Writing Guidelines for
The Humidtropics Innovation Platforms Case Study Competition

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January 2015

THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR CASE STUDY

A Case Study is a stand-alone record of the evolution of an organization, individual(s) or situation over a period of time, written with the objective of teaching it in classrooms and workshops.

Students and practitioners of the field should be able to understand the key challenges and solutions explored in the case, and it should give them enough new and important trends, lessons and frameworks to generate a lively discussion.

The following guidelines are intended to help case authors create a logical, analytical case. However, we understand that "no one size fits all," and case authors may adapt the guidelines to meet the demands of their particular case. Ultimately you should follow the structure that will help you examine and emphasize the lessons of the case study.

**Note**: You need not use the Section Headings "Introduction," "Narration of the Case," etc. These are intended only to guide case authors in structuring the case initially. In fact, in the final draft, case authors should use section headings that are intriguing, suited to the subject matter and help guide the readers through the flow of the case.

I. Introduction
Your introduction should draw the reader in and begin with briefly highlighting the main context, location, timeline, stakeholders, and challenge of the case.

The introduction should help situate the reader into the environment of the case and provide an intriguing look into the nature of the central challenge that the innovation platform resolved. Avoid creating a summary or abstract. Instead, the introduction should give a glimpse of what is to come and make the readers want to find out further.

A good technique to use is to set a scene for the reader that will illustrate the main problem faced by the protagonist. You may end the introduction with a few pointed questions whose answers are contained in the rest of the case. You may also hint at some of the achievements of the innovation platform so that the reader is curious to find out exactly how this impact was

achieved.

II. Narration of the Case

This is the bulk of the case and should be ideally written in a chronological order of events. This section introduces the stakeholders, the environment and background information. It then sets up and explores the problem, before providing the solution developed. It will also delineate the process through which this problem and solution was explored and lay down the timeline of the case. You may like to think through the following questions for this section:

a. Background Information

- o What is the environment in which the innovation platform is operating?
- o Describe the innovation platform and how it developed.
- o Who are the key stakeholders?
- o Lay out the *who*, *what*, *where* and *when*.

b. The Problem

- o Provide information and scope of the problem. Why did the problem occur? What were the reasons, obstacles, distorted incentives, etc that led to the problem.
- o What are the structural, geographical, economic, soci0-cultural, technical, institutional, political constraints facing the target population or commodity chain?

c. The Solution/Intervention

- o What solution or intervention did the innovation platform help create? What criteria and reasoning led to this solution?
- o What alternative hypothesis or actions were considered/implemented? Why were they not deemed suitable? You should lead the reader through the process by which the best intervention or solution was explored, designed and implemented.
- o What were the key challenges in the implementation of the intervention? How did stakeholders generate support, outreach and community consensus?

III. Impact Analysis

- o What was the impact of the intervention generated by the innovation platform? What was the scale of this impact?
- o Why and how did this impact occur? What were the key factors behind the success of the impact? If you can develop any relevant frameworks or patterns to summarize how the impact occurred, you should mention them here.
- o Scalability is a key theme for this Case Study Competition. Explore what factors led to the scale produced.
- o What about failures and remaining challenges? What are the areas of improvement? No platform or process is perfect. Shedding light on remaining challenges will better facilitate discussion regarding the case study.

IV. Conclusion and the Future

- o   Conclude with a summary of the case's key takeaways.
- o   Answer some of the Big Questions: What are the natural next steps in this field? How can the lessons or frameworks from this Case Study be applied in other contexts? What are some significant opportunities and challenges?
- o   What is the significance of the events described in the Case Study for Innovation Platforms overall? How are the lessons scalable and sustainable?
- o   Present suggestions and scenarios for the future. This is the part that will stay with readers and students the most, and is your chance to have a huge impact on future conversation regarding innovation platforms.
- o   Raise additional questions for the readers to think over.

Where to Get Information for Writing the Case

1. Interviews with stakeholders: The biggest, most crucial resource for any Case Study is first-hand interviews with stakeholders. Anecdotal evidence will help you narrate the events in the case better. These expert sources will also be able to direct you towards relevant facts and figures.   To improve your analysis of the case, ask them about:
- o   Their greatest problems before the innovation platform.
- o   How they got involved with the platform and their experience with it.
- o   What intervention was decided and how? Discuss with them the process of creating, testing and implementing the intervention.
- o   What lessons they have learned. How can these lessons be imparted to others?
- o   What is next for them, and for innovation platforms? What are current best practices? What can be better?

2. Data: While interviews with multiple stakeholders will give you a feel for the timeline, the human story and the platforms, these narratives and insights must be supported by objective facts, figures, data, reports, etc. Any kind of objective data that helps you understand the impact and functioning of the particular information platform will be useful to collect.

3. Theory of innovation platforms: The CGIAR Innovation Platform Policy Briefs (accessible here) and the The KIT publication on Putting Heads Together (accessible here) contain extensive background information about platforms. It is also advisable to read the various theories of innovation platforms so you can explore more dimensions within your case.

4. Other Cases: See suggested list at the end of this document. Explore how the experiences of this particular Innovation Platform link to experiences in other platforms, and how the dynamics and language used in the cases can be applied in your own writing process.

5. Case Study Consultant: We have also made a Case Study Consultant available for you in the period leading to the application deadline. She will be able to help you think through different

structures, answer any questions you may have, act as a sounding board, and provide assistance in polishing the analytical and narrative aspects of your case study.

GENERAL WRITING TIPS

1. Length: Case Studies should be 3000-5000 words in length, plus any <u>relevant</u> exhibits (e.g. figures, maps, charts or pictures). They should be comprehensive enough to illustrate the processes employed to solve challenges and lessons that emerged while using the innovation platform.

2. Style: Case Studies should be written in simple English and should use the simple past tense, unless discussing current, ongoing events or raising questions regarding the future. We encourage the use of active voice. While the Case examines a serious topic, it should nevertheless be readable and engaging. To find an appropriate style, it would be best to focus on the end use: something that can be read widely and which can be a useful teaching tool in Iternational Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D) or institutions of higher learning. The Case should explain any technical or sector-specific term in simple English. This will ensure that the Case Study is accessible to readers from multiple disciplines.

3. It is crucial for authors to maintain a neutral style and avoid sensationalism, bias or opinion. Instead, cases should attempt to use facts and objective statements to make their case. The case study author is an impartial authority who clinically examines the details of the case, and presents these nuances with integrity and lack of exaggeration.

4. The Cases should be backed by verifiable data. You may use quotations from your interviews with stakeholders. You may also consult journal articles, research publications, news articles and other reputable sources for data or quotes to support your case.

5. You may present any relevant tables, figures, charts or graphs that help you make your case in the annexe. You may also present background data and figures here, if you think that they will help readers develop a deeper understanding of the case.

6. All facts, figures and data used from different sources must be accurate and must be cited using the Harvard style. For more information on Harvard style, please consult the guide [here](#).

LIST OF CASE STUDY EXAMPLES

Stanford Social Innovation Review: SSIR is a great resources for Case Study Writing, but there is a caveat to consider: SSIR may classify the links below as case studies, but they are essentially well written articles. Even though <u>their format does not exactly suit our Competition</u>, their narrative style, easy exposition and journalistic format should be very helpful. They are easier to grasp and far more engaging to read that many of the more traditional case studies - so consult for voice and writing style. Some examples include:

Acumen Fund Case Study: Good exploration of challenges and pitfalls. Well structured example of setting up a timeline of events.

Impact Hub Case Study: Looks at an innovation hub in real life. Great companion piece to read for Case Writers who are exploring the growing pains and structural challenges of innovation platforms.

Riders for Health Case Study: Looks at scaling up within the developing world context, which will help writers discuss issues of scale/sustainability (an issue, which, as per our call, isn't being explored enough in the current abstracts).

Acumen Fund Case Study: Check out this case study. Imagine you replace Acumen with a particular innovation platform, and then explore its impact on multiple beneficiaries.

The **Humidtropics Innovation Platform Policy Briefs** (accessible here) and the The KIT publication on **Putting Heads Together** (accessible here) contain extensive background information about platforms. Putting heads together also have a collection of cases you may find useful.

Sitaram Rao Livelihoods Case Collections: Their past collection of winning cases can be accessed here. These cases have a specific structure, where they set up the background, explore achievements and also refer to challenges/failures. However, they are focused more on very specific cases in a very specific location, whereas for the Humidtropics competition would like to create more wide-ranging cases, with greater scale, which would ideally highlight the impact of a mature innovation platform across multiple locations and beneficiaries, if possible! Please keep this in mind if you emulate this particular approach.

The International Food and Agribusiness Management Review (IFAMA) Case Study Archive: Shorter cases, so don't always provide concrete details or the depth of analysis needed for such a case to be teachable in a University setting. However, some good cases can be found here.
http://www.ifama.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3319

Notes on the Writing Style

1. Avoid jargon wherever possible. If you're using sector terminology, try to define it in a short phrase. It would be best to keep in mind that the readership will be diverse--from students studying agriculture to other practitioners working in developing countries. In order for the case to appeal to a wide-range of readers, it is best to use simple language that would be easily understandable to a non-technical person.

2. Instead of general subheadings, you may like to experiment with more engaging titles. So for instance, instead of "The Impact Analysis" you could write about "How VolteForce IP Doubled Income for Farmers in Uganda." Readers are always attracted to specific terms and are looking for "signposts"--little clues that tell them what is coming next. In your case study, feel free to use subheadings as signposts.

3. The subjects of the Case Studies are complicated and difficult to understand. The easiest way to explain them is to think: how will you explain it to a class of college students who have some background in agriculture, but are not yet specialists? You may not need to explain value chains, but you will need to explain a new hybrid technology specific to your sector, etc.

4. Sentences should be short. One of the biggest impediments to good writing is run-on sentences, which turn into paragraphs. Wherever you can, try breaking up sentences for better flow. Similarly, avoid long paragraphs of over 7-8 lines. Instead, shorter paragraphs will help readers enjoy your case study more.

5. The way in which IPs figured out the answer is not always the best way in which to explain that answer to readers. Instead of mere narration, you can use the case to tell a story. A good story has some element of suspense. So the way you set up the case should entice the reader to keep wanting to read the next section. End each section with something worth remembering and something that lets the reader know that there are lots of insights coming further in the case.

6. Give concrete examples wherever you can. If you have stories to tell about individual farmers who benefitted from the IP, tell them. It's even better if you can explain abstract ideas with small details that paint a scene for the reader.

7. Write in the active voice. Instead of saying "It was concluded by the members of the IP that..." it is better to say "The members of the IP concluded that..."

8. Feel free to include your own opinion. After studying the IPs for so long, you will have some rare insights into the present and future of IPs overall. The Conclusion of the Case Study is the perfect place to hypothesize and present your ideas about the IP field overall.

9. Avoid including extraneous details. Is the temperature in every season, or the name of every partner really necessary to include? Put in only those details that are crucial for readers to know. If other details are "good to know but not essential," they may be better off in the annexe.

10. One of the best revision techniques is to read your writing aloud. Is it too stiff or confusing? How would you rephrase it if you were giving a TED talk, instead of writing it down? The Case Study gives you room to explain BIG ideas in an easy to understand format, so speaking it aloud can be a useful exercise to figure out areas of your writing that are still too complex.

11. Choose a consistent tense throughout the Case Study. It is best to write in the simple past. Simple past example: "The IP members decided to include province X in its initial experiment."

12. Use analogies and questions. Analogies are useful when you want to explain some highly technical concept in lay man's terms.

And rhetorical questions are one of the best techniques in writing. You can ask questions at the beginning of key sections. For instance, you could ask "Was it possible for the Alpha IP to overcome the distribution challenges that had plagued farmers in Hissar, India for centuries?" and then proceed to answer that question using concrete examples of its success.

Notes on the Content

1. Remember to describe the "PROCESS" by which the IP discovered, tested and implemented the solutions. The working of the IP is crucial to understand for readers, so do take the time to develop this section in detail.

2. Do consider the questions of scalability and sustainability, with regards to the specific IP you are writing about. These questions are crucial for the competition, and for the readers. The biggest question in the IP field today is not whether IPs work, but rather: "How can we scale and replicate successful IPs?" This is a crucial question that the conclusion of your C