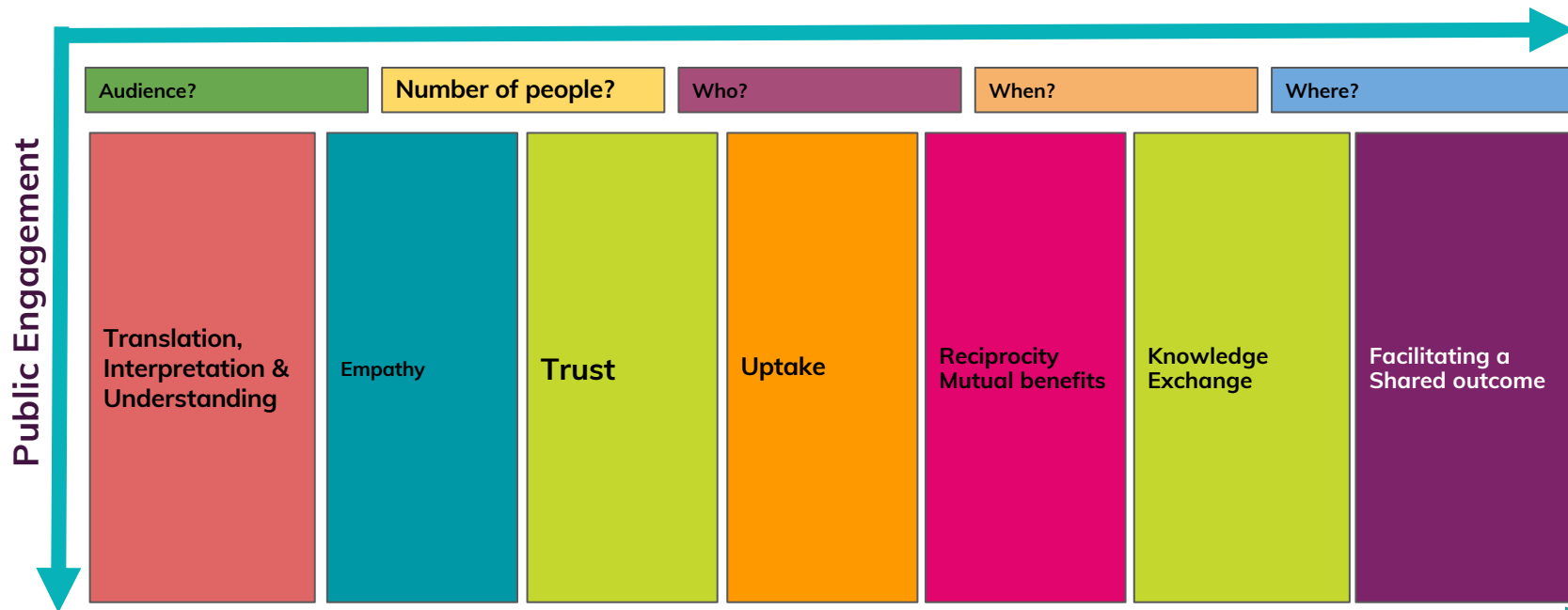


Stakeholders that need to be informed and engaged with research for many reasons:

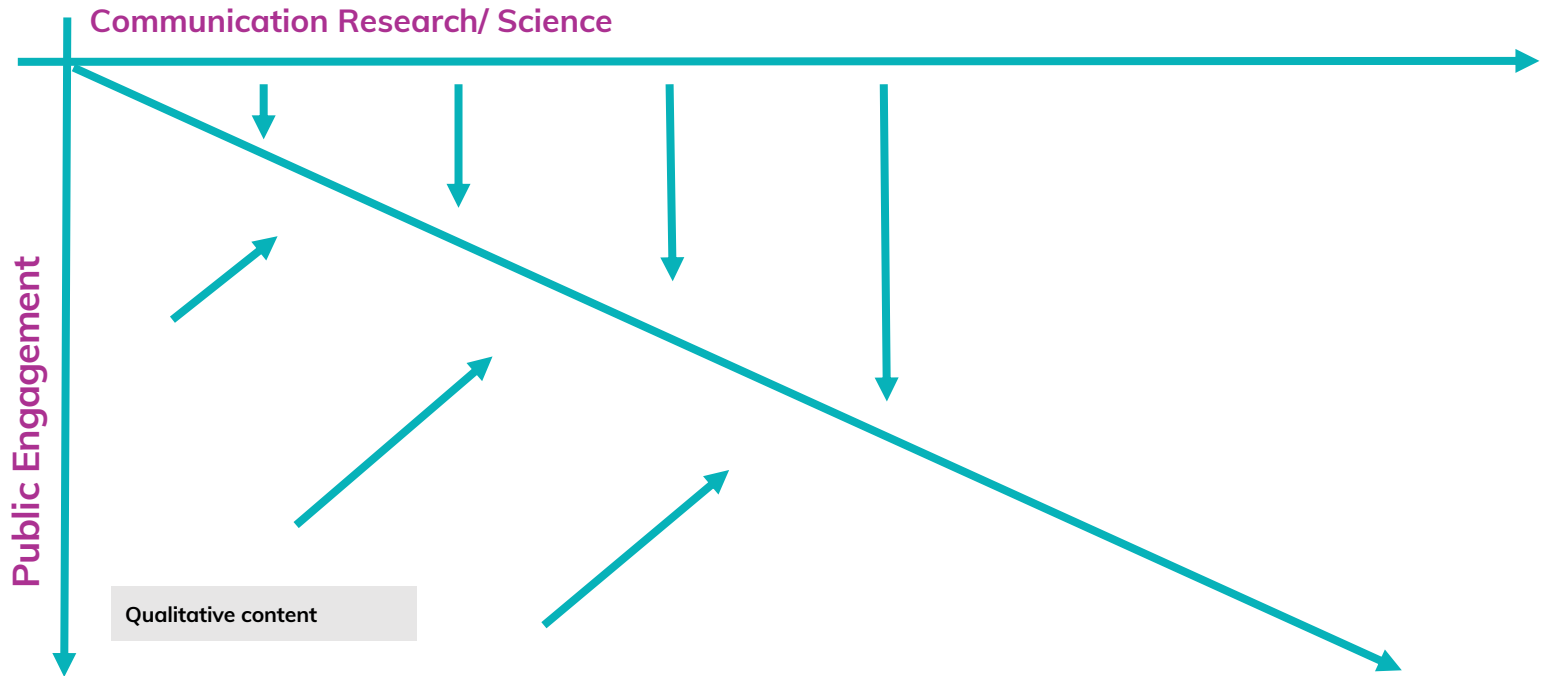
Funding
Participation
knowledge Exchange
Regulation
Policy change

Communicating Research/Science & Public Engagement of Science/Research

Communication Research/Science



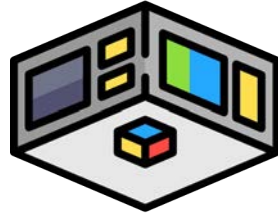
Delicate Balance



Creative Ways to Communicate and Engage



Science Festivals



Research Exhibitions



Science & Art Projects



Dialogue Platforms



Science Journalism



Museums & Art Galleries



Citizen Science



THERE IS NO ONE METHOD TO THIS

NOTE: THE MOST IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE IS TO TELL A STORY IN THE MOST ENGAGING WAY AND FACILITATE DIALOGUE AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

- It is safe to engage experts in this to work with you.
- You may identify and engage creative communicators and engagers to undertake this.
- Co-creation: working your community or stakeholders to tell their story in relation to your research.





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Orienting our Work Towards Impact: Creating an MEL Plan

Derek Tobias

What is a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan?

- A framework that describes the proposal team's intention to:
- Document project activities
- Answer evaluation questions
 - Show progress toward project goals and objectives, and
- “Actionalize” information



What is generally included in MEL plans:?

- A brief project overview
 - Theory of change
 - Project goals and objectives
- Monitoring component
 - Methodology
 - Tools
 - Schedule and frequency
- Evaluation component
 - Impact evaluations
 - Performance evaluations
- Learning component
 - Adaptive management
 - Information dissemination
- MEL Roles and Responsibilities
 - Who, what
- MEL Timeline
 - When

*Adapted from USAID "[Project M&E Plan](#)"

Visual aid for MEL Plan



Objective 1

Activity	Activity lead	Timeline	Output	Outcome	Indicator	Tool	Frequency
1.1							
1.2							
1.3							

Objective 2

Activity	Activity lead	Timeline	Output	Outcome	Indicator	Tool	Frequency
2.1							
2.2							
2.3							



Indicators

- **Definition:** Indicators are signs of progress – they are used to determine whether the project or program or intervention is on its way to achieving its objectives and goal.
- Think S.M.A.R.T.
 - **S**pecific
 - **M**easureable
 - **A**chievable and **A**tributable
 - **R**elevant and **R**ealistic
 - **T**ime-Bound





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PIRA Grant Budgeting

Karah Lothschutz

Budgets help to provide:

- A framework for project design and plan
- Reasonable estimates of the work that will be funded
- Clarity for collaborators to determine budget amounts for each activity
- Clear guidance to PI's who are responsible for appropriate use of funds entrusted to them



Creating Budgets – typically differ by funder

When developing a concept note for a specific funder, pay attention to their guidelines as they:

May not allow certain expenses, e.g., fringe or travel

May have specific language and descriptions for budget categories



Personnel Expenses: Who is doing the work? What are they doing? How much time are they devoting to the project?

Salaries & Fringes

Faculty

Technician

Research Associate

Graduate Student

Undergrad Student



Non-Personnel Expenses: What else is needed to carry out the project?

Equipment

Travel

Participant Support Costs

Other Direct Costs



Equipment

Definition: Article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property with a useful life of more than one year, e.g., lab equipment

Typically, the cost of the item must be \$5,000 or more to be classified as equipment. For the PIRA awards, equipment that exceeds \$5,000 is not allowable. Items that are less than \$5,000 may be listed in the supply category.



Travel

- Distinguish between domestic and international travel
 - International - Keep in mind currency exchange rates, hotel, transportation, etc. (the rates from OANDA should be used <https://www1.oanda.com/currency/converter/>)
- Calculating Travel Costs
 - Most funders require specific details for determining travel amounts
 - Who is traveling, where, and for how many days
 - Include airfare, mileage, lodging, and per diems, visa fees
 - Costs for international travel may not exceed OCONUS rates (international) https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp or CONUS rates (domestic US) <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>



Participant Support Costs

A participant is defined as a non-employee who is the recipient (not the provider), of a service or training associated with a workshop, conference, seminar, symposium, etc.

- Event registration fees
- Event support costs for lodging and meal expenses paid to the event facility
- Training materials
- Stipends – predetermined amount paid directly to participant
- Subsistence allowance – predetermined amount for lodging, meals and laundry. *Local area participants are exempt from having these costs covered
- Travel costs when the sole purpose of the trip is to participate in the project activity

**NOTE – faculty PI travel should not be budgeted as a participant support expense*



Other Direct Costs



- Materials and supplies (provide the cost breakdown)
- Publications
- Graduate tuition and fees (*this does not go under fringe benefits)
- Computer services and equipment rental fees
- Consultants: use a reasonable rate (hourly)
- Rental fees; space
- Computers, if essential and allocable, allocated based on anticipated use and provide a direct benefit to the project



Facilities and Administrative Costs (a.k.a. F&A and indirect costs)



- Typically a percentage of direct costs
- Indirect costs **ARE NOT** an allowable expense on PIRA awards, however, items normally covered by indirect costs may be added as line items under direct costs

PIRA Specific Budget Guidelines

Indirect costs are not allowable

Equipment (exceeding \$5k) is not allowable

Total project salary & fringe cannot exceed 30% of total combined project budget. (Note that MSU salary will not need to budget for fringe as these are GS funds and fringe is centrally funded for these types of funds).

Cost share for consortium and partner PI's should be shown for in-kind/cost shared project expenses and will be positively noted as part of the proposal evaluation. (10% cost share requirement on project)





Budget Justification / Narrative

Follow	Provide	Explain	Avoid	Match
Follow the same order as the budget categories	Provide details for all expenses	Explain unusual circumstances or requests	Avoid using a lot of \$ amounts in the justification	Your budget justification must match your budget!

Sample Budget Justification



c) *Phase III/V – U.S. Participant visit to South Africa/Tanzania*

(1) *Lodging and Per Diem expenses in South Africa:* One MSU staff member will accompany the U.S. delegation during Phase III to assist with logistics and programming. International per diem rates are based on the published State Department's Foreign rates for this location, combined \$550 for Cape Town, South Africa.

(2) *Lodging and Per Diem expenses in South Africa:* Two MSU faculty/staff will participate in the interview process in each country. International per diem rates are based on the published State Department's Foreign rates for this location, combined \$272 for other cities in South Africa.

(3) *Lodging and Per Diem expenses in Tanzania:* International per diem rates are based on the published State Department's Foreign rates for this location, combined \$273 for Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.



Final Points on PIRA Budgets

One budget should be submitted per project (note the template has a tab for each partner budget that rolls into a project summary total)

In addition to collaboration among PIs, the MSU faculty PI should work with their unit research administrator or fiscal officer to complete the budget and will be responsible for submission of the overall project budget and management of grant funds if awarded.

Consortium and other partner PIs will need to follow all procedures of their institution and note that any paid effort on the project is paid to the institution to support their effort.

The completed budget and justification will be evaluated as part of the overall project.





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Thank you for
joining us!