INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH: TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR A SUCCESSFUL PROJECT

Jay Subramanian
Plant Agriculture-Vineland

Helen Hambley
School of Environmental Design & Rural Development
WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH?

- Going out physically and conducting field research
- Providing logistical and monetary support
- Just send your ideas to someone who facilitates the research
- Large concept – split the work with your partner(s)
IDENTIFICATION OF RIGHT PROJECT

• First things first – get the right partner(s)

• Basic versus applied research

• Your strength and partner’s strength – Institutional

• Record of the Principal Investigators

• Team Balance – scientific – gender-age
BACKGROUND PREPARATION

- Analyse the problem well
- Chalk out a research plan – INDEPENDENTLY
- Review the plan critically – look for potential issues
- Review – with former winners, program officers
- Arrive at a mutually agreeable conclusion
- Make use of ‘political sensitivity’ – ‘pet countries’
USE PERTINENT DATA/STATISTICS EXPERTLY

- There will be some stats for any project
- Use the most eye catching ones
- Not too much data but 1-2 significant stats
- Provide the numbers in perspective

[Bar chart showing Demand and Supply]
DEVELOPING THE RIGHT BUDGET

• Make use of people at the OR – they have dealt with a lot
• Should be as genuine as possible –
  • Be ware of partner requests- justification
• Detail each budget line as clearly as possible
• Try to link a budget line to an activity/output with a clear timeline
• Read their Instructions carefully
OTHER INTANGIBLES

- Plan for Monitoring and Evaluation - Mid-term corrections
- Project Advisory Committee – their role
- Intellectual Property Rights – should be done upfront
- Data sharing and publication ethics
- Thinking beyond the duration – Scaling up, commercialization
WHAT TO EXPECT IN ‘IR’? –PARTNER OR PARASITE?

- Innovative excuses
- Communication issues –not just language
- ‘Houdini’ acts– happen even locally
- Long days –Long nights –
  NO ‘Happy Hours’
HOW TO MITIGATE?

• Have alternate plans – Plan B and C even
• Implement multiple plans – if needed at the same time
• Time – plenty of lead time – for everything
• Don’t go for lofty goals – less is better
CHALLENGES TO EXPECT

- Physical
- Monetary
- Logistical
CHALLENGES TO EXPECT

• Keeping ‘focus’ on the target
• Adjusting to the local ‘politics’
• Getting the funds across; Accountability
• Communications
• Time difference and local holidays
OTHER CHALLENGES / ISSUES

- When it rains...it pours
- Expect anyone to jump in
- Be willing to do PR – a lot of it
- Expect criticism – but react cautiously*
- Expect more work – not always bad!
ADVANTAGES OF INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

• High visibility, high impact oriented
• Potential for large data collection
• Opportunity for achieving more leadership
• Satisfaction – if executed well
JUST BE PREPARED FOR A LONG AND OFTEN UNCERTAIN JOURNEY. THE GOOD STUFF DOESN’T COME EASY.

- Tim Westergren