



**Scoping Study on Commissioning Research  
and Improving the Effectiveness of Partnerships in CLARE:  
A Practitioner's Perspective**

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AgMIP	Agricultural Model Intercomparison and Improvement Project
ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
ASSAR	Adaptation at Scale in Semi-Arid Regions
BPP	Business Partnerships Platform (Australian Government)
BRACED	Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters
CARIAA	Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia
CCMCC	Conflict and Cooperation in the Management of Climate Change
CIRCLE	Climate Impacts Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement
CLARE	Climate Adaptation and Resilience Program
COP	Communities of Practice
Co-PI	Co-Principal Investigator
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DECCMA	Deltas, Vulnerability and Climate Change: Migration and Adaptation
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
ESPA	Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation
FCFA	Future Climate for Africa
FRACTAL	Future Resilience for African Cities and Land
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GCRF	Global Challenge Research Fund
HI-AWARE	Himalayan Adaptation, Water and Resilience
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NERC	Natural Environment Research Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PBA	Partnership Brokers Association
PC	Project Coordinator
PI	Principal Investigator
PL	Program Lead
PO	Program Officer
RiU	Research-into-Use
RQ+	Research Quality Plus
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDIP	Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio
SHEAR	Science for Humanitarian Emergencies and Resilience
SRO	Senior Responsible Officer
SWOT	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats
TOR	Terms of Reference
UKRI	United Kingdom Research & Innovation
WISER	Weather and Climate Information Services for Africa

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Climate Adaptation and Resilience (CLARE) research framework program aspires to build on the considerable success and experiences of its eight predecessor programs in order to develop an ambitious approach that is fit for purpose for the evolving needs and opportunities for research to inform effective climate action into the coming decade. CLARE aims to ‘break the mould’ and engage courageously with more diverse, Southern-led, cross-sectoral and non-traditional partners in order to progress Research-into-Use (RiU) agendas, while maintaining its commitment to research excellence. It is envisaged that these much more diverse partnerships along with strong leadership and participation from the Global South will be necessary to achieve a step-change and will be a defining feature of CLARE. In this context, there is a desire for a deeper understanding of what makes for highly effective cross-sectoral (diverse) partnerships and what the experience has been of the predecessor programs and beyond.

This scoping study attempts to explore and address some of these issues through the lens of what is known from previous rich learnings of the CLARE predecessor programs and wider global experience of effective and principled cross-sectoral partnerships and by attention to the processes of collaboration (‘the how’) throughout the research/project cycle. A number of frameworks are presented to better understand the components of effective partnerships, including, importantly, from the perspective of partners. The frameworks also assist in identifying and unpacking some of the partnership challenges experienced by previous consortia, particularly the various layers of inequity and power imbalances, the sheer scale and complexity of research consortia, and the critical role leadership at many levels has to play. Complex and nuanced power dynamics frustrated and limited partner engagement and satisfaction in previous consortia, particularly (but not exclusively) for non-research partners and partners from the Global South, but interregional dynamics was also an important force. The issue of power is further discussed given its insidious presence, its ability to create ‘second-class citizen partners’ and ultimately its potential to impact negatively on project performance.

Commissioning models are examined in detail to identify ways in which, from the very outset of CLARE, the design, approach and systems of CLARE could be designed in such a way as to support and foster equitable, highly effective and diverse partnerships. How to do this while not prescribing standardised approaches, given that every partnership is unique and must be fit for purpose, is a challenge which speaks to the need to develop genuine partnership literacy and capability at all levels of CLARE. A series of recommendations linked to the different steps of commissioning are discussed in detail and presented here in summary form.

Beyond commissioning, the study examines the entire partnership process cycle to identify ways in which CLARE’s partnering processes can be optimised in order to support consortia to most effectively and efficiently achieve project outcomes. This starts from scoping and building consortia (where partners are identified, come together and enter the commissioning process), through the development of consortia Ways of Working to support project implementation and build understanding and value from diverse partnerships. It continues through managing and maintaining the successful partnerships once implementation is underway. Continuous improvement, adjustment and conflict management through health check processes alongside regular review processes in partnerships is also considered, as are different options for sustaining outcomes and exiting partnerships with grace and relationships intact. Suggestions to support improved collaboration under CLARE throughout the project life cycle are discussed and summary recommendations appear below.

The study recommends attention is paid to the purposeful development of collaboration and partnering skills at many levels – from fund managers to Principal and Co-Principal Investigators, and of individual partners to help develop a shared language to support effective collaboration and a level playing field. The potentially pivotal role of the Consortium Convenors (Coordinators) in sustainably building and holding effective partnering practice is flagged, both in their own consortia, but across CLARE.

The study also considers the role of the fund manager and poses some challenges to funders about their own role in encouraging and supporting partners to build and sustain the foundations of strong and effective collaboration. Is the funder prepared to take on its own internal systems that might hinder partnering? Is it prepared to recognise its own power, to lead by example and role-model the principles of equity and mutual accountability with its ‘grant recipients’? Is there a role for funders to be genuine partners, contributing beyond their financing of grants? Are funders and fund managers prepared to invest in building their own capacity and support truly diverse partnerships throughout the partnership cycle in order to achieve greater value-add for partners, end-users and overall project outcomes?

Finally, given the extent of recommendations, and recognising that inevitably, choices need to be made, the study also identifies some key priorities and recommends next steps for consideration. At a minimum, it is suggested that the following be considered priorities to ensuring partnerships under CLARE are as effective, efficient and impactful as possible:

1. Understand the **drivers and incentives for non-traditional partners** to participate in CLARE and ensure this is considered throughout the project design, promotion and implementation.
2. Consider the **funder and fund managers’ own role as partners, systems, language and approaches** and whether they are an impediment to effective partnering for CLARE consortia. How can funders/fund managers role model effective partnering and lead by example, contributing and being accountable to its partners?
3. Provide guidance from the outset to applicants on the **nature of partnerships** expected under CLARE.
4. Seek to **enhance equity** by supporting Southern and non-research partner leadership and Joint-PIs with a purposeful focus on strengthening the capacity of the less experienced partners over time.
5. Assess **partnership elements of each application as part of the selection criteria**, by those with some experience of effective partnerships.
6. Provide **time and attention to partnership building** during the application and inception phase of new consortia, including funding to support this for shortlisted applicants during the selection stages.
7. Consider how CLARE’s budgeting, planning and reporting systems can better reflect an **adaptive management approach**, allowing the partnerships to grow and change over time.
8. Support consortia to negotiate and agree detailed **Ways of Working** as a key aspect of partnership building, during project inception (including providing partnership brokering support to do so if required in order to build equity, transparency and mutual benefit/accountability, particularly across diverse partners).
9. Develop partnership literacy and capability by sharing tools and resources, including guidelines and **training/capacity building** support to build understanding and skills in effective partnering for consortia (particularly consortium leadership) but also for fund managers and technical assistance providers. In particular, foster the collaboration skills and enhance the role and seniority of Consortium Convenors.



10. Institutionalise the concept of a **partnership health check** in all consortia, to sit alongside project/learning reviews, to allow the partnership to review and continuously improve its performance, at least annually but also on an as needed basis. Build the capacity of Consortium Convenors to undertake these but provide external support where needed on sensitive or problematic partnerships.
11. Ensure projects and **partnerships are supported to end well**, and develop concise post-partnering agreements to address any residual and legacy issues.
12. **Embed learning about the consortium management, partnerships and collaboration**, and the part they play in achieving project outcomes and value-add for all partners throughout CLARE and ensure this knowledge is shared across and beyond CLARE.

## 1.1 Summary of recommendations

### A. Commissioning recommendations

Step 1: Calls for proposals	
<b>For funders:</b>	1.1 Make more explicit in each and every call, expectations pertaining to partnerships, particularly around the principles and <i>quality</i> of involvement of Southern institutions and Research-into-Use and other diverse types of partnerships.
	1.2 Provide guidance and examples of what types of partnerships might be expected in applications, without being prescriptive.
	1.3 Provide links to some short case studies or examples of how other successful diverse consortia have managed their partnerships, and links to the lessons learned papers on collaboration emerging from predecessor programs (e.g. CARIIA and FCFA).
	1.4 Consider establishing upfront some CLARE-wide standards/expectations and guidance around areas of known tension in diverse partnerships, recognising that different standards exist in different sectors and countries. Encourage applicants to discuss and work through to achieve alignment on these standards or identify any issues up front.
	1.5 Avoid predetermining the size of consortium membership – consortia should be fit for purpose for what they are aiming to achieve and be able to argue the case for what is their optimal size.
	1.6 Consider indicating a minimum expectation of amount of time (suggest 30%) per Full Time Equivalent (or other substantive) participation for consortium membership, and be very clear that the minimum amount of time allocated will be expected to be upheld (and why).
	1.7 Outline the importance of consortium leadership and management in supporting diverse partnerships and provide for capacity strengthening budgets and activities in this area in proposals.
	1.8 In such a large program as CLARE, consider the range and scope of calls for proposals – how to achieve the balance of providing open opportunities for new and interesting ideas to emerge (and risking receiving large numbers of inappropriate applications which waste applicant, funders and reviewers time) versus being so prescriptive that there is not enough room for applicants to innovate.
	1.9 Where feasible, test the draft call guidance on relevant parties (which may include predecessor programs who will not be eligible for CLARE e.g.

	in different geographies), particularly outside the research community, to see if it makes sense.
<b>Step 2: Partner identification and selection</b>	
<b>For funders</b>	2.1 Provide a longer lead time between announcement of calls and for the submission of concept notes, to allow adequate time for consortia to explore new partnerships and form.
	2.2 Provide flexibility in the proposal requirements to allow applications with 'gaps' in their identified partnership, to provide space for partnerships to 'breathe' and evolve as the proposal development process unfolds, and for consortia to argue the case for the optimal size and structure of their partnership to achieve their outcomes.
	2.3 Once consortia are formed, avoid suggesting or requiring changes to consortia membership, or only do so in open discussion with all consortium members to think through the potential risks and unintended consequences of such decisions on the partnership.
	2.4 Expand the Network Development Grant call approach of UKRI/GCRF, providing purposeful opportunities for potential partnerships to form and build, making explicit the expectation of the types of principle based (e.g. equitable, accountable, shared value, diverse) partnerships expected to be developed, and providing guidance on these.
	2.5 Consider the implications for partner selection and building in a post-COVID-19 environment where this limits opportunities for face-to-face engagement, and look at providing support, training, facilitation and infrastructure if needed to support this being done remotely, but with innovation and creative focus not just on agendas but also on team building.
	2.6 Prior to calls for proposals, consider a (potentially) rolling series of CLARE regional partnership scoping or marketplace events to introduce novel and interested partners to discover potential alignment and common interests, which could be run using something like Open Space or unconference platforms.
<b>For applicants</b>	2.7 Encourage all partners to undertake partnership due-diligence on their fellow proposed consortia members (even those they have collaborated with previously), prior to fully committing, and provide some guidance to support this.
<b>For funders and applicants</b>	2.8 Consider the opportunity to build on pre-existing consortia from GCRF grants and predecessor programs, but encourage transparency around known management or consortium challenges, and should they be shortlisted, provide partnership support via an independent partnership broker to help them identify and work through residual or embedded/inherited issues which may impact on their effectiveness going forward.
<b>Step 3: Concept note development</b>	
<b>For funders</b>	3.1 At concept note stage, ensure some flexibility is left for consortium members to either exit or enter at later stages. For example, ESPA provided for applications to have some gaps in consortium members, and instead include a strategy for bringing these on board at a later stage.
	3.2 To help build equity, consider and provide guidance on who the concept note should be developed by. Ensure at least one Southern organisation and one Research-into-Use partner should be substantively

	and demonstrably involved in leading the development and co-authorship of the concept note.
	3.3 Consider the option of having complementary co-lead agencies (e.g. North-South; research-Research-into-Use) with specific and defined roles and shared decision-making as a way to further build mutuality, reduce inequity and support capacity development of less established partners.
<b>Step 4: Concept note selection</b>	
<b>For funders:</b>	4.1 Try to ensure that processes are streamlined and bureaucracy is minimised to the extent possible, considering the impact from the perspective of applicants.
	4.2 Provide guidance to assessors on how to consider the consortium aspects of the application, by detailing the criteria for selection of quality partnerships, in addition to the technical content or ensure assessors include specific expertise on partnering.
	4.3 Provide useful feedback to unsuccessful applicants to help them improve the quality of future applications.
<b>Step 5: Full proposal development</b>	
<b>For the funder and applicant:</b>	5.1 Continue to provide funding for the full proposal development stage for those who are successful at concept note stage, but consider making it explicitly for proposal <i>and</i> partnership development, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear thinking and explanation about the roles and responsibilities for each partner in the consortium</li> <li>• Identification of the value add for and contributions of each partner</li> <li>• Explanation of specific leadership roles relating to the management of the project, and how equity will be built between North/South; research/Research-into-Use; cross-cultural and interregional considerations, etc.</li> <li>• An outline of how the consortium plans to build its collaboration and team and strengthen the capacity of all partners to engage.</li> </ul>
<b>For the funder:</b>	5.2 What elements of the full proposal could be streamlined to reduce impost on applicants without reducing the quality and information provided?
	5.3 Demonstrate respect for applicants by avoiding changing the goalposts during the proposal development stage.
	5.4 Retain some flexibility and openness in the design and budgeting processes to allow for movement of partners, in and out of the consortia, to meet project needs.
	5.5 Consider providing some capacity strengthening training and opportunities in collaboration/cross-sector partnership and other skills, for all those invited to submit full proposals, so that even those who are eventually unsuccessful will derive value from the process. This could be provided online, remotely, in-country or through advisory support.
	5.6 Provide feedback and acknowledge the work of unsuccessful applicants and identify opportunities for them to be able to engage with CLARE, for example through knowledge dissemination/sharing without funding to continue to build networks.
<b>For the applicant:</b>	5.7 Encourage consortia to think through and plan for formal and informal activities related to partnership and trust building, as part of their project, including provision for Ways of Working, health checks, team building, celebrations, joint field visits, etc. as a way to build strong relationships.

	5.8 Where cross-consortia collaboration and learning is an expectation of the fund manager, ensure that this is known and provided for in the proposal design, budgeting and people's time commitments.
<b>Step 6: Proposal evaluation and selection</b>	
<b>For the funder:</b>	6.1. In addition to the focus on research excellence, evaluation criteria (at both concept note and full proposal stages) should include assessment on the management, approach and quality of the collaboration (for example, by working through the 6Ps Framework, or looking at the Generic Success Indicators of Effective Partnerships), and ideally have someone experienced in assessing such to provide advice/inputs to the selection process.
	6.2 At full proposal stage, the fund manager could undertake an enhanced partnership due diligence/organisational capability process of the key consortium members (especially those not known to the funders), as a way to build engagement and identify capacity strengthening needs.
	6.3 To help build equity and Southern voice, as well as an understanding of the interregional politics and power issues, the selection committee should include assessors from the Global South, ideally from the region in which the consortium plans to operate.
	6.4 Discover what might incentivise Southern assessors to participate as expert reviewers or on selection committees, and invest in their capacity to participate equitably in selection committees, to build the future pool of suitable peer reviewers.
	6.5 The selection committee should also include non-academic Research-into-Use and other sectoral expertise to avoid the skewing of assessments.
	6.6 Assessment of Principal Investigators (PIs) and Co-PIs in particular any lead agencies, should include leadership, management and collaboration skills, commitment and willingness, as well as time to lead and accompany the consortium and be an ongoing expectation of funding. This means moving beyond research track records.
	6.7 Evaluation should include assessment of the plans for the Consortium Coordinator function, including appropriate senior involvement and strong collaboration skills and experience. Consider renaming role to Consortium Convenor to elevate its status beyond administration.
	6.8 Consider carefully the implications of any funder-driven requests for changes to the consortium at this late stage, and work openly with consortium members to achieve it.

## B. Beyond commissioning: Recommendations to support effective partnering throughout the project/partnering cycle

<b>Phase 1: Scoping and building</b>	
1.1	Develop a consortium partnership agreement or Ways of Working at the outset, consider whether this can be facilitated internally or whether external partnership brokering may support partners to build diverse, equitable, shared value, open and mutually accountable partnerships, and to understand each partner's respective drivers and value-add.
1.2	As part of the Ways of Working, co-develop a partnership risk matrix, to assess and openly discuss the potential risks to the consortium from each partner's perspective, not just from a research perspective.
1.3	If not incorporated at the full proposal stage, invest in developing the collaboration skills of ALL consortium members. A dedicated online CLARE 'introduction to effective collaboration' module could be developed to improve accessibility, and can draw on the voices and experiences gained in the predecessor programs, as well as providing frameworks and principles in support of good engagement. Completion of this module could be a pre-requisite for existing and new individuals coming into the consortium and help provide everyone with a common language.
1.4	Where consortia are receiving external partnership brokering support for the development of their partnering agreement, face to face training and exposure can also be provided cost-effectively prior to or as part of developing the agreement.
1.5	Specifically invest in partnership and collaboration skills development of all Consortium Coordinators/Convenors and ideally Principal Investigators and IDRC Program Officers working directly with consortia. This can be provided in face to face training, with follow up mentoring/coaching support where needed.
<b>Phase 2: Managing and maintaining</b>	
2.1	<b>Governance:</b> Build equity and trust through appropriate terminology and structures (e.g. Convening versus Lead Partners) and decision-making protocols which are fit for purpose. Consider carefully the accompanying finance flows and whether these could be less prescribed beyond the initial one or two years to allow for changes in activities and also partners.
2.2	<b>Leadership:</b>
2.2.1	The role of PIs, Co-PIs as consortium leaders not just research leaders: Consider how this is reflected in selection processes, beyond research track records. Ensure sufficient time is available to commit to all leadership roles (i.e. it is not just an 'honorary' appointment) and includes a commitment to capacity building.
2.2.2	Look at the option for appointing joint PIs as a mechanism to genuinely share ownership and leadership between North and South where Southern-only led opportunities are considered higher risk. In this scenario, the Northern PIs would be encouraged to have a remit which included capacity strengthening and leading from behind.
2.2.3	Develop and recognise the key role for Consortium Convenors (previously Coordinators) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide guidance on Terms of Reference at the proposal stage</li> <li>• Appoint full time Consortium Convenors (versus Coordinators) of sufficient seniority and experience</li> <li>• Provide them with training in partnership/collaboration skills and remote mentoring support as they build their skills</li> <li>• Create cross-CLARE (perhaps regional, perhaps thematic) Consortium Convenor Communities of Practice, and ensure it is resourced and time/funds provided in budgets to support participation</li> <li>• In large, multi-country or multi-regional projects, consider the need for Convenors in each region/country</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate opportunities for trained Convenors to undertake facilitation of partnership health checks for other consortia beyond their own to build and access local, knowledgeable expertise and experience, to share learnings across consortia, but also to provide a sustainable partnership brokering resource bank for CLARE over time. Ensure funding and time is provided to support this role.</li> </ul>
2.3	Communications (remote): Consider implications for remote partnering in a time of COVID, and even without, to reduce the travel impost on partners. Do partners have equitable access and skills to utilise appropriate technologies? How can these be used in ways to foster partnership building and principled relationships?
2.4	Transaction costs of meetings: Consider how these can be made more efficient and effective. What do we need to have versus what is nice to have? How do we build in team and trust building activities and measures, including providing space for less formal engagement?
2.5	Strengthening capacity: Building collaborative skills and the 'ability to partner', as flagged in the commissioning models, can occur throughout the project cycle and especially when key new people join a partnership.
2.6	Conflict resolution: Ensure Consortium Convenors or PIs, Co-PIs (does not have to be from lead agency) have the skills and experience to work through (but not smooth or shut down) conflict in a way which builds trust, understanding and transparency.
<b>Phase 3: Reviewing and revising</b>	
3.1	Provide guidance, training and external brokering support where needed for regular consortium health checks to build a commitment to continuous improvement and address any underlying tensions in a constructive manner.
3.2	Revise the Ways of Working and Risk Matrix to ensure it remains current for all partners and remind partners of their commitments.
3.3	Use the health checks as an opportunity to induct new people into the consortium.
3.4	Consider integrating formal partnership or consortium review into regular consortium learning reviews.
3.5	Consider the opportunities for Consortium Convenors to be equipped with the skills to facilitate the health checks of other consortium as part of resourcing and building cross-consortium learning.
3.6	Identify and establish a resource pool of accredited partnership brokers and other trained collaboration facilitators, including importantly those based in various geographical regions or with language and cultural competencies, who can assist with external facilitation of health checks, or support/coaching/accompaniment to Consortium Convenors, who are themselves facilitating health checks if needed.
3.7	Use the opportunity of reviewing and revising the consortia to have some hard conversations if needed. Consider need for introducing new partners, and exiting non-performing partners with grace: <i>'Do we have the right partners at the table for what we need to achieve?'</i>
<b>Phase 4: Sustaining outcomes</b>	
4.1	Consider legacy issues from an early point to ensure common understanding and agreement. Encourage consortia to develop post-funding agreements to cover external communications and agreed public messaging, residual intellectual property, equipment, ongoing research students and access to data, etc. and intention for future collaboration.
4.2	Consider the options available from an earlier period in the partnership (which can be done at health checks) including closure/exit, scaling, embedding, innovating. Just because funding is ending does not necessarily mean the collaboration will end, nor that all partners share the same vision.
4.3	Amplify capturing and sharing learnings as the project progresses. What does each partner want to know? What public messaging about the project is agreed by all partners? How can the learning from the partnership be shared?

4.4 Celebrate success – encourage partners to take time to identify and celebrate their achievements on a regular basis and particularly at the end of the project cycle - both from the project and also from their collaboration.

## 2. BACKGROUND OF THIS STUDY

The Climate Adaptation and Resilience (CLARE) research framework program, which is still in the scoping and design stage, currently reflects an intention to build on the advances and experiences of its predecessor programs and to develop an ambitious approach that is fit for purpose for the evolving needs and opportunities for research to inform effective climate action into the 2020s. It is envisaged that much more diverse partnerships along with strong leadership and participation from the Global South will be necessary to achieve a step-change and will be a defining feature of CLARE. In this context, there is a desire for a deeper understanding of what makes for highly effective cross-sectoral (diverse) partnerships and what the experience has been of the predecessor programs and beyond. This scoping study attempts to raise and address some of these issues.

One of the genuine benefits of CLARE standing on the shoulders of its eight predecessor programs - Agricultural Model Intercomparison and Improvement Project (AgMIP), Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia (CARIAA), Conflict and Cooperation in the Management of Climate Change (CCMCC), Climate Impacts Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement (CIRCLE), Ecosystems Services for Poverty Alleviation (ESPA), Future Climate for Africa (FCFA), Science for Humanitarian Emergencies and Resilience (SHEAR), and Weather and Climate Information Services for Africa (WISER) - is that many of them have extended their commitment to learning and knowledge sharing to reflecting on and writing about the lessons learned about working in complex research collaborations and consortia both within their specific projects, but also across the collective program experience. The author would like to acknowledge the wealth of knowledge and learnings contained in these reports and also note the alignment of the shared partnership experiences captured therein with wider experiences of multi-stakeholder and research collaborations which will be drawn on in the study. This study also draws on some of the analysis, observations and suggestions of a number of the other Scoping Studies which have been commissioned by DFID and IDRC in order to inform the design of CLARE, particularly the *Program Design for Climate Resilient Development: A Review of Key Functions* report (Harvey et al., 2020) and the *Design Scoping Study for the Capacity Strengthening Component of the CLARE Programme: Final Report* (Boulle et al. 2020).

The *CARIAA Summative Evaluation* (Lafontaine et al., 2018) recommended improving Ways of Working in climate change adaptation, in terms of building more diverse strategic partnerships and equitable decision making, as a new research area arising from the CARIAA experience<sup>1</sup>. In order to achieve this, and to circumvent some of the challenges encountered by many of the predecessor program consortia, a more purposeful approach to building and sustaining strong and equitable partnerships is essential.

Harvey et al. (2017)<sup>2</sup>, when reviewing six successful climate case studies from CARIAA, noted enablers of participation and ownership and purposeful facilitation processes, and the importance of providing sufficient time and having the right people in the room and fully engaged, as some of the factors that supported program achievements. These are just two examples, but there is a consistent theme across many of the consortium learning reports of the desire for more understanding, learning and guidance on building and maintaining strong and effective partnerships, to in turn support more effective climate programs.

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<sup>1</sup> CARIAA Summative Evaluation Final Report (2018) p. 69-70

<sup>2</sup> Harvey, B., Cochrane, L., Van Epp, M., Cranston, P., Pirani, P.A. (2017) Designing Knowledge Co-production for Climate and Development. CARIAA Working Paper no. 21. International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada and UK Aid, London, United Kingdom.



### 3. STUDY SCOPE

Under the eight predecessor programs (one of which, CARIAA, was jointly funded by DFID and IDRC), it has been identified that the ways (*'the how'*) in which various consortia collaborated, have been a key contributor to the success and delivery of project and program outcomes. In almost all consortia, it is reported in a range of program source material and from informant interviews<sup>3</sup>, that tensions arose which to a greater or lesser extent took considerable time, skills and resources to resolve, or significantly impeded project implementation. There is a clear desire to consider how the commissioning and management/support processes surrounding consortia under CLARE can be strengthened in order to maximise optimal collaboration throughout the program implementation; to reduce inequity between partners; and importantly to give genuine voice to Southern researchers and newer partners. This will involve consideration of structural and systems aspects of the commissioning, as well as organisational, capacity and cultural constraints. Importantly, to be truly effective, it will require consideration of these aspects from partners' as well as from the funders' perspective.

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Examine and critically assess the range of *commissioning processes* used within each of the set of predecessor programs, identifying to what extent these had implications for partnerships among recipients in terms of equitable responsibility, Southern leadership and mutual accountability.
2. Probe and describe what *partnership issues arose during the lifespan of the predecessor programs* regarding partnership among recipients, and how might these have been *addressed through commission* and/or partnership 'health checks' during implementation.
3. Draw on *other examples* beyond the predecessor programs that *help demonstrate and identify good practice*.
4. Propose considerations and advice on how to commission research under the proposed CLARE framework program in order to enhance the potential for the three attributes of partnership<sup>4</sup>.
5. Provide *recommendations which will support improved partnering and collaboration through the partnership life cycle* and beyond commissioning.

### 4. METHODOLOGY AND ENQUIRY QUESTIONS

A range of methods were used to inform the views and suggestions represented in this report:

- Observer-participation in CLARE scoping workshops in London, UK held 27-28 February 2020, to build contextual awareness and meet and speak with a number of people with direct experience of the predecessor programs;
- Desk review of predecessor programs and Global Challenge Research Fund (GCRF) Network Development documents: final reports, working papers, program and project-specific websites to provide context and lessons learned; and of scoping studies for the CLARE program;

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to CLARE scoping studies on Program Functions & Capacity Strengthening, CARIAA Project Completion Reports, Currie-Alder et al. (2019) [Building climate resilience in Africa & Asia: Lessons on organisation, management and research collaboration from research consortia](#). CARIAA Working Paper no. 24, IDRC Ottawa and UK Aid London; informant interviews and author observations at London CLARE Design and Scoping Workshop: 26<sup>th</sup>; February 2020.

<sup>4</sup> IDRC has outlined as desirable, the 'three attributes of partnership' under CLARE to be:

1. Partnerships that further equitable responsibility in research design, work activities, research uptake and academic publication;
2. Opportunities to demonstrate or enhance scientific and thought leadership from the Global South; and
3. Mutual accountability among participants for progress, output and outcomes.

- Focus group and individual semi-structured interviews and follow-on discussions with Program Leader (PL) and Program Officers (POs) at IDRC involved with CARIAA, and with the relevant Senior Responsible Officers (SROs) at DFID;
- Structured interviews with selected representatives of consortia of a sample of some of the eight predecessor programs to provide a basic level of triangulation between documentation and IDRC/DFID interviews. Those examined in more detail (including interviews with Southern PIs, Co-PIs, Consortium Coordinators, Program Officers and Research-into-Use (RiU) partners among others), included Adaptation at Scale in Semi-Arid Regions (ASSAR), Deltas, Vulnerability and Climate Change: Migration and Adaptation (DECCMA), Himalayan Adaptation, Water and Resilience (HI-AWARE) in CARIAA, Future Resilience for African Cities and Land (FRACTAL) in FCFA, Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation (ESPA) and its Programme Management Unit, Natural Environment Research Council (NERC);
- Drawing on the Author's practitioner experience as a Partnerships Advisor to HI-AWARE through its life cycle, and wider global experience and practice of multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral partnerships, including complex consortia between Northern and Southern institutions;
- Reference to additional beyond-IDRC and DFID 'good practice' collaboration examples of relevance to CLARE.

In reviewing and analysing this information, the following enquiry questions were considered:

1. What have been some of the common features and contributing factors of 'successful' partnerships?
2. How has success in collaboration been defined and understood by various stakeholders?
3. What have been some of the commonly experienced challenges, and how successfully were these addressed? Did these challenges reflect what is known about other multi-stakeholder partnerships, or are they unique?
4. What role did the structure of the commissioning models play in enhancing or restraining the consortia from succeeding?
5. What have been the key lessons learned from various stakeholders' perspectives (including IDRC, DFID, Lead Agencies, PIs and Co-PIs) and what might they do differently next time, with the benefit of hindsight.

## 5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Limited interview sample size: Only a very small sample of representatives of a number of projects across the eight predecessor programs identified by IDRC and DFID could be interviewed in the time provided for the scoping study. For this reason, interviews with partner representatives were used more commonly as a means of triangulating the observations drawn from the document review and interviews with DFID and IDRC, and providing limited case study opportunities.
2. Partnership is all about perspective: of the funders, the partners, and the individuals within the partnership. This was both expected and reflected in responses to questions even on the same project or situation, and was evident when deep-diving into projects in order to uncover some of the challenges faced from the perspective of each participant and to surmise causes for it. Every partnership is unique and while some generalisations can be made, this should also be kept in mind when seeking to extrapolate those lessons, due to the limited sample size. Where appropriate the author has also referred to her wider experience of relevant partnerships in drawing on typologies and lessons.
3. Partnerships can be a sensitive topic: Where consortia have had particular challenges, and notably where there has been major conflict or power imbalances, there can be hesitation for partners to speak frankly publicly where they feel this might compromise existing or future relationships. For

this reason, some projects or individuals are not individually identified or cited in this report in order to protect confidences.

## 6. SOME FRAMING CONSIDERATIONS

### 6.1 Shortfalls in approaches to collaboration in research consortia compromise outcomes

Many research consortia, particularly in the physical sciences, have worked on the 'co-production' of research via consortium models for many years. The value of co-design or co-production is widely understood, particularly in terms of user benefit, end-user adoption and creative approaches. *How* co-design is delivered however, i.e. the processes supporting co-production or collaboration, can either enhance or reduce this value, and this is less well understood or practiced. Trischler et al. (2018) note that the best co-production results are seen in teams which are cohesive and collaborate effectively, and conversely where individuals dominate, there is far more likelihood of conflict, less collaboration and reduced innovation<sup>5</sup>.

Another DFID-funded program, Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED), along with FCFA and WISER, gave considerable thought to the process components of co-production (Figure 1). From its consortium experience, BRACED identified six key building blocks which supported better research co-production throughout the project management cycle, highlighting the importance of collaborative working with external (research users) and internal (consortium partners) stakeholders.

This model reveals that co-design alone is not sufficient to sustain effective collaboration. This is a current and major consideration, with the popularity of co-design as an approach in many different sectors, the temptation is to consult and engage with partners widely at the outset (or design stage), but then to fall back to 'business as usual' once a project commences, which often leaves partners feeling frustrated and manipulated, but further, reduces opportunities for ongoing learning and innovation. The BRACED model goes beyond co-design, acknowledging the importance at the outset of selecting the right partners and building partnerships (*Identify key actors and Build Partnerships*), through finding common ground, after which it flags the importance of continuing to deliver and problem solve collaboratively. However, like many other collaboration models, it falls short on examining the 'how' this can be achieved.

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<sup>5</sup> Trishler et al (2018) 'The Value of Co-Design: The Effect of Customer Involvement in Service Design Teams' in Journal of Service Research, Vol 21 (1) pp 75-100

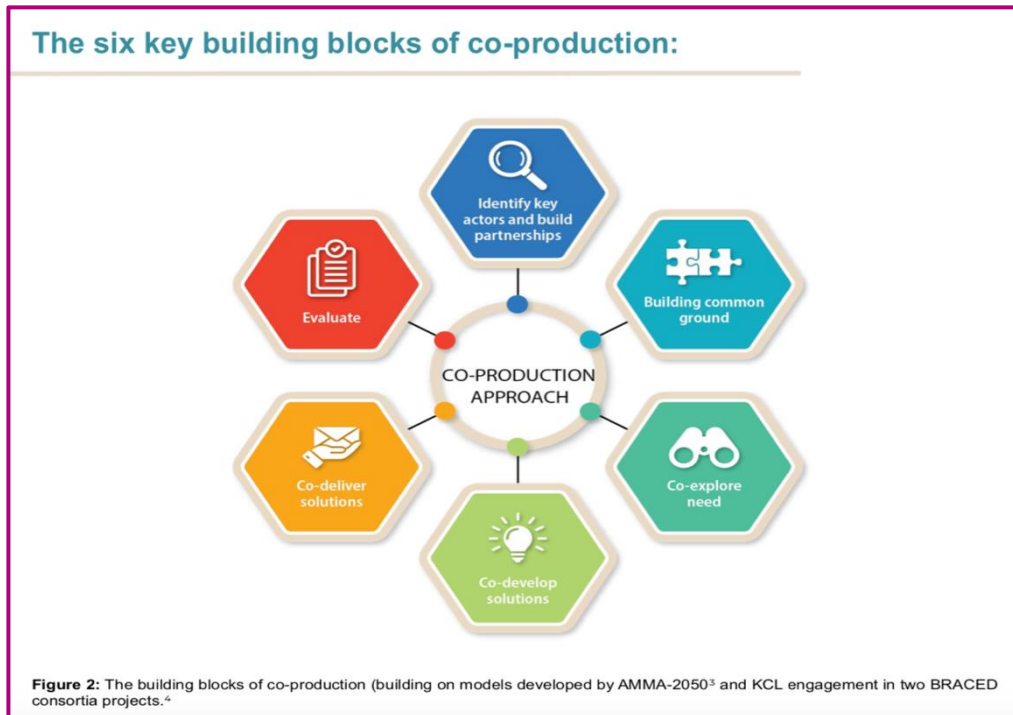


Figure 1: BRACED Building Blocks of Co-production. Source: WISER/FCFA Manual in Carter et al. (2019)

## 6.2 Cross-sector and diverse partnerships create additional challenges and potential

As a user and action-oriented research-for-development initiative, the CLARE program has ambitions to proactively foster cross-sectoral and highly diverse partnerships at a scale beyond what has perhaps been achieved in some of the predecessor programs. In fact, it will only be able to achieve its objectives through effective engagement of traditional and non-traditional actors: engaging RiU user and other civil society and community groups, the private sector and more unexpected and novel partners, alongside more usual academic and research institutions. This will require deep and purposeful attention to the partnership in and of itself, in order to build effective collaboration so that all participants are able to engage equitably, build understanding and trust for their different ways of operating, derive genuine value from their engagement, feel respected for what they contribute, and contribute from their core strengths.

## 6.3 What do we mean by ‘partnership’?

It is helpful first to consider a definition of *partnership*, given it is used (and mis-used) widely and differently by many groups. The Partnership Brokers Association (PBA), a global professional association for partnership brokers, refers to ongoing, principles-based working relationships between diverse stakeholders, where solutions are co-designed and delivered, where each partner contributes a range of resources based on their strengths, commits to mutual accountability in return for mutual benefit, and where risks and benefits are shared.

This definition of partnership sits at the ‘collaboration’ end of the partnering continuum, and is the approach adopted (or aspired to) by most successful cross-sector partnerships working on complex issues. However, the scale of CLARE suggests that there will also be room for more transactional partnerships and relationships which may even be straightforward contracts (on the left-hand side of the continuum), for example, straight forward research fellowships, and providing these are fit for purpose and each partner’s expectation is matched, even transactional partnerships can be delivered

in a principled way to extract most value. There is no judgment as to whether a transactional or collaborative partnership is better than the other – it must be fit for purpose for what is to be achieved. The more collaborative the partnership, the higher the transaction costs, but usually the greater the benefit and potential for transformative change when done well: the end must justify the means.

## A partnering continuum

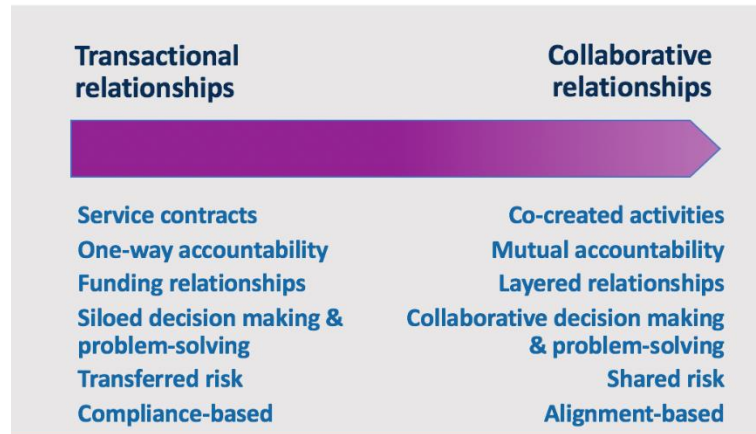


Figure 2: A partnering continuum © Partnership Brokers Association 2020

In this study, the terms partnership and collaboration are used interchangeably to describe consortium-working.

### 6.4 What constitutes a highly effective partnership?

We know from wide international practice of partnerships across many sectors, and from global reporting of the challenges of achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 ‘Partnerships for the Goals’<sup>6</sup> and indeed from the experience of CLARE’s predecessor programs, that achieving high value-added collaboration is not easy and it doesn’t happen by itself. Partnerships will need to be intentional, at all stages of the project cycle, including from the moment they are commissioned, and given due attention and space alongside the project work of CLARE in order for CLARE to achieve its objectives. It is perhaps useful to consider highly effective partnerships as providing a framework within which exceptional research and research uptake can occur.

We know from broad anecdotal experience that the converse is also true: poor partnerships typified by poor relationships, ineffective leadership, a lack of trust and respect between partners, competitiveness between partners, and a lack of diversity can absolutely compromise the achievement of project outcomes, and creates reputational and project risk for those involved which can have lasting repercussions.

There are certainly generic indicators of successful partnerships. First and foremost, does the partnership achieve the shared and individual objectives of those involved? Partnership practitioners may consider factors such as those drawn from the Partnering Toolkit<sup>7</sup>, when considering the effectiveness of a partnership.

<sup>6</sup> Sustainable Development Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals: Progress of Goal 17 in 2019, [Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform](#) website (accessed 21 June 2020)

<sup>7</sup> Tennyson, R (2011) *The Partnering Toolkit: An Essential Guide to Cross-Sector Partnering* (4<sup>th</sup> ed), London: The Partnering Initiative.

<p>1. Approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational understanding of partnering process</li> <li>• Jointly agreed program of work</li> <li>• Flexibility of all partners</li> <li>• All partners having a genuine voice</li> </ul> <p>2. Attitude and Competencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff of all partners having the necessary collaborative skillset and attitudes</li> <li>• Genuine partner engagement/institutionalisation</li> </ul> <p>3. Efficiency/Effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enough (but not too much) time is allocated to partnership-building</li> <li>• Governance structures are appropriate</li> <li>• Strong communications (external and internal)</li> <li>• Senior Management buy-in</li> <li>• Supportive systems</li> </ul> <p>4. Results / Productivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcome and results focus</li> <li>• Individual and shared goals being achieved</li> <li>• Partnership maximised value-add for each partner</li> <li>• Partnership is achieving wider impact &amp; influence</li> </ul>
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*Figure 3: Partnership Success Indicators*

Beyond this, and most importantly, what constitutes an effective partnership is in the eye of the beholder. Every partnership is unique, and partners themselves are the experts of their own partnership, though they sometimes benefit from a neutral voice. Partnerships are all about perspectives, and how to understand and reduce the gaps and differences in perspective is an important question for those interested in building a strong partnership. For example, how can we help a researcher at the University of Botswana understand the drivers, pressures and motivations of their counterparts at the University of Cape Town and vice versa? How might an Oxfam or a Red Cross Red Crescent or a private sector partner appreciate the timeframes and processes burdening their academic partner when they believe it is important to act and to act now? How can a professor in Pakistan address the societal expectations of co-authorship in a way which protects their ability to undertake field work when working with Northern partners who adhere to the 'Vancouver' protocols' or similar Global North standards<sup>8</sup>? If CLARE is to genuinely embrace what it calls 'novel' partners, in an equitable manner, these differences in views and perception will only increase.

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<sup>8</sup> The Vancouver Protocol (for bio-medical publications) was cited by a number of Northern-based interviewees for this study, as the international standard for peer reviewed journal publications and can be found here: <http://www.acponline.org>. Among other requirements, it speaks to co-authorship requirements for publications: 'Authorship credit should be based only on substantial contributions to 1) conception and design, or analysis and interpretation of data; and to 2) drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and on 3) final approval of the version to be published. Conditions 1, 2, and 3 must all be met. Participation solely in the acquisition of funding or the collection of data does not justify authorship. General supervision of the research group is not sufficient for authorship. Any part of an article critical to its main conclusions must be the responsibility of at least one author'. It is notable that these requirements do not necessarily align with national practice in some of the predecessor program focus countries, and caused considerable challenges for many locally-based organisations to navigate.

## 7. FRAMEWORKS FOR BUILDING EFFECTIVE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS UNDER CLARE

This study proposes three key partnering frameworks which may help CLARE address some of its commissioning and collaboration challenges:

1. The Six Influencers of Partnership Effectiveness
2. The Partnering Process Cycle
3. A Principles-based Approach to Partnering

### 7.1 Elements of effective cross-sectoral and diverse partnerships

When considering what goes into making partnerships which really ‘sing’, or alternatively those which are in a continual state of struggle or underperformance, it may be useful for those designing CLARE to consider the six aspects or influencers of effective partnerships presented in Figure 4 below and detailed in the following table.

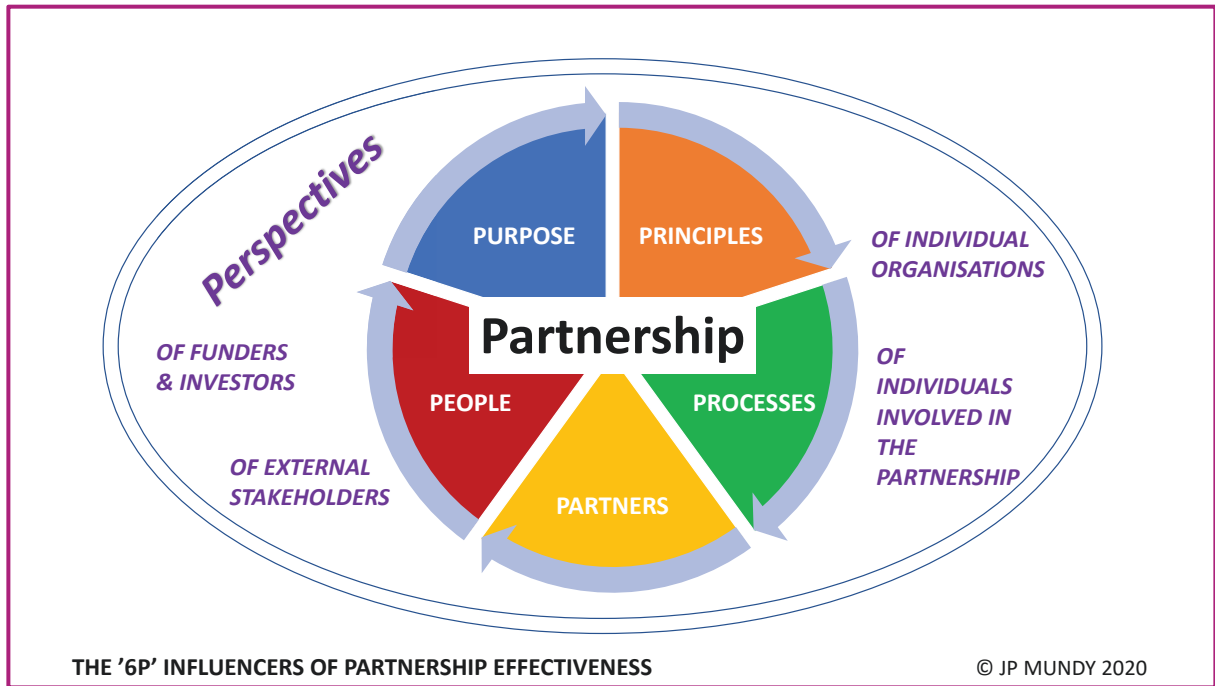


Figure 4: The 6P Influencers of Partnership Effectiveness

<b>1. Purpose</b>	What are the shared and individual objectives, drivers, motivations and intent of the partners and of the consortium? Are these in general alignment? Are there any points of conflict which we need to work through? Is there enough value for each consortium member to fully engage and participate?
<b>2. Principles</b>	How do partners intend to work together? What will define the characteristic ‘personality’ of each consortium? This is the ‘how’ of partnering; the defining ways of working and engaging which support highly effective partnership. The most critical principles of effective partnerships are drawn from the PBA principles: Diversity, Equity, Openness, Mutual Value/Accountability, and Courage <sup>9</sup> and speak to how people work and behave together.

<sup>9</sup> [www.partnershipbrokers.org](http://www.partnershipbrokers.org) and refer to the discussion in the third framework below on principles.

<b>3. Partners</b>	Are the 'right' partners involved where there is alignment of objectives, resources and capacity to deliver, diversity and complementarity amongst partners? Have we the right mix of research, research-into-use partners and other sectors represented in order to achieve our objectives? Is someone missing?
<b>4. People</b>	What is the quality and consistency of partners' relationships? Do consortium members have the necessary collaboration skills (strong communication, empathy, relationship management), capability and attitude to work across teams, cultures, languages and sectors? Are they prepared to commit to the agreed principles and to be held to account? Do they have 'authority to partner' from their own organisation? Do they have a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, and their own accountabilities? Do they have sufficient time to do what they have committed to doing? Are they interested in and passionate about the project, and have something to contribute, or are they there because they have been told to participate? Importantly, do the project leaders have the right skills, time and approach to effectively and collaboratively lead and manage a large, complex consortium across boundaries?
<b>5. Processes</b>	Does the partnership have the right internal systems and instruments, meetings, governance structures and partnership interventions to support the partnership throughout the project cycle? Have they developed a Ways of Working, conflict resolution mechanisms, an approach to reviewing the partnership in a constructive way? Are meetings and record keeping effective and efficient? Are the systems in place supporting or undermining relations and collaborations? How can systems be designed to reflect the partnership's principles (e.g. build equity through rotation of meeting chairs and venues)?
<b>6. Perspectives</b>	How do we ensure we take into account and value the points of view and experience of each partner at each step of the partnership? How do we work through differences in perception when these are causing challenges in the partnership? How can we build understanding of each other's situation, context and unique pressures?

This study considers in detail the principles, processes, partners and people elements of CLARE and its predecessor programs, and looks at these from the perspective of donor, fund managers and partners. For those involved in establishing and managing partnerships it is important to consider these various lenses when trying to maximise the effectiveness of a partnership.

When selecting, building, managing and problem-solving consortia for CLARE, how can these factors be considered? How can this framing be built into CLARE in a way that is useful and effective? The recommendations contained in this study are framed with these influencers in mind.

## 7.2 The Partnering Process Cycle

It is useful to consider a model which focusses specifically on the full gamut and possibilities of collaboration through attention to the partnership *process* activities aligned with the various stages of the project management cycle. One such framework is 'The Partnership Cycle' developed by The Partnering Initiative out of initial work in West Africa in the late 1990s and further evolved over the past 7 years by the Partnership Brokers Association<sup>10</sup>, based on extensive practitioner experience of cross-sector and multi-stakeholder partnerships. This model has been widely used globally for over 20 years in many complex cross-sector and multi-stakeholder partnerships in sectors, including climate (where it has been adopted in projects by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), including in HI-AWARE, and for example Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and the Department of the Environment), governance, education, financial services, humanitarian settings, mining, tourism, housing, gender, health, transport and infrastructure, law reform, SDG 17 initiatives, and many

<sup>10</sup> [www.partnershipbrokers.org](http://www.partnershipbrokers.org) and Partnership Brokers in Action: Skills, Tools, Approaches (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed), 2018



research-only and research-business-non-governmental organisation (NGO) partnerships. The model (see Figure 5 below) has been well tested, aligns with the project cycle, and provides a helpful structure to consider collaboration inputs which would benefit CLARE programs.

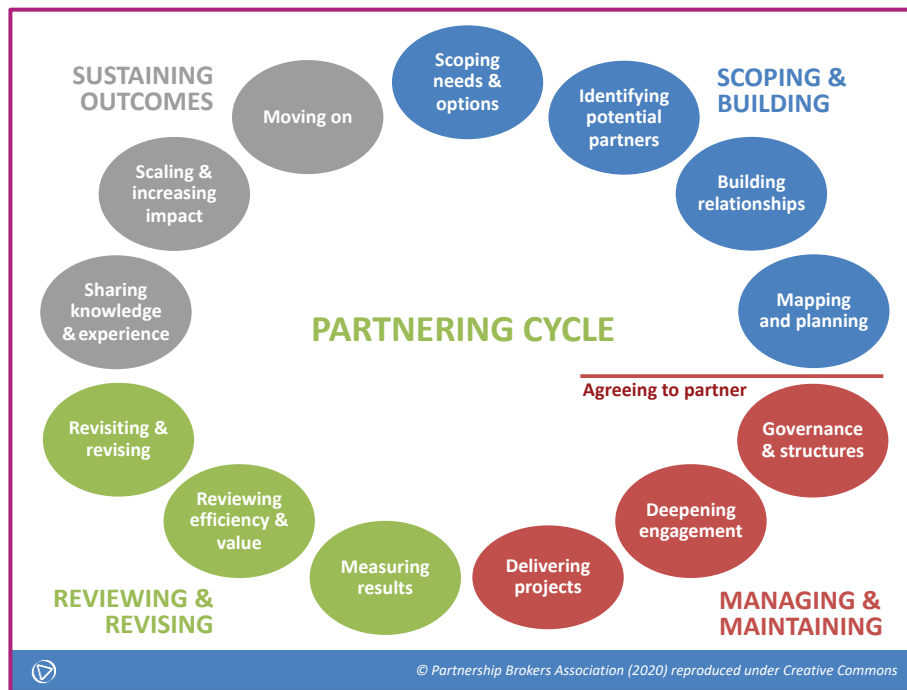


Figure 5: The Partnering Process Cycle

The Partnering Cycle considers four distinct phases of partnerships (though they don't always occur in a linear fashion): Scoping and Building, Managing and Maintaining, Reviewing and Revising and Sustaining Outcomes, with a series of sub-tasks involved in each stage. More often, we see focus put into building collaboration at the outset, and the adoption of a 'set and forget' approach: 'we have an MOU, it's all good from here'. It is a major misstep to think that once a consortium is brought together and an agreement signed, that the collaboration will then just occur automatically. The DECCMA and ASSAR teams for example, could not recall or find the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which was initially signed between partners, and this is not at all uncommon in the author's experience. Developing an MOU becomes part of the consortium 'tick box' of requirements for project funding, rather than something that is useful and helps guide partnerships.

Working in partnership is NOT business as usual, and most particularly not for research institutions, whose siloed, bureaucratic, opaque, competitive structures, resourcing and performance reward mechanisms can actively work against collaborations. It is well recognised amongst partnership brokers globally that research partnerships can be amongst the most challenging for non-research partners to navigate.

This partnering approach which is reflected in this cycle, is also highly suitable for emergent and adaptive (rather than linear) programs which evolve over time, supporting processes which allow for open discussion, iterative review and adaptation according to emerging realities. The partnering agreement, for example, which develops out of the building and scoping phase (or in the inception phase of CLARE), is not a legally binding document, but something that sits alongside the contracts and provides an evolving point of reference, guidance, reflection and intention to meet the changing needs of the partnership. This is an approach shared by other adaptive models of management and monitoring, such as those adopted by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) in their NGO partnerships, and in The Asia Foundation's 'Strategy Testing' approach to monitoring,

evaluation and learning in adaptive programs, which was developed as a result of its institutional partnership with DFAT<sup>11</sup>. Knowing that nothing is static, with CLARE’s intention to fund consortia on a rolling basis but up to five years, and based on experience of the predecessor programs which learned as they progressed, and with organisations and individuals that came and went, it is highly likely that CLARE will also benefit from an iterative, adaptive approach.

Being purposeful about the processes of collaboration can create an environment which allows people to deliver, instead of being side-tracked by tensions and inefficiencies. Attention to the process of collaboration takes place at every step of the 13-stage partnering cycle, and every partner plays a role in this, although they may require capacity strengthening to acquire or embed the skills to collaborate well, as these are not necessarily intuitive nor a pre-requisite for many researchers.

Ensuring the partnership processes are afforded sufficient attention, time and space is a key function for the Consortium Convenor (Coordinator), Principal Investigators (PIs) and Co-PIs, but also for the Program Officers of the fund manager to be aware of and provide support as needed. Some of the process activities which may be important at each stage are outlined in Figure 6 below and are addressed as appropriate in the study recommendations.

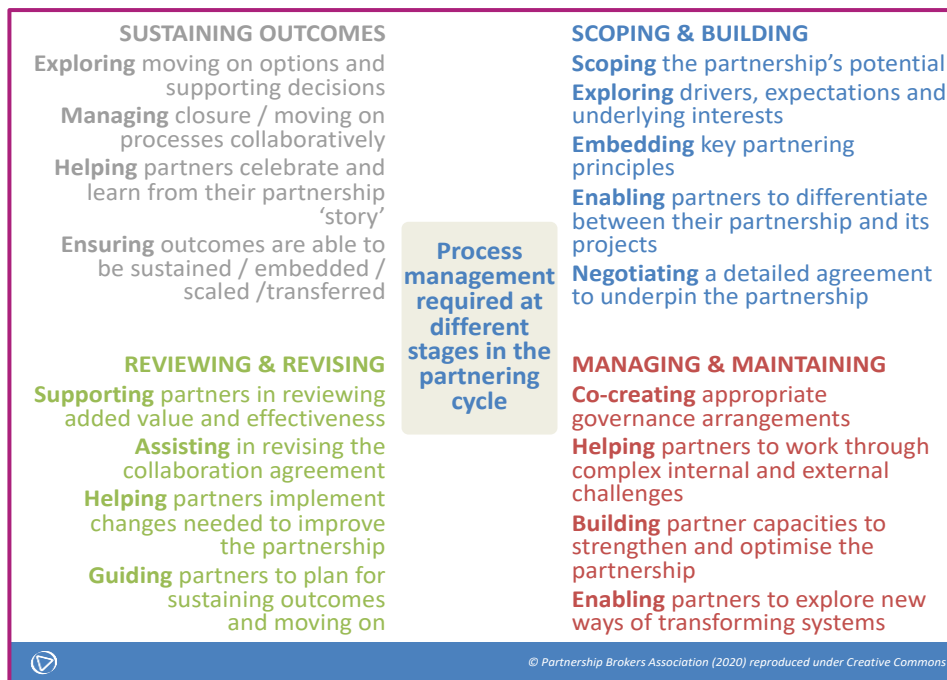


Figure 6: Process Management Activities required at different stages of the partnering process cycle

### 7.3 A principles-based approach to collaborating

In the Terms of Reference for this study, IDRC outlined as desirable, the ‘three attributes of partnership’ under CLARE to be, which are highly principles based:

1. Partnerships that further **equitable responsibility** in research design, work activities, research uptake and academic publication;
2. Opportunities to **demonstrate or enhance scientific and thought leadership from the Global South**; and

<sup>11</sup> Ladner (2015) Strategy Testing: An Innovative Approach to Monitoring Highly Flexible Aid Programs, Working Politically in Practice, Case Study No. 3, The Asia Foundation: San Francisco.

### 3. **Mutual accountability** among participants for progress, output and outcomes.

These are a very good start but perhaps don't go far enough, focussing as they do on the accountabilities but to a lesser extent of the shared value component or quality of the relationships. The desire for equity (including of and from the Global South) and accountability, as well as the challenges of genuinely achieving both, do come through as ongoing themes in the predecessor programs, and power imbalances which are a key cause of inequity, are a major contributor to this and are explored later in the report.

The GCRF Network Development Grants go much further in detailing a highly principled approach for its applicants:

*“Partnerships should be transparent and based on mutual respect. Partnerships should aim to have clearly articulated equitable distribution of resources, responsibilities, efforts and benefits. Partnerships should recognise different inputs, different interests and different desired outcomes and should ensure the ethical sharing and use of data which is responsive to the identified needs of society”<sup>12</sup>.*

What is notable and laudable about this statement is that it was co-developed with participants from the Global South in a workshop in East Africa, and has now become a guidance for applicants, although how or whether it is assessed in the selection process remains unclear.

The FCFA and WISER programs also explored the principles of successful co-production in some detail, as a result of their combined challenges and experience, developing the ‘Ten Principles for Good co-production’<sup>13</sup> which are applicable to both consortia and their approach to research. The programs have written extensively on it, and published a variety of helpful user guides, a clear indication of its perceived importance to program success. These principles are well detailed, based on project experience, and include elements such as:

#### *Building Trust:*

- *sustained collaboration to build trust and longer term relationships*
- *agreeing the most effective interaction styles*
- *shared understanding of the co-production process*

#### *Ensure Value Add for All Involved*

- *Value of engagement and time and effort spent needs to be demonstrated*
- *Need to co-identify value during project development*
- *Ensure that all benefit – to increase the odds of deep and continued engagement of actors and sustainability*

#### *Communicate in Accessible Ways*

- *Choose communication channels together*
- *Shared understanding of key terms to avoid misunderstanding*

#### *Support conscious facilitation*

- *Create a safe space*

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<sup>12</sup> GCRF Climate Resilience Network Development Scoping Call Specification page 5, included at Annex 3

<sup>13</sup> WISER and FCFA (2019) [Ten Principles for Good Co-Production](#) (WISER Knowledge Reference Number WISER0133) via [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk) and Carter et al (2019) [A Manual for Co-Production in African Weather and Climate Services](#). WISER/FCFA: Cape Town, pp 24-34.

- *Diffuse power dynamics and hierarchies to allow different knowledges and experiences to be equally heard*

*Embrace diversity and respect differences*

- *Inclusion of different people, sectors, disciplines and decision-making levels*
- *Effective communication amongst all partners that respects different values and knowledge systems*

They have also produced an excellent manual on co-production which will be a good resource for future programs seeking to learn from and build the strength and resilience of their collaboration (Carter et al, *ibid*). Like the BRACED model discussed earlier, the guidance focuses on the ‘what’ above the ‘how’ and building the skills for consortium members to be able to collaborate effectively will be key.

### 7.3.1 Common partnering principles seen in highly effective partnerships

While each partnership will rightly determine its own guiding principles, when we look at shared global experience of multi-stakeholder collaboration around the world<sup>14</sup>, there are five underlying key principles of effective partnering which have been developed (and continue to develop in light of emerging practice) out of some very common challenges which are observed across many multi-stakeholder partnerships, particularly but not exclusively, in the international development context<sup>15</sup>: Experience shows that where these principles, outlined in Figure 7, are purposefully integrated in partnerships, they will lead to improved outcomes for all partners, which in turn contribute significantly to effective implementation of programs.

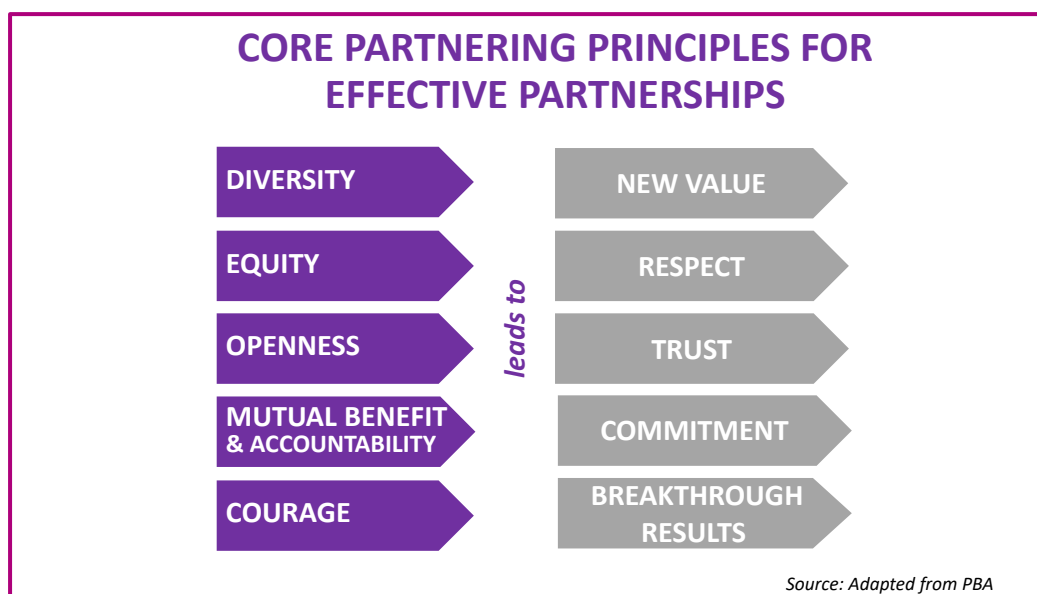


Figure 7: Core Partnering Principles for Effective Partnership

### 7.3.2 Partnering principles and implications for CLARE

***Equity is arguably one of the most critical and challenging principles for CLARE.***

<sup>14</sup> These principles have been developed from the collective global partnering experience of the 3600+ global alumni of the Partnership Brokers Training and 300+ accredited partnership brokers over the past 20 years.

<sup>15</sup> Tennyson (1998), Tennyson and Mundy (2019), and Partnership Brokers Association Associates Community of Practice (2016)

Equity does not mean equality, but rather a commitment to justice, fairness, even-handedness and to ensure everyone's voice is genuinely heard. For CLARE, this means that even 'small' partners (in-country as opposed to regional or contracted/implementing/field partners) have as much right to be heard and to contribute as bigger partners. It means that lead or convening partners, fund managers and donors will hold themselves to account as much as they hold their partners to account. And it means that all partners will each contribute from their areas of competence and strength, will respect each other's commitments, and importantly, will uphold any commitments they make. This is particularly important for the RiU partners in CLARE, as many reported feeling somehow 'lesser' than the research institutions in their consortia, though this usually lessened over time as their value-add became clearer. Governance procedures and decision making will also be equitable (which is not to say equal – consensus decision making rather than alignment-based models of decision making, can be useful sometimes but can also take enormous amounts of time and be very inefficient: consensus is not needed on all decisions though it may be important for some). An alignment approach to decision making considers who needs to be involved in which decisions (and this is agreed up front), and who needs to be kept informed, ensuring general alignment with the direction being taken.

Where genuine equity exists, partners are much more likely to value and respect each other's contributions, and this is the basis of genuine respect in partnerships. Inequity and dissension (expressed as conflict, distress or sometimes withdrawal) are the inevitable outcome of power imbalances in partnerships, which can be linked to organisational hierarchies, history, past experience, resources, competency and skills, first language, status, and even personality. In reviewing the 'dos and don'ts' of large scale, international health research consortia, El Ansari et al. (2007) discussed the potential pitfalls of language fluency in terms of cementing power imbalances:

*'Don't let members of English-speaking countries, or those who are proficient in English, dominate the research topics, activity and dissemination because of their language fluency. If the terminology, culture and views of good English speakers dominate, this defeats the objective of international collaboration.'*<sup>16</sup>

French and Raven (1959 and 1965) describe six different levels of power (adapted by New Zealand partnership broker, Trish Hall, below) and these can still be seen to play out in complex partnerships today and certainly across some of the predecessor programs, where considerable inequity played out in many forms: between Global North and South, between researchers and RiU partners, between consortium members and strategic or field partners, between Consortium Leads and PIs and Co-PIs and their organisations, and even between countries. Potential implications for CLARE are identified and discussed.

<b>Collaboration and Different Forms of Power</b>		<b>Potential Implications for CLARE</b>
<b>Legitimate Power/ Formal Authority</b>	Legitimate power belongs to a person who holds a position or a role within an organisation. An individual can exercise legitimate power when they carry out tasks with the authority their position gives them (e.g. formal chain of command). Partnerships need this authority at times. If people use this power inappropriately in partnerships the results will be constrained and	This needs to be exercised consciously and carefully by the fund managers/donors as well as the PIs, all of whom have the ability to intervene and influence both negatively and positively, partnership progress and dynamics, for example, how they are seen to interact and support or endorse less powerful members of a consortium, whether they ask questions first of Southern

<sup>16</sup> El Ansari W et al (2007) 'Nurses involvement in international research collaborations' in Nursing Standard Vol 21, No 26, pp 35-40

	others' commitment to the partnership could be minimised.	institutions, or early career researchers or only the PIs, whether they focus their attention on the research components rather than the RiU elements: all of this can greatly influence relationships in the partnership beyond that specific intervention.
<b>Reward Power</b>	Reward power is the ability to give rewards to individuals. Rewards in a partnership can be a public acknowledgement, or recognition, praise or asking for input on other initiatives.	In predecessor programs, and most programs managed by a lead partner, reward power usually sits with the PI (and to a lesser extent, the Co-PIs) and with the fund manager. This is another form of power which should be understood and exercised purposefully in order to build equity of voice and participation.
<b>Charismatic Power</b>	Charismatic power is based upon the engagement and appeal of individuals who inspire others. It depends on personal flair, but also on skills acquired through training and practice. People with charismatic power are respected for their competence as well as their personal characteristics regardless of their formal authority in the organisation. Partnerships need this sort of power to be used to build the collaborative team. This type of power can often occur regardless of hierarchies or position, where people are given a voice.	There is an opportunity to identify and tap into the informal charismatic power in consortia, based on astute and unegotistical leadership from the PI, and this is an excellent opportunity to build the confidence, engagement and influence of those in less-obvious formal positions, including young people, women and civil society.
<b>Expert Power</b>	Within organisations and partnerships, a person who has expert knowledge, ability, or skill can influence others. Expertise may be obtained through special training, experience, access to specialist information, exceptional abilities, or a general aura of competence. Partnerships need expert power that is exercised with generosity rather than control.	How CLARE leverages the expertise of RiU partners to ensure it is accepted, appreciated and understood by academic counterparts will be key to building equity, respect and trust in CLARE partnerships. As a research fund, administered by research units and fund managers, there is a tendency for academic approaches, language, protocols, rules and precedence to hold sway which automatically disadvantages non-academic partners, but more, may be an active barrier to innovation.
<b>Information Power</b>	Anyone who possesses information of any type desired by others has information power. Collaborators all exercise information power because	

	everyone brings their information about the initiative.	
<b>Connection Power</b>	The ability to network and build and maintain relationships is central to the success of partnerships. Everyone in a partnership will need to exercise and expand this power. Some people have super-connector abilities that will be invaluable to a partnership. Often referred to as the 'soft skills' of collaboration, these do not always come naturally and are in fact hard to acquire if it is not a person's natural state.	While it is important that anyone in leadership roles in partnership foster the ability to collaborate, build and maintain partnerships, and support others to do so, this will be a fundamental skill needed of Consortium Coordinators/Convenors, and should be actively recruited.

It is also important to understand that power can be both real (both exercised and withheld) and perceived, and both are important considerations in building effective partnerships. If programs are set up in a way to cement power imbalances and inequity, or partners feel voiceless or unable to participate fully even if this is not the intent, they may become disenfranchised and the most common symptom of this in partnerships is withdrawal: partners not doing what they said they would do, missing deadlines, avoiding phone calls, not speaking up or participating in meetings. It can take considerable skill, time and emotional intelligence on the part of consortium leaders and members to overcome this once embedded. Yet attention to process from the outset can minimise the risk of this occurring.

It is also important to note, in a time of COVID-19 and the expanding necessity of online communications, that power and equity may play out entirely differently in remote relationships than in face-to-face, exacerbating or shifting power dynamics. For example, are people more or less comfortable in an online environment? Is internet connectivity and technology sufficient to support access, both for meetings, but also for research projects requiring access to significant computer modelling resources? How is confidentiality respected? Whether to record, who records and who holds the recordings of those meetings? Whose time zones are prioritised when scheduling meetings? Is working in a second language more challenging and exhausting for people if they cannot see people's faces? Are participants with disabilities able to participate fully using appropriate technologies? This is an area which is rapidly evolving and will require careful thought as we see a transition to more online meetings. Anecdotal evidence and that borne out by a group of humanitarian organisations working together with the Partnership Brokers Association on building skills to support remote partnership brokering<sup>17</sup>, found that where technology access was comparable, remote partnering meetings, well facilitated, actually *built equity*, as it required a methodical approach to ensure that all voices were heard and taken into account, something which is often missing in face-to-face meetings where the most charismatic or confident or senior person is heard more frequently and before others.

Other major considerations of equity for CLARE, which commonly (and not unexpectedly) arose amongst many of the predecessor programs include:

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<sup>17</sup> Brokering Partnerships Remotely online program developed in conjunction with Partnership Brokers Association, PAX, The Partnerships Resource Centre, Action Against Hunger, British Red Cross, Humanitarian Leadership Academy, Care, Cordaid, IPPF, Oxfam and Save the Children <http://www.remotepartnering.org/>

- the North-South institution divide (where power, language, familiarity and resourcing all have a major impact, and where Southern institutions in some consortia reported that their voices were not given as much weight as those of their Northern partners);
- research vs non-research partner differences (and the assumed primacy of research partners) where partners reported feeling undervalued and unappreciated;
- gender considerations where women were sometimes under-represented in more senior, decision-making roles, and the specific societal challenges of women undertaking field research, was not adequately addressed;
- age, seniority and hierarchy, particularly where this impeded open discussion and contributions by younger, less experienced researchers; and
- intra-regional and even internecine politics within countries, which played out similarly to and perhaps more insidiously than some of the North-South politics.

For all of these factors, which can have huge, negative and long-lasting impact on partnerships and their projects, the single most important thing that can be done is, as a partnerships, to name, acknowledge and discuss the ramifications of the imbalances from the very outset (or as inequity becomes evident), and identify together what can be done to address these concerns, or to make informed and shared decisions where addressing them may cause more harm than good. Good and courageous leadership (be it from PIs, Coordinators, co-PIs, fund managers, donors, is vital in creating safe and supportive space for often very entrenched inequities to be discussed and may be more difficult when that leadership has a vested and sometimes opaque interest in maintaining an inequitable status quo. In this event, there may be a need for a neutral partnership broker, or skilled fund manager or Consortium Coordinator to facilitate what can be a difficult and challenging conversation between partners in a principled and highly transparent manner. This may require very skilled and experienced brokering depending on the issues involves.

**Openness** means that all partners, including IDRC and DFID, will be open and honest in their dealings with each other; will not intentionally withhold information, or cover up errors, and will make decisions based on discussion and openness in their dealings with partners. It is often typified as a ‘no unwelcome surprises’ approach. There is recognition that commercial-in-confidence issues may arise from time to time, but these will be identified and respected. Openness is a key ingredient to the development of respect and trust in partnerships, which in turns enables improved accountability and assists in risk mitigation. The development of trust (or the time it has taken to build it, or the lack of it) has been a key consideration for many of the predecessor programs, and this is exacerbated when some partners are working with organisations with which they may have a competitive history (for good reason) and suspect hidden agendas. In this event, the development of high quality, open person-to-person relationships in the consortium is critical, and this takes time and cannot be achieved through long meetings sitting at tables. Making provision in busy meeting schedules and often over-programmed ‘Write Weeks’ for team building, having fun, particularly undertaking joint field trips or field work together, and even scheduling open-space style meetings which allow the participants time to speak and get to know each other, sounds indulgent. Rather it is a necessity as it creates an environment where respectful relationships can flourish more quickly. A number of the predecessor programs commented that by the very end of the programs, they had developed a culture which felt like a family, but that this took many years and surviving many difficult times together to develop. Conversely, some sub-contract and civil society partners in CARIAA projects, for example, felt that they did not have access to nor understanding of the ‘full picture’ of the consortia work, and felt both excluded and undervalued as a result. It is also likely that they did not contribute to the extent possible due to feeling on the outside. CLARE consortia governance structures can play an important role in enhancing or undermining openness.



**Mutual Benefit (or value) and Mutual Accountability** recognises that different partners may be involved in projects for different reasons, in addition to helping to achieve the shared goal. It is important to be able to discuss and recognise each partner's individual drivers for being involved in the partnership and ensure that these are met through the course of the partnership and each partner derives genuine value. It is most important not to assume that everyone is involved for the same reason (particularly in cross-sectoral and diverse partnerships), nor that one partner's motivations are more valid than another's. In fact, for CLARE, where the intent is to extend the engagement of non-traditional partners, such as the private sector, government and civil society even further than its predecessor programs, understanding and meeting partners' drivers for involvement in CLARE (which may not be financial) will be the key factor to keeping them at the table. When mutual benefit exists, it is much more likely that, even in difficult situations, partners will continue to engage and work out solutions together: programs are more likely to achieve sustainability as a result.

Mutual accountability is the other aspect of this principle, which means that partners need to meet their mutual obligations and commitments to build the reciprocal engagement key to effective partnerships. This applies to ALL stakeholders, including fund managers and donors: just as grant recipients need to be accountable for their fund expenditure and reporting, donors should be asking how partners would expect them to be accountable in return – for example, some of the types of things often mentioned by grantees include: reading and responding to reports in a timely manner; releasing funds on time; keeping partners informed of upcoming changes in policies; providing early contextual political information which may impact on their program delivery; facilitating participation in international fora; ensuring they sign off on any external communications about them prior to release by the funder. Building these webs of accountability helps to build equity, respect, trust and commitment.

**Diversity** is a particularly critical principle in CLARE with its desire to capture the voices and knowledge of research users and Global South voices and expertise. It recognises that organisations and sectors may (and should) have different values, approaches, systems and experience, which they bring to the partnership, and that this diversity is a key potential value-add of partnerships. It is important that diversity is discussed and protected within partnerships, as this is one of the key reasons why different organisations come together in the first place – they bring something others do not, to help solve often complex problems which they cannot solve unilaterally. The key here is to ensure that while values, processes, systems, languages, culture, gender, age and priorities may be different, they cannot be in conflict, but should at least be aligned in order for a partnership to be successful. This is an area carefully explored during the development of a Ways of Working, but something which must be paid attention to throughout, as ignoring diversity is a key feature of imbalanced power in partnerships, where the more 'powerful' or influential partner may push their own agenda at the cost of inclusion of other voices. Diverse partnerships can often experience greater conflict than intra-sectoral ones, but when managed well and in a partnership culture (and with leadership) which genuinely respects diversity, this can be an exciting strength resulting in innovation and genuine transformation as partners challenge each other's assumptions.

**Courage** is possibly the least visible and tangible of the five principles but in novel partnerships in particular it is **fundamental to building innovative, effective and resilient partnerships**. This refers to both individual and organisational courage: to trust each other, to speak up if something is not working, or your needs are not being met, or if you have a problem; to hold others to account; to acknowledge fault; to address conflict rather than try and smooth it away (it WILL keep coming back until you do!); to try something new and different; to tackle inflexible organisational systems or unsupportive people in your own organisation which are impeding the partnership; and to share risk (an inevitable feature of collaboration but one that sits uncomfortably with many). It is quite something to watch a collaboration characterised by courage, and sometimes requires one person to

have the courage to speak up (often to voice the thing that everyone else in the room is thinking), before others will, but often this is the space of genuine breakthrough work. What is known, and is important for CLARE, is that for partnerships to be brave, *leadership matters* – authentic leaders, role modelling the behaviours the partnership seeks to achieve, can be game-changing.

When a genuine, principled partnership approach is adopted (and not just in a tokenistic or tick box manner) and is evidenced in the way all partners behave and work together, CLARE can anticipate that the possibilities for partnerships to become *transformative*, is enhanced.

Taking this a further step, many consortia will refer to their MOUs and say, ‘*we do have agreed principles! We agreed to work respectfully and equitably and to openly share our knowledge and learnings*’. However, the evidence can fall short of these statements. How to turn written principles into a lived experience is the challenge, and it is through attention to detail and to process that this can be best achieved. Embedding a principles-based approach to collaboration takes purposeful intention, consistency of approach and execution, and must be considered at every stage of the cycle. If we consider the 6P’s it means that the processes (partnership building, agreements, health checks), the people (relationships), the partners must all be working well together, guided by some shared principles, in order to achieve the purpose. It should be reflected in the commissioning processes (guidance and selection criteria) and at every stage thereon.

## 8. REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON COMMISSIONING MODELS

IDRC and DFID, along with the scoping study on capacity strengthening by Boulle et al. (2020) have identified that the systems which support programme implementation including from the outset in the commissioning models, have the ability to support or undermine good collaboration and need careful consideration in the design of CLARE particularly if equitable, accountable partnerships are to result.

The WISER program identified that genuine collaboration and co-production had impact throughout the project life-cycle, and this is certainly the experience elsewhere. WISER outlined a 5-step process<sup>18</sup>, as follows:

1. Identify actors and building partnerships
2. Co-explore need
3. Co-design solutions
4. Co-deliver solutions
5. Evaluate (I would amend this to: co-evaluate)

Of these, item 1 is often given scant attention, or just assumed, and this is problematic. ‘Identifying actors and building partnerships’, or the Scoping and Building stage of the partnership cycle, is a critical foundational first step in building strong partnerships, particularly for cross-sectoral, diverse collaborations and done purposefully can lead to truly transformational results. This presents a major opportunity for CLARE to positively influence this stage of the partnership building, in the way commissioning models and approaches can contribute to the creation of strong foundations for emerging CLARE consortia, but also adding value to those who are ultimately successful by increasing understanding of effective partnerships.

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<sup>18</sup> WISER Co-Production Guidance, p29

If we take the set of commissioning models involved in the establishment of the predecessor programs and their various calls for proposals (noting many programs had multiple calls, often for different purposes in addition to rolling calls), where consortia are involved, they tended to align (with some small variations) with fairly standard two or three staged processes. The ones run by the UK research funding organisations in particular mostly follow a standard 2-stage (concept-full proposal) model, while IDRC ran a 3-stage (concept-revised concept-full proposal) model for CARIAA. I have broken down the commissioning processes further to better analyse the points at which collaboration can be strengthened and consolidated.

Commissioning step	Fund Manager-led	Applicant-led
1. Calls for proposal including proposal guidance	x	
2. Partner identification and selection	x	x
3. Concept note development		x
4. Concept note selection	x	
5. Full proposal development		x
6. Final proposal selection	x	

In the following section on Commissioning models, reflections are shared from the study followed by recommendations/suggestions for consideration, based on the findings of the study and from the author's 20+ years of wider experience of complex cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder development and research partnerships. Where the recommendations are not self-evident, more detailed discussion is included. Recommendations have not been included twice where they apply to more than one step.

### 8.1 Commissioning step 1: Calls for proposals - guidance

Each of the eight programs, to a greater or lesser extent, indicated either in their call documentation or proposal guidelines, that programs are expected to be delivered in consortium with a range of partners. In some of the predecessor programs, reference is made in commissioning documents and call guidance to 'meaningful partnerships' (FCFA Regional Consortium grants), though without defining what this implies.

The WISER program, managed by the UK Met Office, learned that the process of developing co-produced proposals (not just the actual research) requires significantly more time and attention to engagement than usual. Short call periods do not allow consortia to form effectively nor to genuinely and equitably support good co-design. WISER also highlighted the need to ensure co-production is inclusive, collaborative and flexible. Importantly, they reflected that while knowledge of co-production and co-design is high amongst the science community, there is a lack of understanding about what is involved to actually achieve this. For this reason, it is worth considering how CLARE might provide more detailed and explicit guidance, not assuming that applicants understand inherently 'how to partner', but avoiding the pitfalls of becoming too prescriptive.

In reviewing the call documentation and guidance still currently available, references to partnership or collaboration were in evidence in most of the programs, but detail was scant:

Program	Collaboration/Partnership references in commissioning documentation/guidance
AgMIP	AgMIP Charter objectives describe it as an international partnership program; and 'an opportunity to collaborate with regional experts'.

CARIAA	Stipulates 3 to 5 member consortia and ‘regional/interregional partnerships’ are encouraged. Requires applicants to describe co-management model and capabilities. Sub-component of Effective criteria in proposal evaluation includes ‘overall cohesion and integration of the partnership model’ but no further description of what is meant by ‘partnership model’. Funds of up to CAD\$80,000 available to successful concept note consortia for development of full proposal, but no reference to partnership elements of this.
CIRCLE	N/A Individual fellowship program.
CCMCC	No longer available.
ESPA	Refers to ‘interdisciplinary’ partnerships.
FCFA	Refers to ‘meaningful’ and interdisciplinary international partnerships’ with African partners and a preference for African leadership. It allowed for gaps in partnerships at Outline stage, and funding of up to GBP20,000 specifically to support the development of interdisciplinary research-user partnerships with African leadership for successful outline stage applicants, for the development of full proposals.
SHEAR	‘Creation of meaningful partnerships’ as a criterion. Focus on ‘interdisciplinary working’ and reference to a ‘breadth and depth of consortium partners’ inclusion of African/Asian institutions; requires descriptions of collaborations.
WISER	No longer available.

Beyond these fairly token references, which can be widely interpreted, there is little guidance, and an assumption that everyone understands partnerships and consortium in the same way. However, we know that this is not the case and expectations vary widely, creating grounds for discontent as projects unfold. DFID and UKRI have gone some way to addressing this ambiguity in the recent GCRF Network Development Challenge Fund Call<sup>19</sup>, an opportunity which is designed to maximise the scope for the development of global leadership groups and networks, and which is much more explicit with respect to its expectations of collaboration, and as noted earlier, is highly principles-based:

*“Partnerships should be transparent and based on mutual respect<sup>20</sup>. Partnerships should aim to have clearly articulated equitable distribution of resources, responsibilities, efforts and benefits. Partnerships should recognise different inputs, different interests and different desired outcomes and should ensure the ethical sharing and use of data which is responsive to the identified needs of society.”* (UKRI statement developed in consultation with researchers from East Africa)

This type of clarity is very helpful for applicants and informs them from the outset of the program’s expectation of partnerships. What it does lack however is further guidance or explanation as to what is meant by these highly value-laden terms, which will not be received nor interpreted identically by all those reading it. What is understood by ‘meaningful’ for example? Meaningful for whom? Is there a universal understanding, which crosses funder-research-policy-practitioner-geographical boundaries of ‘ethical sharing of data’? Even the term transparency is highly contentious in different realms, especially where government or private sector partners are involved. In cross-sectoral partnerships in particular, such as those envisaged under CLARE, it is important not to assume that everyone understands such terms in the same way. For example, it is very common that many partners understand equity to mean equality (e.g. of decision making, of funding, or visibility) and this is a vastly different concept, which can create different expectations giving rise to considerable misunderstanding and ill feeling in partnerships. Equality is often misunderstood as a pre-condition for partnerships, however each partner does not play an equal role, but rather leads and contributes from its respective strengths, and each partner must have a voice to be heard, respected and their views and needs taken into account: this is what we would consider equity.

<sup>19</sup> <https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/funding-opportunities/ukri-gcrf-collective-programme-climate-resilience-network-development-call/>

<sup>20</sup> To this, I would suggest adding ‘... and mutual accountability’.

If we consider the ‘perspectives’ overlay of partnerships, it is relatively simple for a lead partner to tick the UKRI partnership statement off in its head when developing a concept note, yet if a Southern partner on the same proposal was to be asked, they may not feel at all able to respond in the affirmative, purely due to the power dynamics at play. Might it be possible to have consortium with genuinely joint-lead agencies: one from the South with one from the North, as is the case with many IDRC-supported partnerships, or over time, sole leadership migrating to the Southern institution as their capacity was strengthened (with specific, measurable budgets and milestones towards that capability development built in to the funding arrangements)? One research institution and one RiU organisation? How might this work practically?

It is strongly suggested therefore that at the guidance stage, information is provided to further flesh out and clarify expectations of the types of partnerships CLARE aims to encourage, and perhaps links to case studies or papers of consortium learning from the predecessor programs. This will then need to be consistently reflected throughout the commissioning processes, including in the evaluation criteria and selection processes. An example of this can be seen at DFAT’s Business Partnership Platform, where ‘partnership’ is one of the five key selection criteria, and the application and selection guidance which outlines the program’s understanding and expectations of partnerships<sup>21</sup>.

It would also be very helpful to provide clearer expectations on the nature of engagement of Southern partners and of non-research partners, given that CLARE is expecting that buy in from cross-sectoral and non-traditional partners will be a key means by which climate challenges will be tackled. What will be these organisations’ role in consortium leadership, and what provision will be made for capacity strengthening expectations and opportunities up front?

It may also be helpful for CLARE to clarify at the guidance stage any additional (‘non-negotiable’ as long as they genuinely are that) requirements which can be contentious in consortia (for example expectations around open source data, definitions of co-authorship), just as it does with ethical research standards in call documentation. It should be suggested that these are thoroughly discussed and explored between consortium members, rather than just assumed as given. The opportunity for misunderstandings when working in diverse partnerships is far more than when the partners come from the same sector (e.g. research). In some of the interviews with respondents from the Global North, there was an immediate assumption that everyone would comply with ‘Vancouver protocols’ for example, but without any consideration of the fact that this protocol and other authorship issues may be meaningless, or even problematic, to community or research user groups, and even cause challenges for Southern researchers. These need to be explained, justified, discussed, understood and resolved. If there is disagreement on approaches which have not been set down by the funder, whose opinion is paramount or correct?

Many of the predecessor programs have indicated preferred sizes of consortia at the call for proposal stage. However, in interviews with Program Coordinators and Principal Investigators, many found this restrictive and artificial. Provide guidelines but avoid predetermining the optimal size of consortium membership – consortia should be fit for purpose for what they are aiming to achieve, and this should be determined by the consortia itself, with reasonable justification. This may involve very small collaborations or more extensive ones where strategic partners also have a seat at the consortia table. Being too prescriptive means that consortia are made to fit the guidelines rather than fit the problem they are trying to address.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://thebpp.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/BPP-Guidelines-for-Applicants-Round-3.pdf>

Having said that, both the author and a number of interview respondents and reports from FCFA and CARIIA commented on how unwieldy the very large interregional projects were in terms of management and quality of engagement<sup>22</sup>. This was particularly challenging in the final year, when project synthesis and write weeks presented major technical challenges in drawing conclusions. However, from a management perspective also, it presented major challenges. Are programs really benefiting to the extent possible from consortia which are so large and unwieldy that strong and consistent relationships are unable to be formed – merely from the tyrannies of distance, time and geography?

While inter-regional partnerships should remain an option, and some clearly generate considerable value-add, might an option be for the Fund Manager to consciously link smaller consortia working on aligned problems together, build communities of practice across the projects in response to expressed or perceived need, and facilitate that higher-level collaboration at different points during the program? This approach would need to be reflected in project design and budgets and allow each consortium to build its own identity and more manageable structures, and then bring them together for a structured annual learning and exchange forum, responsibility for which could be rotated, and further linkages built by quarterly joint meetings between each consortium's PIs and Coordinators. Where partners are proposing large consortia, justification should be provided for why (i.e. what will the value-add be) and how they will effectively manage the collaboration, and additional resources/staffing may be required for each consortium's management and coordination.

This smaller but more focussed approach may become much more pressing as partnerships diversify under the CLARE portfolio, which in turn will require much more attention in terms of building understanding and synergies between partners. It is not unusual in cross-sectoral partnerships, as was also noted in CARIIA and FCFA, to report that it can take up to a year or longer for partners to build understanding of each other, even down to terminology, jargon and language, and without attention to the building of knowledge of each other in a new partnership, considerable misunderstanding and slow implementation can occur. So, in this case, smaller, higher quality partnerships may be better, at least initially. By intentionality from the outset of the partnering process, through the development of a Ways of Working, which helps build understanding and communication between key stakeholders, each of the partners become more alert to the needs and value of attending to the partnership itself in order to support the project.

Some of the predecessor programs have also been large, not so much in terms of consortium membership, but more with many, very part-time, people involved which has presented considerable challenges for partnership and for trust-building and coordination. Consortium Coordinators and PIs in particular reported this as a challenge. Larger groups involve very extensive transaction costs: time, resourcing, leadership, coordination and attention to be able to achieve genuine individual engagement and commitment and may distract rather than add to the eventual research outputs. This is particularly so where strong personalities float in and out, distracting and diverting (though sometimes such disruption is also the source of innovation, so it is a balancing act!). How these large numbers are managed without causing additional burden in the consortia, given the focus and obvious value and opportunities for engaging and building junior researchers/students, is a question for each consortium to consider.

Another challenge identified which could be addressed best from the outset in call guidelines, to avoid conflict in partnerships, is that of ballooning numbers of individuals in consortium who may come and go in short cycles, or only contribute 10-20% of their time to the project. Project Coordinators and

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<sup>22</sup> Refer Sconadibbio, L (2020) Are Large Scale Collaborations Worth it? Lessons From a Climate Adaptation Project. ASSAR DRAFT working paper (unpublished).

Principal Investigators described this as a major challenge in building and maintaining relationships for all partners. It is equally worth stipulating expected minimum % FTE for the leading roles of Consortium Coordinators, PIs and Co-PIs. otherwise provide an indication of how the many masters and doctoral students may come and go, will be integrated or otherwise into the partnership – encourage people to think carefully about the management and dynamics of such expansive groups.

With more challenging and diverse groups, stronger management, collaboration and facilitation skills, and leadership will be required to support good collaboration. The call guidance could indicate as such, valuing these skills and ensuring that applicants understand the importance of consortium (not just research) leadership and management as integral to the program and indicating CLARE’s support for capacity strengthening of these skills across the consortium as part of any proposal (for more on this refer to Section 9.2 on Managing and maintaining).

In such a large program as CLARE, it was suggested by two interviewees that consideration is provided to the range and scope of calls for proposals: how will the program achieve the balance of providing open opportunities for new and interesting ideas to emerge (and risking receiving large numbers of inappropriate applications which waste applicant, funders and reviewers time) versus being so prescriptive that there is not enough room for applicants to innovate, and this is particularly so for the non-research partners. Does CLARE for example envisage potential consortia led by non-research institutions?

Finally, given the desire for CLARE to reach beyond research institutions, take the time to test any call guidance and application processes on past and potential applicants (e.g. from the private sector, NGOs, RiU groups, Global South), to see if it makes sense and provides clarity to a wider audience: does it pass the jargon test?

<b>Commissioning Recommendations - Step 1: Calls for proposals</b>	
<b>For funders:</b>	1.1 Make more explicit in each and every call, expectations pertaining to partnerships, particularly around the principles and <i>quality</i> of involvement of Southern Institutions and Research-into-Use and other diverse types of partnerships.
	1.2 Provide guidance and examples of what types of partnerships might be expected in applications, without being prescriptive.
	1.3 Provide links to some short case studies or examples of how other successful diverse consortia have managed their partnerships, and links to the lessons learned papers on collaboration emerging from predecessor program (e.g. CARIAA and FCFA).
	1.4 Consider establishing upfront some CLARE-wide standards/expectations and guidance around areas of known tension in diverse partnerships, recognising that different standards exist in different sectors and countries. Encourage applicants to discuss and work through to achieve alignment on these standards or identify any issues up front.
	1.5 Avoid predetermining the size of consortium membership – consortia should be fit for purpose for what they are aiming to achieve and be able to argue the case for what is their optimal size.
	1.6 Consider indicating a minimum expectation of amount of time (suggest 30%) per FTE (or other substantive) participation for consortium membership and be very clear that the minimum amount of time allocated will be expected to be upheld (and why).

	1.7 Outline the importance of consortium leadership and management in supporting diverse partnerships and provide for capacity strengthening budgets and activities in this area in proposals.
	1.8 In such a large program as CLARE, consider the range and scope of calls for proposals – how to achieve the balance of providing open opportunities for new and interesting ideas to emerge (and risking receiving large numbers of inappropriate applications which waste applicant, funders and reviewers time) versus being so prescriptive that there is not enough room for applicants to innovate.
	1.9 Where feasible, test the draft call guidance on relevant parties (which may include predecessor programs who will not be eligible for CLARE e.g. in different geographies), particularly outside the research community, to see if it makes sense.

## 8.2 Commissioning step 2: Partner identification and selection

With very few exceptions, predecessor programs generally expected that consortia membership would be fully formed at the concept note stage (and would remain static for the remainder of the project), yet this is inherently problematic for a number of reasons:

- Often the time between a call for concept notes and submission is relatively short, in some cases 4-6 weeks. And while the content of the concept notes is relatively high level, there is an expectation that consortium partners will at the least be identified and sometimes named, though written organisational commitments are not required at the concept note stage. This short time frame means that many consortia lead agencies report they are rushed to choose and commit to partners with whom they have previously worked with, or others which may have approached them, without the time to do sufficient partnership due diligence and relationship building or even to take the time to investigate and approach entirely new partners which may be missed in the pressure to pull together a consortium in a short amount of time. Identifying and building new partnerships, especially diverse or ‘novel’ partnerships, from different types of organisations, takes time and attention, and the short concept note stage can work actively against this. Mitigating this to an extent, is the fact that calls are often flagged or communicated informally some weeks or months in advance of the formal announced to submit concept notes, but without enough clarity about what will be expected that it still makes consortium building challenging. It is also likely that it will be the ‘usual players’ in the Global North and some of the larger institutions from the Global South, who are alerted to and aware of these opportunities coming up, and will already be positioning and forming their consortia well in advance of such calls, which again will mean it is less likely to attract newer players in meaningful ways without some careful consideration.
- Equally, rushed commitments at this stage can mean that as the co-design of the project develops, it is very difficult to divest of partners who may not in the end be the best suited for the consortia, as each partner may already be heavily invested in the developing design. This challenge of allowing space for consortium to form was recognised by FCFA, which in its Announcement of Opportunity for Regional Consortium Grants in 2014, allowed for Outline applications (i.e. concept notes) to have identified gaps in consortium teams, as long as they indicated a clear strategy supporting how partnerships would be formed. Funding of up to GBP20,000 was provided to successful applicants at the outline stage specifically to facilitate the development of interdisciplinary partnerships with African leadership.



This is similar to the aforementioned Global Challenge Research Fund (GCRF)/ Network Development Scoping Grants<sup>23</sup> of up to GBP200,000 and 15 months, which are currently available and intended to ‘support the building of new researcher-practitioner-policy maker teams to search for novel solutions to complex climate risks’. Those who receive grants then have the opportunity to apply for a follow-on grant for larger Climate Resilience Network Plus grants to co-design the solutions. This approach is strongly endorsed by this study, though perhaps with providing some further guidance and suggestions (not prescriptions) for the types of activities ‘the building of new teams’ might entail, to encourage innovation in this space, particularly for deeper thinking on the building of novel and diverse partnerships, for example:

- providing purposeful opportunities for potential partnerships to form and build;
- making explicit the expectation of the types of principles-based (e.g. equitable, accountable, shared value, diverse) partnerships expected to be developed and providing guidance on these;
- encouraging a focus on getting to know each other’s organisational and individual drivers, motivations, constraints and ambitions;
- Focus on building an understanding of the value and strength which each partner derives and brings to the consortia, which is even more important when diverse cross-sectoral partners are involved. For example, how do the research members perceive and relate to the RiU, private sector or NGO partners in order to create equity and address potential and perceived power imbalances?

How this process is conducted can start to establish and identify the principles of engagement for the consortium from the outset, where power imbalances exist (size, reputation, experience, resourcing, capability, global and regional historical tensions, academic vs non-academic sector, etc.). Consider providing neutral facilitation/partnership brokering to facilitate this process if needed, for example, Accredited Partnership Brokers through the Partnership Brokers Association (the independent professional association of partnership brokers), who are required to abide by a code of conduct to uphold principle-based partnerships and to act in the interests of the overall partnership rather than any one particular partner, or those trained by The Partnering Initiative. Both not for profit organisations have a strong global presence.

As mentioned in the call guidance recommendations, consortia need to be free to design and optimise the size and structure of their consortium, given what they are setting out to achieve. While large consortia can and have proven to be unwieldy in terms of transaction costs and require attentive and purposeful management to extract maximum value, equally, constraining the numbers can mean that partners who should ideally be sitting at the table from the outset, end up forced by the fund call into sub-contracting and implementing roles, and there is a reported perception amongst these partners that they are ‘second class’ when compared to consortium membership partners<sup>24</sup>.

Many of the consortia from the predecessor programs were formed of existing organisations who had experience of working with each other or were in some ways known to one or more members of the consortia. However, selection of partners is most usually done (and was so in these programs) on a relatively informal basis, without due consideration of whether they would in fact be the right fit. There is a comfort and ease in working with known friends, but also a risk: partnerships may become stale and reinforce the existing status quo, shying away from what is new and challenging. In the case of CLARE, the intention to engage consortia working across civil society, government or the private sector and other RiU organisations will entail occasional discomfort. Even with partners who are thought to be known, rarely do partnerships undertake the type of due-diligence exploration which can avoid major conflict arising as collaborations proceed. While financial viability may be considered,

<sup>23</sup> <https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/funding-opportunities/ukri-gcrf-collective-programme-climate-resilience-network-development-call/>

<sup>24</sup> HI-AWARE, ASSAR, FCFA among those analysed.

the diagram below talks to some of the equally (if not more) important factors which partners are encouraged to explore with each other when considering whether they genuinely wish to engage with other organisations in partnership.



Figure 8: Partner identification and due diligence

Another consideration of working with existing effective partnerships of key stakeholders which may have been formed during the predecessor programs is that while they already have experience of working together, there may be peer pressure for all partners to continue forward despite knowledge that some partners have not contributed fully or have not benefited enough, or despite the new research question not perhaps fitting the partner. This was the experience of HI-AWARE which discussed this matter in some detail as part of their post-project funding partnership agreement which dealt with a number of legacy issues. Where existing partners do choose to continue on to new projects, continuing consortia may have deeply entrenched power dynamics which may be further cemented, or alternatively may have good levels of existing trust which means they are able to start up very rapidly. Another consideration with existing partnerships is that they may not be as open to new and innovative partners joining ‘the club’ and can become quite comfortable in themselves. Where new partners are brought into an existing consortium (high functioning or not), their entry and induction need to be considered to ensure that they are not forever considered and treated as the ‘new partners’ – a very common issue. These scenarios could all benefit from partnerships brokering to help resolve any outstanding tensions or to help induct and build the re-formed partnership.

An option to consider is whether there is an appetite in the fund manager playing an active role in helping to bring together potential new partnerships, in order to help challenge the status quo and foster new types of partnerships or whether this should be left entirely to the market. There may be a role for CLARE partnership regional scoping and marketplace (or ‘matchmaking’) events hosted by the fund manager, perhaps as part of a CLARE launch program. In the past, some of the UKRI programs have utilised research ‘sandpits’<sup>25</sup> – carefully structured and curated events, with participation either open or by invitation, whereby representatives brainstorm together to develop linkages and research opportunities – sometimes described as matchmaking. A number of interviewees commented on how competitive this process can become, with academics unwilling to share their ideas for fear their intellectual property may be taken by others in advance of the call; and with other more established participants not attending for a similar reason but instead opting to apply to the call without

<sup>25</sup> <https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/routes/network/ideas/whatisasandpit/>

participating in the sandpit process at all. DFID reported an instance of one research call where not one group whose ideas and consortium had developed from a sandpit were ultimately successful in winning funding. Competition is at the opposite end of the spectrum to collaboration and developing a process which does not exacerbate inherent competitiveness will be key.

There are alternatives, however, and such events could be facilitated in a much more light touch manner than a traditional sandpit using something like Open Space<sup>26</sup> technology, which tends to be more interest and participant driven ('i.e. the theory of two feet') than competitive; the focus here would be on finding aligned organisations and exploring shared interests, rather than revealing deep technical knowledge and ideas. Consideration would need to be given to making participation a pre-requisite for eventual proposal applications to avoid more established organisations from by-passing the process (and thereby undervaluing the process from the outset). Another model could be participant-led, regional CLARE 'unConferences' which have a premise that the building of strong relationships first and foremost will provide a strong basis for project delivery. There is good evidence that unConferences can foster collaboration and learning in a way traditional meetings do not<sup>27</sup>. Participation could be by open invitation to help uncover unlikely organisations who self-select, or be more heavily curated and by invitation only after initial application, interest and vetting by IDRC and DFID. Consideration would need to be provided to funding participation if travel is to be involved in order to ensure less well-resourced organisations are not precluded.

In a post-COVID-19 environment, careful thought could also be provided to creatively facilitating initial scoping meetings via online platforms as a substitute for face-to-face meetings, which may prove difficult or even impossible for some time. This may require providing additional time to respond to calls, and co-work on proposals, support for technical platforms, providing training, hosting, access to facilities to support online meetings and providing guidance on how these can be facilitated and enhanced to also build partnerships while at the same time developing proposals. There will need to be conscious recognition of the challenges (and opportunities) of building remote partnerships and this may have some impact on the scale and breadth of consortia in the immediate future: how realistic is inter and intraregional collaboration when travel is heavily restricted and not possible? Will this mean focussing in on country-specific proposals in the first iteration, with the fund manager playing a highly active facilitative role alongside Knowledge Brokers in drawing linkages across consortia?

While definitely not ideal in terms of establishing new relationships, for example, something like BarCamp, which built from the Open Space approach, is a widely used and open-source technology from the IT sector but adapted by many other sectors subsequently, could be considered to help facilitate this process. There are many other emerging platforms which are really engaging with how to build collaboration remotely (beyond Zoom!), such as Stormboard, Mural and Miro. A good role for the fund manager would be to learn about and invest in different platforms and to provide capacity building in how to run meetings and build relationships remotely, and there are a number of online and other courses which specifically focus on this type of skill development<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Owen, H (2008) Open Space Technology: A User's Guide, Third Edition, but essentially first explored by scientist, Alexander Humboldt, in 1828, when he convened a large meeting of scientists in Berlin where his focus was on building a programme and connecting scientists to each other on a more personal level, rather than more conventionally just sit and listen to paper presentations, believing that this was the way that knowledge would be created and shared across disciplines. Andrea Wulf (2016) The Invention of Nature: the Adventures of Alexander von Humbolt, the Lost Hero of Science; Hachette: Australia

<sup>27</sup> Budd et al (29 Jan 2015) *Ten Simple Rules for Organising an Unconference* in PLOS Computational Biology Journal accessed via ncbi.nlm.nih.gov on 7 May 2020

<sup>28</sup> Consider: reospartners.org (Adam Kahane) and remotepartnering.org Brokering Partnerships Remotely

<b>Commissioning Recommendations - Step 2: Partner identification and selection</b>	
<b>For funders</b>	2.1 Provide a longer lead time between announcement of calls and for the submission of concept notes, to allow adequate time for consortia to explore new partnerships and form.
	2.2 Provide flexibility in the proposal requirements to allow applications with 'gaps' in their identified partnership, to provide space for partnerships to 'breathe' and evolve as the proposal development process unfolds, and for consortia to argue the case for the optimal size and structure of their partnership to achieve their outcomes.
	2.3 Once consortia are formed, avoid suggesting or requiring changes to consortia membership, or only do so in open discussion with all consortium members to think through the potential risks and unintended consequences of such decisions on the partnership.
	2.4 Expand the Network Development Grant call approach of UKRI/GCRF, providing purposeful opportunities for potential partnerships to form and build, making explicit the expectation of the types of principle based (eg equitable, accountable, shared value, diverse) partnerships expected to be developed, and providing guidance on these.
	2.5 Consider the implications for partner selection and building in a post-COVID-19 environment where this limits opportunities for face-to-face engagement, and look at providing support, training, facilitation and infrastructure if needed to support this being done remotely, but with innovation and creative focus not just on agendas but also on team building.
	2.6 Prior to calls for proposals, consider a (potentially) rolling series of CLARE regional partnership scoping or marketplace events to introduce novel and interested partners to discover potential alignment and common interests, which could be run using something like Open Space or unConference platforms.
<b>For applicants</b>	2.7 Encourage all partners to undertake partnership due-diligence on their fellow proposed consortia members (even those they have collaborated with previously), prior to fully committing, and provide some guidance to support this.
<b>For funders and applicants</b>	2.8 Consider the opportunity to build on pre-existing consortia from GCRF Grants and predecessor programs, but encourage transparency around known management or consortium challenges, and should they be shortlisted, provide partnership support via an independent partnership broker to help them identify and work through residual or embedded/inherited issues which may impact on their effectiveness going forward.

### 8.3 Commissioning step 3: Concept note development

<b>Commissioning Recommendations - Step 3: Concept note development</b>	
<b>For funders</b>	3.1 At concept note stage, ensure some flexibility is left for consortium members to either exit or enter at later stages. For example, ESPA provided for applications to have some gaps in consortium members, and instead include a strategy for bringing these on board at a later stage.

	3.2 To help build equity, consider and provide guidance on who the concept note should be developed by. Ensure at least one Southern organisation and one Research-into-Use partner should be substantively and demonstrably involved in leading the development and co-authorship of the concept note.
	3.3 Consider the option of having complementary co-lead agencies (e.g. North-South; research-Research-into-Use) with specific and defined roles and shared decision-making as a way to further build mutuality, reduce inequity and support capacity development of less established partners.

#### 8.4 Commissioning step 4: Concept note selection

Being clear to both applicants and assessors about the criteria and time frame for selection of concept notes is critical and the concise formats required at this stage seem very reasonable. In the CARIIAA program, a third stage provided the opportunity for questions to be raised by the selection committee, and for applicants to have a chance to revise their concept notes based on these questions<sup>29</sup>. It is good where possible to try and streamline the amount of work involved in resubmission at this stage, and to consider whether a stand-alone response to questions raised by assessors might be sufficient. Given that many applicants at this stage will not progress to develop full proposals, consider the burden of unnecessary bureaucracy, particularly on Southern or smaller partners. Think about providing guidance to assessors and ensuring the fund manager is also assessing not just the technical content but gaining a sense of the partnership as well. It was not clear if feedback is provided to unsuccessful applicants at the concept note stage but in a program seeking to ensure mutual value and equity, it would be ideal to provide a publicly available commentary, such as an after-action review, with non-identifiable, generalised observations about the applicants (general strengths and weaknesses) both so the fund manager could learn how to improve the next call, but also particularly so that future applicants can be better informed about what CLARE is looking for.

<b>Commissioning Recommendations - Step 4: Concept note selection</b>	
<b>For funders:</b>	4.1 Try to ensure that processes are streamlined and bureaucracy is minimised to the extent possible, considering the impact from the perspective of applicants.
	4.2 Provide guidance to assessors on how to consider the consortium aspects of the application, by detailing the criteria for selection of quality partnerships, in addition to the technical content or ensure assessors include specific expertise on partnering.
	4.3 Provide useful feedback to unsuccessful applicants to help them improve the quality of future applications.

#### 8.5 Commissioning step 5: Full proposal development

Funds have been provided under predecessor and other DFID programs for those successful at the concept note stage to have a period of time to further develop their proposal and this is enormously appreciated and valued by all. It is often the time when partners get the first quality opportunity to really sit down and work through the project and their ideas together, and particularly for new partners, it is a key time for them to explore and develop relationships with other partners. The amount of funds provided range from GBP60,000 to GBP200,000 and cover time periods of 2 to 15

<sup>29</sup> Leone M (2014) CARIIAA Project Proposals Development Grants: Holding Tank. Project Completion Report IDRC

months (the GBP200,000, 15-month timeframe is slightly different as it applies to the UKRI/GCRF Network Development grants already mentioned, but in essence it is for the same purpose of proposal and consortium development). Partners interviewed for CARIAA felt that the two-month time period was too short to develop the full proposal and did not recognise the pre-existing commitments of many individuals. This was also the findings of the analysis of the CARIAA development grants undertaken by IDRC (Leone, 2014).

It is strongly suggested that funding for the full proposal development stage continues to be provided for those who are successful at concept note stage, but it could be further strengthened by ensuring sufficient time is provided explicitly for proposal *and* partnership development. This could include, for example:

- Clear thinking and explanation about the roles and responsibilities for each partner in the consortium
- Identification of the value add for and contributions of each partner
- Explanation of specific leadership roles relating to the management of the project, and how equity will be built between North/South; research/RiU; cross-cultural and interregional considerations etc.
- An outline of how the consortium plans to ‘build’ its collaboration and team and strengthen the capacity of all partners to engage
- Development of a partnership risk matrix, identifying the potential challenges of their consortium, particularly and how they plan to address these. Working through this collaboratively during write weeks, and with some guidance, can be a very powerful partnership building tool, and encourages open conversations and trust building at an early stage<sup>30</sup>.

Consider the impost on researchers and institutions, and ‘application fatigue’ implications of developing an extensive full proposal given an expected 50% success rate, on the unsuccessful parties given the extent of documentation required. What areas could be realistically reduced without reducing the quality and information provided? Consider ‘need to know’ versus ‘nice to know’ (i.e. funding decisions are based on the consortium and idea quality, and based on extensive organisational due diligence conducted by the funder, with or without stop/go points).

It is important for funders to try and think through the implications of their requests and changes in requirements or decisions after the call guidelines are established, in terms of its impact on applicants/consortia, and to demonstrate respect for the applicants’ time (also applies to inception stage) which will entail significant rework given the detail required in the proposals and commitments already made. For example, in CARIAA projects were required to re-budget and redesign when a decision to bring a fourth consortium was introduced at a later stage. Fund managers themselves need to aspire to be role models for the type of partnerships they wish to foster: if they wish partnerships to move away from hierarchy and status differential, and to promote equity, trust and respect, they need to lead by example in understanding the impact of their decisions and behaviours from their partners’ perspectives. Where changes are required (as will inevitably be the case), this should be done openly with partners and reasons clearly explained, concerns heard, and a way found through together wherever possible.

Retain some flexibility and openness in the design to allow for ‘breathing’ or movement of partners, in and out as the partnership progresses. The expectation that full proposals deliver fully fleshed out

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<sup>30</sup> Mundy, J (2006) *Risky Business: Removing Barriers to Effective Partnerships for Development*. Café conversations: A compendium of essays on the practise and theory of brokering multi-sectoral partnerships for sustainable development, ODI/IBLF, UK.

five-year budgets listing each activity by line item does not support an adaptive management approach and also creates expectations of ongoing funding for each partner organisation no matter what. It is also a very big ask for those applications which are eventually unsuccessful and has led to 'application fatigue'. Consider an approach such as 1-2 years detail at partner level, 3 years indicative at project level, revised annually (a model used increasingly in adaptive programs by DFAT<sup>31</sup>, for example in the South Asia climate change program, the Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio (SDIP), portfolio partners were provided with 3-4 year indicative funding envelopes of an anticipated eight year program, and within that developed detailed annual budgets and workplans, with indicative budgets for the remaining years, which allowed them to respond to emergent knowledge and evidence). This approach can avoid cementing partners or creating expectations of guaranteed funding regardless of performance or contribution. Note that in CARIIA, many budget lines were revised and IDRC was quite flexible, but perhaps this involved more work than necessary due to budgets being so predetermined to the smallest activity level.

Consider providing some capacity building training and opportunities for all those invited to submit full proposals, so that even those who are eventually unsuccessful will derive value from the process, particularly given the extent of effort required. Ideally, providing training in effective partnerships and a discussion of some of the common challenges and solutions could be very helpful as people are thinking through the development of their consortia, and this could be provided online as self-paced modules or preferably live, with access to advisory support if done remotely, in-country or through advisory support per consortium. This may also be a role for the fund manager's team where their own partnership expertise is built over time.

Encourage consortia to think through and provide for activities related to partnership and trust building, as part of their project design, including time and provision for the development of Ways of Working, partnership health checks, capacity building, team building exercises, joint field trips, celebrations, etc. which could be built into their inception planning, retreats and write-weeks. Informal opportunities such as these, which foster engagement outside of formal meetings go a very long way to building sound relationships which can weather real challenges.

Where cross-consortia collaboration and learning is an expectation of the fund manager, ensure that this is known in advance and provided for in the proposal design, budgeting and people's time commitments, not just layered as an expectation to be managed in addition to the consortia's business. Higher level cross consortium learning was raised by all project representatives as both a real benefit of the predecessor programs, but also a genuine impost on top of their existing workloads, specifically because it had not been planned for.

As for concept notes, but more particularly so, ensure that feedback is provided to all unsuccessful full proposal applicants and consider how they may have benefited from the process, and how they might still be able to engage in the learning or sharing of information being generated by CLARE. How might they become part of the CLARE network, even without funding? Some of the unsuccessful consortium applicants to CARIIA for example, went on to receive funding from other instruments.

<b>Commissioning Recommendations - Step 5: Full proposal development</b>	
<b>For the funder and applicant:</b>	5.1 Continue to provide funding for the full proposal development stage for those who are successful at concept note stage, but consider making it explicitly for proposal <i>and</i> partnership development, including:

<sup>31</sup> Boddington, S (2020) Creativity in Confronting the Challenges of Adaptive and Flexible Programs, Paper and presentation delivered at the Australasian Aid Conference, 18 Feb 2020.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear thinking and explanation about the roles and responsibilities for each partner in the consortium</li> <li>• Identification of the value add for and contributions of each partner</li> <li>• Explanation of specific leadership roles relating to the management of the project, and how equity will be built between North/South; research/Research-into-Use; cross-cultural and interregional considerations, etc.</li> <li>• An outline of how the consortium plans to 'build' its collaboration and team and strengthen the capacity of all partners to engage</li> </ul>
<b>For the funder</b>	5.2 What elements of the full proposal could be streamlined to reduce impost on applicants without reducing the quality and information provided?
	5.3 Demonstrate respect for applicants by avoiding changing the goalposts during the proposal development stage.
	5.4 Retain some flexibility and openness in the design and budgeting processes to allow for movement of partners, in and out of the consortia, to meet project needs.
	5.5 Consider providing some capacity strengthening training and opportunities in collaboration/cross-sector partnership and other skills, for all those invited to submit full proposals, so that even those who are eventually unsuccessful will derive value from the process. This could be provided online, remotely, in-country or through advisory support.
	5.6 Provide feedback and acknowledge the work of unsuccessful applicants and identify opportunities for them to be able to engage with CLARE, for example through knowledge dissemination/sharing without funding to continue to build networks.
<b>For the applicant</b>	5.7 Encourage consortia to think through and plan for formal and informal activities related to partnership and trust building, as part of their project, including provision for Ways of Working, health checks, team building, celebrations, joint field visits, etc. as a way to build strong relationships.
	5.8 Where cross-consortia collaboration and learning is an expectation of the fund manager, ensure that this is known and provided for in the proposal design, budgeting and people's time commitments.

## 8.6 Commissioning step 6: Proposal evaluation and selection

The UKRI councils all comply with standard evaluation criteria, which include, first and foremost, research excellence, and then 'fit to scheme', which can include both scientific and non-scientific criteria suited to the call. Publicly available documents describe the criteria for applicants and guidance for reviewers<sup>32</sup>. IDRC is not constrained by these requirements. In addition to the focus on research excellence, evaluation criteria (at both concept and full proposal stages) should include assessment on the management, approach and quality of the collaboration, and ideally have someone experienced in assessing such to provide advice/inputs to the selection process.

At full proposal stage, the fund manager could undertake an enhanced partnership due diligence/organisational capability process of the key consortium members, most particularly the lead consortium members. This should ideally not be done as a desk review but in consultation with the applicants, which will in turn start to build the fund manager's own relationships with the applicants. This was an approach taken by DFAT in the SDIP program which had 7 main shortlisted partners.

<sup>32</sup> <https://nerc.ukri.org/funding/application/assessment/assesscriteria/>



Advisors made visits to each partner to work through with them any identified areas of institutional strengthening needed in support of the project implementation, and this considered the soft skills of collaboration as well as technical, financial, policy and procedure assessment. A plan of support and capacity building was agreed as part of that process. Given the anticipated scale of CLARE programs, it may be appropriate that the face-to-face partnering assessment is conducted with final short-listed or successful proponents, as part of their project inception.

To help build equity and Southern voice, as well as an understanding of the interregional politics and power issues, the selection committee should include expert assessors from the Global South, ideally from the region in which the consortium plans to operate. In an interview with NERC, it was identified that this has been attempted previously in a number of calls involving the Global South, but the difficulty has been identifying suitable candidates with both the time and capacity to provide inputs at the expected level. This represents an ideal opportunity for the funder to invest in the development of capacity of Southern partners to participate equitably in selection committees and to also build the pool of suitable peer reviewers. It would be helpful to consider how this could be most effectively done – for example through mentorship by more experienced reviewers/selectors similar to approaches already well established in UK universities over a period of time. Could processes be adapted, for example, to allow for the assessors to be brought together for discussion of the applications as a learning opportunity for new assessors, keeping in mind UKRI requirements around independence and confidentiality? It would also be helpful to think through (and ask) potential candidates for the pool, what would motivate them to get involved (i.e. applying the same principles as you would to any partnership – understanding the value add and drivers/interests of those you seek to engage). For example, it may be a desirable skill set, help to build their CV, provide access to wider professional networks, professional development opportunities, perhaps as a stepping stone to becoming a peer reviewer for a prestigious journal, etc. What is valuable can only be determined by the target group, and thus it is worth asking.

The selection committee should also include non-academic, RiU or private sector expertise to avoid the skewing of selection. This has been done on a recent SHEAR call, for example. RiU partners reported feeling like second class citizens in the initial years of some programs; tolerated but not genuinely welcomed by their research counterparts until they were gradually able to demonstrate their worth over time. Giving visibility to this skill and role from the outset can help to address this perception and better value what they uniquely bring to the table, which may be under-appreciated or just not understood by some academics, for example.

Assessment of PIs and in particular any lead agency, should include consideration of their leadership experience (most particularly in consortia or experience beyond their own sector), management and collaboration skills, commitment and willingness, as well as sufficient time to lead and ‘accompany’ the consortium itself (not just the research). Where there are concerns that a PI is more to be in name only, but is already over committed, consider a different title/role for this person. This is somewhat akin to the ‘no gift author’ conversation: a consortium leader needs to be available to partners and to lead, and this caused considerable problems in at least two of the partnerships reviewed for this study, alleviated somewhat by strong and committed Consortium Coordinators and deputy PIs who were able to step up.

A pitfall for a funder at this stage, often with good intent but unintended consequences, is to require or mandate changes to consortium arrangements. In ASSAR, the funder proposed a change in the RiU partner, with a number of valid concerns about the originally proposed member. However, the impact of this decision and the last-minute introduction of a new member (a Global South organisation replacing a local organisation), caused long-lasting ructions and relationship challenges over a period of years. Ideally, if a partnership due-diligence is completed by the fund manager on each consortium

(refer due-diligence diagram), as part of the evaluation process, and concerns are identified, these should be discussed with the consortium leads or possibly even the consortium as a whole and then solutions found together (e.g. Extended capacity building of the partner concerned? Introduction of an additional/replacement/new member and if so, how this will be managed? Exiting or changing role of the old member?). Given concerns raised in the scoping study interviews around genuine elevation of Southern organisations and voices and existing North-South tensions, this needs to be sensitively managed and may require the support of the fund manager or a partnership broker to work through successfully.

<b>Commissioning Recommendations - Step 6: Proposal evaluation and selection</b>	
<b>For the funder:</b>	6.1. In addition to the focus on research excellence, evaluation criteria (at both concept note and full proposal stages) should include assessment on the management, approach and quality of the collaboration (for example, by working through the 6Ps Framework, or looking at the Generic Success Indicators of Effective Partnerships), and ideally have someone experienced in assessing such to provide advice/inputs to the selection process.
	6.2 At full proposal stage, the fund manager could undertake an enhanced partnership due diligence/organisational capability process of the key consortium members (especially those not known to the funders), as a way to build engagement and identify capacity strengthening needs.
	6.3 To help build equity and Southern voice, as well as an understanding of the interregional politics and power issues, the selection committee should include assessors from the Global South, ideally from the region in which the consortium plans to operate.
	6.4 Discover what might incentivise Southern assessors to participate as expert reviewers or on selection committees, and invest in their capacity to participate equitably in selection committees, to build the future pool of suitable peer reviewers.
	6.5 The selection committee should also include non-academic, RiU and other sectoral expertise to avoid the skewing of assessments.
	6.6 Assessment of PIs and Co-PIs in particular any lead agencies, should include leadership, management and collaboration skills, commitment and willingness, as well as time to lead and accompany the consortium and be an ongoing expectation of funding. This means moving beyond research track records.
	6.7 Evaluation should include assessment of the plans for the Consortium Coordinator function, including appropriately senior involvement and strong collaboration skills and experience. Consider renaming role to Consortium Convenor to elevate its status beyond administration.
	6.8 Consider carefully the implications of any funder-driven requests for changes to the consortium at this late stage, and work openly with consortium members to achieve it.

## 9. BEYOND COMMISSIONING: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OPTIMISING THE VALUE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF PARTNERSHIPS THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT CYCLE

In working through this series of recommendations for optimising collaboration under CLARE, as per the scope of this study, it is very clear that many great things have been achieved through the extensive collaborations which have been developed under the predecessor programs, many of which continue to this day, and beyond funding. Thousands of individuals have put their hearts and souls into making their consortia work, to overcoming barriers to communication, and putting concerns aside to deliver outstanding research and insights. More than this, they valued enormously working differently. Collaboration across diverse partners is new to many, particularly Southern researchers, and has been both challenging and highly valued.

This was highlighted in the ASSAR surveys of participants' consortium experience (Scodanibbio, 2018 and 2020), when asked what had been the most important things participants had learned from their engagement in ASSAR/CARIAA:

- new ways of thinking and acting (62%)
- learning how to work collaboratively (15%)
- valuing a collaborative, cross-regional network (23%)

Equally in HI-AWARE, which like many projects also experienced differences between Northern and Southern partners, when asked about overall highlights, consortium members were quick to acknowledge the value of the collaboration:

*'Our association with HI-AWARE has been a wonderful experience. I often cite the project to my students as an example of high quality interaction and capacity building.'* (Global South Partner)

*'Apart from good research, I liked the partnership approach of HI-AWARE which has been a great learning. The North-South divide in research has been bridged through this project with successful partnership between researchers from different areas and backgrounds.'* (Global North Partner)<sup>33</sup>

Despite the undoubted success of most consortia, to a greater or lesser extent, they have all encountered a range of partnership related blocks and challenges, which with a more purposeful approach, and more capacity and attention to collaboration in and of itself, could be averted, to optimise cooperation and effectiveness. The following recommendations build on the identification of challenges outlined in many of the project and program reports which focussed on learnings in consortia (refer to Annex 2 references for complete list) and also reflect issues identified in the scoping studies on program functions (Harvey et al., 2020) and capacity strengthening (Bouille et al., 2020).

This study uses the four phases of the partnership cycle framework to organise the challenges that have been evident in the predecessor programs and subsequent recommendations for the fund manager to consider in terms of how it might embed improved practices in the CLARE consortia. Where recommendations are not self-explanatory, further discussion is included under each phase.

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<sup>33</sup> Wester et al (2018) CARIAA Final Technical Report and Highlights 2014-2018

## 9.1 Phase 1: Scoping and building (project inception)

It is clear that in many of the programs, a lack of clarity about roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and expectations from the outset caused ongoing ill-feeling and misunderstandings in a number of consortia. In most cases, this reduced over time, as people got to know each other and started to build trust, but it took much longer than was necessary. It is really critical to explore underlying values and approaches by academic consortium members towards RiU partners, as some partners in CARIAA, for example, reported feeling like second-class citizens, or more tolerated rather than genuinely appreciated and included for the value that they could bring. There are some deeply held stereotypes in many research institutions and also in some NGOs towards the other sector and these perceptions should be surfaced and discussed early. Often in the pressure to produce proposals which meet funder criteria, these will not have been properly explored, but the project inception period provides a good opportunity to do so. This conversation may benefit from experienced brokering.

The key recommendation at this stage therefore is to provide for consortia to co-create a detailed (as opposed to high-level) Ways of Working/partnering document (tailored to suit their needs), at the start of the project conception stage, in order to establish from the outset, a principled approach to the consortium, highlighting openness, diversity, equity, mutual benefit and accountability.

Depending on the level of partnership skills they have, and the diversity of partners and sectors included, the development of an agreement/Ways of Working may be best supported by an external partnership broker (who may be drawn from IDRC, though not by the consortium's designated Program Officer as it is important that they be perceived as quite neutral, from a suitably skilled Consortium Convenor from another project, or from an external pool which is probably advisable in the early forming stages of large, new consortia). Depending on the scale, familiarity and complexity of issues in the partnership, this may take 1-3 days in development. It is also worth considering whether this represents a good opportunity for IDRC (and potentially DFID) representatives to participate in these discussions and also to clarify their own roles and responsibilities, and accountabilities to partners, and commitments to a Ways of Working. This document becomes a living document (as compared to a tick box document which is tackled as a 'set and forget' exercise) and is used as an induction and guidance tool for all individuals, outlining in essence a 'code of conduct' which assists partners to mitigate and work through challenges and conflict. It is also a reference tool used for the partners to review the health of their partnership at regular health checks.

The critical aspect of this process is that the partnering agreement (or Ways of Working) should be developed together, through discussion of any points of contention, with all the key players in the room. It should NOT be an exchange of templates via email (the usual fate of MOUs) as its value is in the capturing of the conversations and discussions which lead to its development and help build alignment and agreement across the consortium. Handled well, it is a major trust and partnership building exercise. It may be less or more detailed according to the needs of the specific consortium, however experience shows that more specific discussions work through issues and build understanding and agreement which is then captured and shared with new consortium members – it becomes an effective induction and review tool when used in this way. High level agreements do not achieve the same level of use nor understanding.

While it is important not to be prescriptive, guidance and examples can be provided to support consortia to decide what type/extent of agreement might be fit for purpose for them. In an approach which worked very well for the HI-AWARE consortium, but also has been highly effective in many

other research and large-scale, complex partnerships globally<sup>34</sup>, the types of topics which may be explored by partners and captured in a Ways of Working discussion might include (but not be limited to) the issues outlined below in Figure 9.

<p><b>Context/Background/Preamble</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links to the project and partners' wider contexts, including partners' operating context/networks</li> </ul> <p><b>Shared vision/Objectives</b></p> <p><b>Individual partner objectives/Motivation for involvement (benefits)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be specific to partners and not necessarily shared</li> <li>• May also feed into partnership success factors (KPIs)</li> </ul> <p><b>Partner roles, responsibilities and accountabilities in the Partnership</b></p> <p><b>Guiding principles/values</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including specific descriptions of expected behaviours of each partner, not just sweeping statements</li> </ul> <p><b>Contributions (not just financial) by each partner</b></p> <p><b>Risks (shared and individual) – a simple risk register works well</b></p> <p><b>Accountabilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes mutual reporting obligations (not just one-way)</li> </ul> <p><b>Governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure, composition and regularity of meetings</li> <li>• Decision making and delegations</li> <li>• Record keeping</li> <li>• Succession planning/induction processes</li> <li>• Risk Management</li> </ul> <p><b>Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal (including contact points, confidentiality)</li> <li>• External (including press releases, publications, use of information, branding/logos)</li> </ul> <p><b>Intellectual property</b> (principles to inform legal negotiations)</p> <p><b>Agreement on partnership specific issues such as authorship</b></p> <p><b>Review processes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including agreeing partnership success indicators</li> <li>• What, who, when, how, who pays, internal/external</li> <li>• Looks at partnering processes/relationships, not just activities</li> <li>• May include transition arrangements for 'moving-on' options</li> </ul> <p><b>Grievance/Dispute resolution processes</b></p>
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*Figure 9: Ways of Working Discussion Content*

The mutual development of a partnership risk matrix for example, often results in a rich discussion, where sometimes sensitive but critical issues are surfaced, and assists in building understanding of the respective pressures, constraints and drivers each partner is working under, and again helps to build trust and understanding amongst partners. It is also important from the outset to understand each partner's respective risk appetites, as strong difference in these (i.e. one partner being much more risk averse than another partner in an innovative program) can be a key cause of disagreement as a project proceeds. The matrix can be attached to the Ways of Working (and reviewed and updated with that document) or even better, included in an overall project risk framework (which should cover

<sup>34</sup>E.g. Organisations such as DFAT use the partnership agreement approach to support more effective, open and trusting program delivery in a wide range of very large cross-sectoral programs, from their Pacific Leadership Programs, Viet Nam Infrastructure and Gender programs, Indonesia governance programs (Nixon et al), its South Asia climate change initiative (the Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio, which included partners such as IFC, CSIRO, ACIAR, ICIMOD, the South Asia Water Initiative of the World Bank and The Asia Foundation), and Business Partnerships Platform. It is also used across a range of novel research consortia such as the Research for Development Impact Network University-NGO consortium.

at least the following risks: financial, technical, legal, people, partnership). For those consortia less experienced in the development of risk frameworks, simple guidance can be provided.

While the agreement should be developed specific to the needs of the particular consortium, consideration needs to be given to who should be involved in the discussion – is it the main consortium members? Subcontracted partners-implementers? Fund managers? There is no right answer, and this is in and of itself an important discussion. It is not uncommon for large and complex partnerships to have more than one partnering agreement in place, in different configurations. So, for example, there may be a core partnering agreement in place with the core consortium members, then a wider-reaching one embracing other key partners, such as the RiU or local civil-society partners, in order to effectively draw them into the partnership and guard against them feeling like second-class citizens. In HI-AWARE, for example, the role and contributions of the strategic (field and RiU) partners, who had not been a part of the original partnering agreement discussions or health checks, were felt to be undervalued by those partners.

It is also important that all partners understand that this Ways of Working sits alongside any contracting arrangements (between funder and consortium members) and that it is non-legally binding. The contracts or grant agreements usually outline the ‘what’ and the Ways of Working, the ‘how’. This may take some explanation and negotiation with each partner’s legal and procurement teams to ensure they are comfortable with the intent and even the name of the document, so the funder should avoid prescribing templates for such documents, while still providing guidance on what might be included. Templates can be very counterproductive as each partnership is unique and whatever is developed should be fit for purpose for that particular partnership.

<b>Recommendations for Phase 1: Scoping and building (project inception)</b>	
1.1	Develop a consortium partnership agreement or Ways of Working at the outset. Consider whether this can be facilitated internally or whether external partnership brokering may support partners to build diverse, equitable, shared value, open and mutually accountable partnerships, and to understand each partner’s respective drivers and value-add.
1.2	Co-develop a partnership risk matrix, to assess and openly discuss the potential risks to the consortium from each partner’s perspective, not just from a research perspective.
1.3	If not incorporated at the full proposal stage, invest in developing the collaboration skills of ALL consortium members. A dedicated online CLARE ‘introduction to effective collaboration’ module could be developed to improve accessibility, and can draw on the voices and experiences gained in the predecessor programs, as well as providing frameworks and principles in support of good engagement. Completion of this module could be a pre-requisite for existing and new individuals coming into the consortium and help provide everyone with a common language.
1.4	Where consortia are receiving external partnership brokering support for the development of their partnering agreement, face to face training and exposure can also be provided cost-effectively prior to or as part of developing the agreement.
1.5	Specifically invest in partnership and collaboration skills development of all Consortium Coordinators/Convenors and ideally Principal Investigators and IDRC Program Officers working directly with consortia. This can be provided in face to face training, with follow up mentoring/coaching support where needed.

## 9.2 Phase 2: Managing and maintaining

Phase 2 of the partnering cycle is where project implementation finally commences. Yet the work of the consortium continues to be facilitated and enabled by the collaboration structures enacted at this

stage. It is an error to assume that partnerships are ‘set and forget’ mechanisms – something that is put in place at the outset and then everything runs smoothly. A light touch attention to detail throughout the partnering and project cycle will help keep the partnership functioning effectively.

### 9.2.1 Governance and accountability structures

Governance structures of partnerships are usually established with very good intent at the outset, yet they are often revealed to be overly complex, time-consuming, inefficient and unwieldy. In some cases they reinforce unhealthy power dynamics. However, since partners themselves have generally agreed to the structures initially, they often feel reluctant to raise concerns about whether they are fit for purpose, and instead start to build resentment and anxiety about how things are operating. This is a genuine example of where the principle of ‘courage’ is of value – who amongst the partners is brave enough to raise concerns?

Some of the research consortia of the predecessor programs had extremely complex governance structures, reflective of the size, reach and scope of the variety of research packages, and the language of hierarchy (rather than equity) is in evidence throughout. In fact, many of the partners interviewed spoke informally of the hierarchical constructs of the consortium: *second tier partners, second class citizens, leads, principals*. Such terminology exacerbates the real and perceived power imbalances that play out in most partnerships. And were evident in some of the predecessor projects.

For example, most consortia have a designated Lead Partner which in and of itself conveys an immediate hierarchy. This is most acute when Lead Partners also held the purse-strings, or were perceived to pursue their own research agendas by more junior partners, rather than make decisions in service of the wider consortium. Most of the predecessor programs’ fund managers were conscious of this factor, and made laudable decisions in ensuring that Lead Partners did not in fact hold all the funds and then release it to the other consortium members. Rather, Lead Partners (such as ICIMOD in HI-AWARE/CARIAA, for example) usually held funds for consortium management and convening activities, (but also on behalf of some partners for whom expenditure approvals were otherwise too slow to enable timely engagement) and then in turn for the research packages which they were leading. Partners were then responsible and accountable directly to the fund manager for the expenditure of these funds. This approach, while well intended, did create some difficulties and friction in some of the consortia, as reported in the Currie-Alder et al (2019) paper which considered management and collaboration lessons from the CARIAA program<sup>35</sup>. Lead Partners were held to account for overall consortium performance but had no sight of partners’ expenditure; consortium partners resented not being able to make decisions on incurring their own travel expenses for consortium events.

Some CARIAA projects worked around this over time with more open sharing of financial and budget information and flexibility to move funds around to areas of most need. This expectation should be established from the outset, and is a key role for the fund manager to play in establishing practices which support this level of openness, and supporting consortia members to make shared decisions where changes are necessary, cognisant of the implications this has for each partner, particularly if they are losing funds. Consider having a more high level and adaptive project budget right from the outset (i.e. an indicative budget with perhaps only the first 2 years programmed, allows time and space for the consortium to work with the fund manager to refine the project budget over time, and does not create nor undermine expectations on guaranteed funding from the outset regardless of performance).

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<sup>35</sup> Currie-Alder et al (2019) [Building climate resilience in Africa & Asia: Lessons on organisation, management and research collaboration from research consortia](#). CARIAA Working Paper no. 24, IDRC Ottawa and UK Aid London

Could Lead Partners perhaps instead be referred to as *Convening Partners*? Neil et al. (2011) in The Art of Convening, refers to the convening as the creation of an environment in which all voices are heard, profound exchanges take place and transformative action results. A worthy aspiration for CLARE.

### 9.2.2 Leadership roles

#### Principal investigators and Co-PIs

The role of the Principal Investigator is unsurprisingly fundamental. As a key leadership role in any consortium, it is the PI who sets the tone, creates a dynamic to support and encourage shared discussion and openness, responds to conflict, etc. While the PI is charged with considerable research excellence responsibility they are also in essence the captain of the ship and set the tone for engagement: it is essential that they role model collaborative behaviour and lead by example to demonstrate the partnership's agreed Ways of Working, and behave in ways which encourage or support partners. There are examples in all partnerships where poor, incapable or disinterested leadership has set the tone for the entire project. Conversely, there are also excellent examples in CLARE predecessor programs where PIs were fundamental in calling out challenging behaviours of partners, and helping to resolve conflict. They have a key role in helping to build the confidence and capability of consortium partners, and to intentionally and authentically demonstrate a respect for diversity, equity and to behave transparently in the interests of the consortium. Each PI brings their own experience, personality and style to the consortium, and given the influence this has on the overall outcomes of projects, it is not sufficient to consider research track record alone when assessing leadership of a consortium: they require time, management and collaboration expertise, exceptional communication skills and a commitment to capacity development. In addition, PIs are often senior academics, over-committed elsewhere, and in some cases, were clearly not available to fulfil their project commitments to the detriment of the projects. Currie-Alder et al. (2019) recommend that PIs must be available for a minimum of 30% of their time, but I expect this may be an under-estimate. PIs need to work closely with their Co-PIs and the Consortium Convenor.

#### Co-PIs

Co-PIs played a very considerable leadership role in predecessor programs, often taking lead responsibility for the achievement of project outcomes in regions and specific countries. This could be consciously built on and enhanced with the opportunity to appoint Joint PIs (rather than Co-PIs) as a mechanism for building the ownership and capability of Southern or non-research partners in consortium which were assessed to not already have that in place. In this scenario, the Northern PIs could be encouraged to have a remit (and strategy agreed with their Joint PI) which included capacity strengthening and leading from behind in order to progressively transfer ownership and capability to the Southern partner. This approach may also be suited to regions where there are capability and power imbalances amongst different countries, often for geo-political or historical reasons.

#### Consortium Convenor (previously: Coordinator)

This study agrees with many of the findings of a number of the lessons learned reports from the predecessor programs: the role of the Consortium Coordinator is key, especially in large consortia. This should be a full-time role, and relatively senior, to ensure that it is given the respect needed to be able to perform the task. For this reason, I have also suggested reframing the title as Consortium Convenor (coordinator implying a primarily administrative function), and developing a shared terms of reference for the role from the outset which can be seen and adapted (which should be indicative rather than directive) by each consortium according to their needs. It is not necessary for this to be a researcher role, and in some ways, separating this role from the actual research removes concerns about perceived conflicts of interest, which were experienced in HI-AWARE for example. However, it IS necessary that this role has substantive experience and skills capability in convening, partnership



brokering<sup>36</sup>, facilitating and creating and maintaining engagement, as well as project management and coordination: in essence they act to help ensure accountability but also as an internal partnership broker. In many predecessor programs, Consortium Coordinators have worked hand in hand with PIs and even fund managers to ensure the delivery of the project and I expect that this will continue. This is very much a 'leading from behind' function requiring enthusiasm, cajoling, attention to detail, goals and results management, exceptional communication skills and conflict resolution skills. It is also highly advisable, given the complexity and scale of most consortia, that this is a full-time role. It is highly recommended that CLARE provides for training (ideally together across consortia and perhaps on a rolling basis) for the convening roles in either collaboration skills or partnership brokering and creates a community of practice for Consortium Convenors across programs so they can share their learnings and act as an ongoing resource for each other. There is also the opportunity, as Consortium Convenors develop their skills, that they could provide facilitation and brokering of other consortia's partnership health checks and project reviews, which would serve to both provide that resource to consortia, build knowledge and perspective of the Consortium Convenor, and build networks and linkages across CLARE projects. It may be appropriate for remote partnership mentoring and advisory support to the Convenors to be provided as they develop their own skills and confidence. As with any cross-program expectations, both time and resources should be actively provided for these additional responsibilities.

#### **Recommendations for Phase 2: Managing and maintaining**

2.1 Governance: Build equity and trust through appropriate terminology and structures (e.g. Convening versus Lead Partners) and decision-making protocols which are fit for purpose. Consider carefully the accompanying finance flows and whether these could be less prescribed beyond the initial one or two years to allow for changes in activities and also partners.

#### 2.2 Leadership:

2.2.1 The role of PIs, Co-PIs as consortium leaders not just research leaders: Consider how this is reflected in selection processes, beyond research track records. Ensure sufficient time is available to commit to all leadership roles (i.e. it is not just an 'honorary' appointment) and includes a commitment to capacity building.

2.2.2 Look at the option for appointing Joint PIs as a mechanism to genuinely share ownership and leadership between North and South where Southern-only led opportunities are considered higher risk. In this scenario, the Northern PIs would be encouraged to have a remit which included capacity strengthening and leading from behind.

#### 2.2.3 Develop and recognise the key role for Consortium Convenors (previously Coordinators)

- Provide guidance on TORs at the proposal stage
- Appoint full time Consortium Convenors (versus Coordinators) of sufficient seniority and experience
- Provide them with training in partnership/collaboration skills and remote mentoring support as they build their skills
- Create cross-CLARE (perhaps regional, perhaps thematic) Consortium Convenor Communities of Practice, and ensure it is resourced and time/funds provided in budgets to support participation
- In large, multi-country or multi-regional projects, consider the need for Convenors in each region/country
- Investigate opportunities for trained Convenors to undertake facilitation of partnership health checks for other consortia beyond their own to build and access local, knowledgeable

<sup>36</sup> Partnership brokering pays attention to the processes of collaboration, and focusses on building and strengthening the partnership over its life cycle to ensure it delivers impactful programs of work as well as delivering significant value to those involved and to the wider stakeholders. For more information on the roles, skills

expertise and experience, to share learnings across consortia, but also to provide a sustainable partnership brokering resource bank for CLARE over time. Ensure funding and time is provided to support this role.
2.3 Communications (remote): Consider implications for remote partnering in a time of COVID, and even without, to reduce the travel impost on partners. Do partners have equitable access and skills to utilise appropriate technologies? How can these be used in ways to foster partnership building and principled relationships?
2.4 Transaction costs of meetings: Consider how these can be made more efficient and effective. What do we need to have versus what is nice to have? How do we build in team and trust building activities and measures, including providing space for less formal engagement?
2.5 Strengthening capacity: Building collaborative skills and the 'ability to partner', as flagged in the commissioning models, can occur throughout the project cycle and especially when key new people join a partnership.
2.6 Conflict resolution: Ensure Consortium Convenors or PIs, Co PIs (does not have to be from lead agency) have the skills and experience to work through (but not smooth or shut down) conflict in a way which builds trust, understanding and transparency.

### 9.3 Phase 3: Review and revise

Understanding how critical effective consortia are to effective program delivery, one of the most valuable interventions that can be made in the Review and revise stage of the partnering cycle is the opportunity to take stock, reflect on not just how well the project is progressing, but how well the partnership is working, and importantly, what if anything needs to change and how. This can take any number of formats, according to the needs of the partners at any given time, but it is important to consider the different perspectives of each consortium member, as this is often the root of many misunderstandings. In the early, forming stages of a partnership, a light touch review (never an evaluation), can be a key tool to build trust and engagement<sup>37</sup>, but it is therefore essential to do so using a strengths-based, appreciative enquiry model, rather than one leading to critique and blame (such as SWOT analyses tend to result in) identifying what has been working well, what lessons have been learned (with the benefit of hindsight) and what needs to change.

The consortium health check should ideally be done on a regular basis – often six months into the commencement of implementation to allow for early course-reset if needed, and thereafter annually or as needed. This is ideally the opportunity to review progress against the baseline agreed in the Ways of Working document, as well as to check whether this needs to be changed or updated. While HI-AWARE (CARIAA) undertook internal health checks on a regular basis, and had the specific partnership brokering skills to do so in its consortium leadership team, it also incorporated an externally facilitated partnership review into its mid-term and end-of-project learning review week, which allowed it to tackle more challenging issues and make changes in how the consortium operated. Even as a light touch mechanism, a health check provides the opportunity to reflect, amend, course-correct, review the agreements made in the Ways of Working (commitments, objectives, risks, etc.) and continuously improve the collaboration. It is also an indispensable induction tool for new partners and individuals joining a consortium after its commencement. It also provides the opportunity for discussion of legacy and post-project issues at an early stage, and even to consider consortium make-up: the need for new partners or for existing partners to move on or out.

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<sup>37</sup> Mundy, J (2013) *Progressive review and evaluation as a trust-building mechanism in partnerships* in The Journal of Partnership Brokering, Issue 2, December 2013, PBA: London

An example of the types of questions which might be posed in a health check is below (see Figure 10), although the consortium itself should consider what it needs to know, and each health check may be different (less or more structured, focussed on a particular area or issue) according to the needs of that particular consortium at that particular time.

<p><b><u>1: Success Indicators: Project goals and objectives and success indicators</u></b>  How are we tracking against our:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared goals/objectives?</li> <li>Individual organisational objectives/success indicators?</li> <li>'Good practice' partnership success indicators?</li> </ol> <p><b><u>2: Processes and Systems</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could we change/improve the partnership governance structure to ensure it is as effective and efficient as possible?</li> <li>Do we need to change or re-assess our partnership risk register?</li> </ol> <p><b><u>3: Partner-Partner Relationship</u></b>  In terms of the relationship between the partners:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What has worked well? Give specific examples.</li> <li>What would we do differently with the benefit of hindsight (and why)? Give specific examples of a situation/behavior, which would ideally be handled differently.</li> <li>Are we behaving in the way we committed (i.e. have we lived up to the partnership principles or are they just words?). Give specific examples to illustrate.</li> <li>Are there any examples of crises or contentious/challenging issues in the partnership so far, and if so, how did the partnership handle it?</li> <li>What frustrations, if any, have we experienced in working together to date? Think of specific examples, and suggestions for how this might be done differently for the future.</li> <li>Have we had the 'right' partners involved? Is a key player missing from the partnership?</li> </ol> <p><b><u>4: Looking forward</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there anything we are particularly excited about?</li> <li>.... concerned about?</li> <li>What, if anything, has changed in our external operating environment, and how is this, or will this affect the partnership?</li> <li>What considerations/options are there for sustaining the outcomes of the partnership? Is there the potential for scale or replication elsewhere?</li> <li>What future opportunities might exist for the partnership and/or the partners?</li> <li>Can we derive more value-add from the partnership for each of the partners?</li> </ol> <p><b><u>5: A learning partnership</u></b>  Have there been any key partnership learnings (and if so, what), which we would like to share:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More widely within our own organisations?</li> <li>With other partners, or beyond our existing partnership?</li> </ol> <p><b><u>6: Actions</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What actions will we take as a result of these discussions?</li> <li>At the end of project partnership review, we might also consider including questions linked to value-add and impact of the approach.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>7: The Partnership Approach &amp; Impact</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In what ways do partners communicate and promote the partnership and approach back into their own organisations and externally?</li> <li>Value Add: What has each partner gained from partnering with each other – unanticipated as well as planned? Tangible and intangible? What have been the challenges/costs?</li> <li>In what ways, if any, has the approach differed from a traditional grant/service agreement approach?</li> <li>Could the same results have been achieved as, or more effectively using a different approach or model?</li> </ol>
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Figure 10: Sample enquiry questions for partnership health check process

This type of approach has been implemented by other large agencies, including the Australian Government’s Department of Land, Agriculture, Water and the Environment, who have integrated a partnering framework for their work nation-wide, and have developed a series of guidance notes, including ones for conducting health checks in this manner.

Where partnerships are equitable, respectful, working well and effectively, the health check process can be internally facilitated by someone who is considered to have a relatively neutral or unaligned perspective (by the Consortium Convenor, if they are appropriately skilled, but not the PI in most circumstances, due to the power dynamics). It should also be noted that if the Consortium Convenor is facilitating, it is very difficult for them also to contribute as a participant in the health check which might be desirable. It might be possible, for example, to invite a Consortium Convenor from a different CLARE project, to facilitate the health check, which would have the double benefit of building linkages across projects.

The health check ideally operates just as the name implies, as a preventative health mechanism, and should not be ignored as not important unless there are problems to be dealt with – it is a preventative measure which can help prevent major problems from occurring, which can save considerable time, effort and goodwill in the long run. However, where there are significant tensions, challenges or sensitivities, a health check can be scheduled where other more informal interventions have failed. In these circumstances, it is useful to consider an independent external partnership broker, whose role may be both to facilitate but also to actively assist the consortium to progress and problem-solve in a way which ensures that all voices and perspectives are heard, and the partnerships principles upheld.

In a number of the CARIIAA projects, health checks were incorporated as internal review mechanisms, but more often focussed on review of project progress, which is in many ways much easier and more comfortable to do than address the principles, people and perspectives that arise in an independently brokered discussion. There is a natural tendency to ‘smooth’ uncomfortable issues so as not to hurt feelings or ‘open cans of worms’. Yet left unaddressed, these tensions and dynamics can quickly undermine project performance. The HI-AWARE project was able to discuss and address some major inequity issues through its facilitated health checks, as well as to acknowledge and celebrate strengths and achievements, something which is often lost in the heavy workload carried by many consortium members.

<b>Recommendations for Phase 3: Review and revising</b>
3.1 Provide guidance, training and external brokering support where needed for regular consortium health checks to build a commitment to continuous improvement and address any underlying tensions in a constructive manner.
3.2 Revise the Ways of Working and Risk Matrix to ensure it remains current for all partners and remind partners of their commitments.
3.3 Use the health checks as an opportunity to induct new people into the consortium.
3.4 Consider integrating formal Partnership or Consortium Review into regular consortium learning reviews.
3.5 Consider the opportunities for Consortium Convenors to be equipped with the skills to facilitate the health checks of other consortium as part of resourcing and building cross-consortium learning.
3.6 Identify and establish a resource pool of accredited partnership brokers and other trained collaboration facilitators, including importantly those based in various geographical regions or with language and cultural competencies, who can assist with external facilitation of health checks, or support/coaching/accompaniment to Consortium Convenors, who are themselves facilitating health checks if needed.

3.7 Use the opportunity of reviewing and revising the consortia to have some hard conversations if needed. Consider need for introducing new partners, and exiting non-performing partners with grace: *'Do we have the right partners at the table for what we need to achieve?'*

#### 9.4 Phase 4: Sustaining outcomes

It is never too early in partnerships to start discussing legacy issues, as it is as important to end or transition a partnership as well as it is to start one. Yet by the end of often long projects, participants are exhausted and worn out and just ready for it all to be over, especially when the last stage of the predecessor programs have involved such challenging synthesis of many disparate work packages and streams of work. However, left unconsidered, there is the potential for even very successful partnerships to go awry at this very late stage, often just through neglect.

HI-AWARE for example, developed a brief post-funding agreement<sup>38</sup> as an addendum to their Ways of Working, through discussion with all consortium members and strategic partners during their final learning reflection week, which covered:

- Ongoing engagement
- Authorship of remaining papers
- Residual doctoral students
- HI-AWARE Fellows
- Communications
  - Public messaging
  - Storage of data
  - CARIAA emails, HI-AWARE website and social media
  - HI-AWARE photograph use protocols
  - Use of partner logos and HI-AWARE brand
  - Access to information/intellectual property
- Use/ownership of residual equipment
- Cooperation on impact assessments
- Final report acknowledgments
- Future collaboration intentions

A helpful concept to keep in mind at this stage, is how to end (if that is the decision) *with grace*, and in some ways this involves the 'unbuilding' of the consortium in phase 4. Consider the options: while funding for a particular program may be drawing to a close there may be ongoing or continuing engagement between some or all of the partners. Some may choose to withdraw/exit; others may continue to work together; the consortium itself may pursue further funding or programming opportunities (such as focussing on embedding the research findings into use as a future focus) as a team. This can be a conversation managed internally in the consortium, though there would be value in having funder participation in this if appropriate and welcomed.

The capturing of lessons learned has been a real strength of many of the predecessor programs, and is heartening for those of us working in international collaboration, to see the learning reflection weeks and extent of the published work, not just related to the project output publications, but also of the experience and lessons learned of working in consortia. CLARE is strongly encouraged to continue this commitment to learning and to share those learnings beyond the climate and research sectors, given the level of interest in 'how' partnerships can be delivered more effectively, including for the SDGs. Should consortia be drawing to a close, securing agreement on what public messaging

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<sup>38</sup> Addendum to HI-AWARE Working Arrangements: Post Funding Agreement (2018)

drawn from shared learnings will be communicated externally, is important to avoid future misunderstandings and reputational risk.

And finally, while it seems obvious, it is rare that in the push to a project's end, that success and achievements should be acknowledged and celebrated together, no matter how small. This is particularly so in the types of complex research consortia envisaged under CLARE, where many different research packages are being integrated in the final months of the project, requiring a huge investment of time by all partners. However, end of project reflection weeks, participation in international fora and learning events, publications and videos are a valuable and much-valued feature of the predecessor programs.

<b>Recommendations for Phase 4: Sustaining outcomes</b>
4.1 Consider legacy issues from an early point to ensure common understanding and agreement. Encourage consortia to develop post-funding agreements to cover external communications and agreed public messaging, residual intellectual property, equipment, ongoing research students and access to data, etc. and intention for future collaboration.
4.2 Consider the options available from an earlier period in the partnership (which can be done at health checks) including: closure/exit, scaling, embedding, innovating. Just because funding is ending does not necessarily mean the collaboration will end, nor that all partners share the same vision.
4.3 Amplify capturing and sharing learnings as the project progresses. What does each partner want to know? What public messaging about the project is agreed by all partners? How can the learning from the partnership be shared?
4.4 Celebrate success – encourage partners to take time to identify and celebrate their achievements on a regular basis and particularly at the end of the project cycle - both from the project and also from their collaboration.

## 10. HOW CAN THE FUND MANAGER ADD-VALUE?

IDRC, as the main fund manager (and co-financer) of CLARE, along with the UK research institutes who will also be involved directly in management of some elements of CLARE, has a pivotal role in helping consortia to work differently. IDRC has the experience of the consortia model under CARIAA and is well-informed of the types of partnering challenges which constrained or inhibited performance. With partners, they have documented and shared their consortia lessons learned, and many of their POs and SPOs are experienced and skilled in supporting partnerships. Yet IDRC as fund manager will be the key first-point resource for consortia (particularly for PIs, CCs and Co-PIs) under CLARE who are seeking advice or experiencing problems within their partnership. How well equipped is IDRC to respond to this in a systematic way?

### 10.1 Partnering recommendations for IDRC

1. Discuss the findings and recommendations of this study as a team and determine the implications for IDRC's own systems, approaches and practice. What needs to change because it will otherwise undermine good partnering practice? What cannot change (and why)? This may include policy, procurement, budgeting, program management and research evaluation practices. How, for example, might a shift to a more principles-based partnering approach, impact the Research Quality Plus (RQ+) frameworks and work undertaken by IDRC?

2. Discuss and review further IDRC's own framework, principles and subsequent public-facing statement on partnering, which currently focusses on the what, rather than the how. Particularly consider how it exercises its power and accountability to partners. Consider conducting an internal 'audit' of its current partnering practice. Does IDRC as a fund manager uphold its stated approaches? It has some excellent partnering resources on its website, such as the *Guide for Research Partnership Agreements*<sup>39</sup> which was produced under the Next Generation for Models for Canadian Collaboration in International Development subgrant, but how is this then applied in its own practice and engagement with its partners? As part of any internal audit, ask partners (including CARIIA consortia members) for their perspectives on IDRC's partnering scorecard.
3. Particularly consider how IDRC's own systems, biases, language, research foundations and approaches may inadvertently disadvantage, inhibit or undermine non-research partners and partnerships from engaging and participating to the extent possible.
4. Further, think creatively about how to actively invite and encourage wider groups of diverse partners to participate in CLARE opportunities, over and above stipulating such in application processes. What types of fora and communications (with attention to language used) could IDRC promote and participate in in order to extend its audience? Consider asking civil society and private sector partners from predecessor consortia about what attracted/detracted from their engagement? Understanding their drivers and incentives for engagement (which may or may not be financial) will be important in positioning CLARE.
5. Consider how IDRC will promote and role model good partnering practice itself, leading by example, acknowledging the influencing position they will hold throughout CLARE.
6. Build the capacity of the IDRC team to support, advise, guide partnerships through:
  - a. Investing in partnership brokering skills development of those team members engaged directly with consortia;
  - b. Recruiting new team members (when vacancies arise) into those roles with partnership management and brokering skills and experience, in addition to other technical expertise;
  - c. Ensuring role descriptions reflect this aspect of PO roles and recognition and time is allocated to partnership building and support, rather than considering it as an expected add-on without dedicated time or resourcing
  - d. Providing access to (external or internal peer) partnership mentoring/coaching support on an as needed basis to support continuous learning and build confidence of the PO to respond to complex or unique partnership challenges.
  - e. Over time, build 'expert' capacity internally within IDRC's partnership team or elsewhere, who can take over coaching and support to POs, and carry responsibility for development of tools and resources to support CLARE consortia's partnering practice. These could be developed and made available at the outset of CLARE and developed with external support initially, but ideally should be owned and sustained by IDRC in the long term.
7. Source and maintain a pool of accredited external independent partnership brokers (with at least some based regionally, close to consortium members) who can provide support to Consortium Convenors and consortium leadership, in strengthening their partnering capacities, by the provision of training (if needed), developing Ways of Working, facilitating health checks (and overtime, building the capacity of and supporting Consortium Convenors to do so themselves).
8. Convene (and ideally participate in as practitioners to enhance own learning) the Consortium Convenors community of practice across consortia to build and share partnering knowledge and experience.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/bitstream/handle/10625/58810/58953.pdf>

9. Procure and make available to consortia, partnership capacity building training (face-to-face, online, documented self-help tools and resources), tapping into and enhancing some of its existing resources.
10. Ensure that the quality of consortium relationships and partnership processes, the value add (cost-benefit of the approach) is considered during learning weeks and other review opportunities to help build literacy, learning and evidence for this different way of working.

## 11. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF FUNDERS? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

While slightly beyond the scope of this study, a key question for IDRC and DFID to ask themselves, which has implications for the commissioning and management of CLARE is: what is our (individual and collective) role as funders? Does CLARE imagine a radical reengineering of what might be possible through the delivery of more diverse and equitable partnerships and what might DFID and IDRC's part be in achieving this? With changes to its own internal structures, will DFID remain in the role of a more traditional funder, in essence contracting its donor monitoring and technical inputs to the program to IDRC as fund manager, but increase its strategic engagement in order to learn and influence, and if so, at what points? How will this work with IDRC's role? And what of the role of IDRC as both funder and fund manager? Seemingly more engaged at a technical level with partners than many other funders in research for development today, IDRC still operates with many top-down back-of-house systems which may not best support innovation and adaptation in partnerships. It is also possible that the funders might assume different roles in different types of partnerships, according to need – for example to provide more technical support for a newer consortium with less capacity.

Does CLARE represent an opportunity to rethink the approaches, systems and framing of the funder to position itself more thoroughly as a development partner (both contributing and deriving value) to consortia in CLARE, and if so, how does this sit with its contracting and monitoring obligations? What appetite is there to consider the systems changes that might be required to achieve this? There will be non-negotiables in place determined by legislative constraints for both DFID and IDRC, but this is a further area for thought, not covered in the scope of this study. Despite inevitable resistance (*'That's the way we have to do things'*), there will equally be opportunities to amend and adapt internal processes and systems in a way which are more collaboration friendly. For example, does IDRC communicate informally in a highly equitable and engaged manner but then just expect consortium partners to sign contracts full of master-servant language, creating dissonance? How could that power imbalance be addressed? How can reporting requirements reflect partner needs, as well as funder needs to avoid duplication of reporting effort? Importantly, what appetite is there to tackle the systems which are required to support such changes? This is something that another bilateral donor has been considering:

### ***The changing role of the funder: The Business Partnerships Platform<sup>40</sup>***

*The Australian Aid program has embarked on an aspirational program to engage the private sector in development, called the Business Partnerships Platform. Very different in scale, but reflecting CLARE's intent to engage with non-traditional partners, there are some useful learnings from this program which seeks to provide seed funding, technical and partnership support to partnerships between the private sector, NGOs, government and universities, in order to leverage entirely new players, expertise, resources and approaches into international development. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), which implements this program,*

<sup>40</sup> [www.thebpp.com.au](http://www.thebpp.com.au) and for an example of the types of partnerships: <http://thebpp.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/180124-TAF-VBSP-Mastercard-Vietnam.pdf>



*and its fund manager, Palladium International, have had to work together closely to entirely re-engineer many of their internal systems and approaches in order to attract the private sector and achieve shared value: it has reframed its contracting models and language, reduced bureaucracy, reviewed systems to streamline and speed them up, changed reporting requirements, built its own capacity in skills and collaboration, and importantly has repositioned itself in the role of partner instead of funder, though this has not been easy to achieve. In doing so, DFAT has positioned itself as 'more than a funder', and has instituted an intentional partnership approach in order to maximise the value-add ('win-win') of the partnerships, build and maintain strong relationships and critically, to mitigate risk. It is also notable that the partnership between DFAT and Palladium is run with the same principles applied to the BPP partnerships, which has moved the traditional top-down Donor-Management Contractor relationship to one of much greater equity, transparency and mutual benefit.*

It is important to understand that there is no right or wrong answer; collaborations sit along a continuum from highly transactional (one-way accountability, compliance-based with transfer of risk) to highly collaborative (mutual accountability, alignment-based, shared risk), and it is more a matter of openly considering the type of role desired, being explicit and clear about this with partners. Even highly transactional partnerships where the funder retains purely an investor, grantor or contractor, can be delivered in a principled manner which supports open, respectful partnerships, though in general terms these do not build equity or ownership.

Most funders still today operate in a 'master-servant' model, and this is a term heard even amongst some partners in the predecessor programs when referring to IDRC or other fund managers, and even to Lead Partners. As funders, DFID and IDRC have the opportunity to establish the tone and approach of CLARE from the outset, to foster and enhance equitable, effective partnerships and potentially to transform the dynamics and unlock the potential of global climate change partnerships, starting with the thoughtful commissioning of the projects.

A useful recent report for DFID and IDRC to review, which was developed by a group of funders and considered these questions and more from a funder perspective, is Serafin and Tennyson (2018) [Power Shifts When Power Is Shared: Reframing the Role of Donors in Development](#). It suggests that when donors actively engage as partners in development, not just as funders, they can have a positive impact by providing new opportunities for engagement, accountability and transparency for all partners. This then is the opportunity presented by CLARE.

## 12. PRIORITIES AND NEXT STEPS?

These are initial recommendations: This scoping study represents a first set of suggestions for discussion with the wider CLARE co-designing group from DFID, IDRC and partners such as UKRI. Each suggestion has a series of implications for further development (for example of guidance documents to support processes, selection committees, online modules, tools for consortia, specific capacity strengthening) and may entail investment of resources in support of better collaboration. Some recommendations can be achieved simply without cost and some will be more involved. The next step is thinking through which interventions would yield the maximum return on investment and which are practicable.

One critical element to consider when prioritising investment of time and resources in partnering work, is the costs and risks of *not doing anything*. How much time and energy was expended on predecessor programs on fixing problematic partnerships and regaining momentum, how many relationships may have been damaged which impact on future regional and global work in climate change over the long term due to poor partnering? How badly was project performance and outcome affected by the 'invisible' aspects of partnering? While this study describes all possibilities for optimising partnerships through the commissioning process and many can be achieved relatively

quickly and at little to no cost, if choices need to be made due to resourcing constraints, the most impactful interventions for CLARE would include, the following priorities to ensuring partnerships under CLARE are as effective, efficient and impactful as possible:

1. Understand the **drivers and incentives for non-traditional partners** to participate in CLARE and ensure this is considered throughout the project design, promotion and implementation.
2. Consider the **funder and fund managers' own role as partners, systems, language and approaches** and whether they are an impediment to effective partnering for CLARE consortia. How can funders/fund managers role model effective partnering and lead by example, contributing and being accountable to its partners?
3. Provide guidance from the outset to applicants on the **nature of partnerships** expected under CLARE.
4. Seek to **enhance equity** by supporting Southern and non-research partner leadership and Joint-PIs with a purposeful focus on strengthening the capacity of the less experienced partners over time.
5. Assess **partnership elements of each application as part of the selection criteria**, by those with some experience of effective partnerships.
6. Provide **time and attention to partnership building** during the application and inception phase of new consortia, including funding to support this for shortlisted applicants during the selection stages.
7. Consider how CLARE's budgeting, planning and reporting systems can better reflect an **adaptive management approach**, allowing the partnerships to grow and change over time.
8. Support consortia to negotiate and agree detailed **Ways of Working** as a key aspect of partnership building, during project inception (including providing partnership brokering support to do so if required in order to build equity, transparency and mutual benefit/accountability, particularly across diverse partners).
9. Develop partnership literacy and capability by sharing tools and resources, including guidelines and **training/capacity building** support to build understanding and skills in effective partnering for consortia (particularly consortium leadership) but also for fund managers and technical assistance providers. In particular, foster the collaboration skills and enhance the role and seniority of Consortium Convenors.
10. Institutionalise the concept of a **partnership health check** in all consortia, to sit alongside project/learning reviews, to allow the partnership to review and continuously improve its performance, at least annually but also on an as needed basis. Build the capacity of Consortium Convenors to undertake these but provide external support where needed on sensitive or problematic partnerships.
11. Ensure projects and **partnerships are supported to end well** and develop concise post-partnering agreements to address any residual and legacy issues.
12. **Embed learning about the consortium management, partnerships and collaboration**, and the part they play in achieving project outcomes and value-add for all partners throughout CLARE and ensure this knowledge is shared across and beyond CLARE.

## Annex 1: Key informant interviews (focus groups and individual)

Bruce Currie-Alder, IDRC Program Leader (CARIAA)

Georgina Kemp, IDRC Program Officer (ASSAR/CARIAA)

Heidi Braun, IDRC Program Officer

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Hillary Masundire, University of Botswana, (Co-PI, ASSAR/CARIAA)

Philippus Wester, ICIMOD (and previously Principal Investigator, HI-AWARE/CARIAA)

Jesse DeMaria-Kinney, Senior Expert Climate Adaptation, Climate Services and Research for Impact, and Deputy Director, Plan-Adapt (and previously Oxfam GB, ASSAR/CARIAA)

Daniel Morchain, IISD Canada (and previously Oxfam GB, ASSAR/CARIAA)

Neil Adger, Professor of Geography, University of Exeter (and previously ESPA and DECCMA/CARIAA)

Katherine Vincent, Director, Kulima Integrated Development Solutions, South Africa (involved in DECCMA/CARIAA and UMFULA/FCFA)

Alice McClure, Climate Systems Analysis Group, University of Cape Town (Project Coordinator, FRACTAL/FCFA)

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## Annex 3: Climate Resilience Network Development Scoping Call



### **UKRI-GCRF Collective Programme Climate Resilience Network Development Scoping call**

#### **Call Specification**

##### **Summary**

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), on behalf of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Department for International Development (DfID), are pleased to invite applications for Climate Resilience Network Development Scoping grants.

Funding has been allocated from the [Global Challenges Research Fund](#) (GCRF) which is a £1.5 billion fund to support cutting-edge research which addresses the problems faced by developing countries. GCRF will address global challenges through disciplinary and interdisciplinary research and will strengthen capability for research and innovation within both the UK and developing countries, providing an agile response to emergencies where there is an urgent research need. GCRF forms part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment, and funds will be awarded in a manner that fits with [ODA guidelines](#).

This will be the first of three calls within the theme of Climate Resilience which respond to the UN Climate Action Summit and will form part of the wider UKRI GCRF Collective Programme and DfID's [Climate And Resilience Framework Programme \(CLARE\)](#). Successful teams will be invited to apply for a second stage round of larger Climate Resilience Network Plus awards to co-design solutions. A call for applications for the position of Climate Resilience Knowledge Manager to provide support to the successful scoping projects will be launched shortly.

Exceptionally, for this call, principal investigators based at established overseas research organisations are eligible to apply in addition to those from UK organisations that are eligible for UKRI funding.

Applications are invited up to a maximum value of **£200,000** (100% fEC) and **15 months** duration. Successful applicants will be eligible to apply for Network Plus stage of the process which will be launched in 2021.



Proposals should be submitted via the Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S) by the **deadline of 16:00 UK time on 25 March 2020**. Projects should commence on **1 October 2020**.

### **Background and scope**

The [Global Challenges Research Fund \(GCRF\)](#) is a key component in the delivery of the [UK Aid Strategy](#): tackling global challenges in the national interest. The fund aims to ensure that UK research takes a leading role in addressing the problems faced by developing countries through:

- Challenge-led disciplinary and interdisciplinary research
- Strengthening capacity for research and innovation within both the UK and developing countries
- Providing an agile response to emergencies where there is an urgent research need.

The Collective Programme under the UKRI GCRF Collective Fund is a series of calls designed to enhance the coherence, strategic focus and overall impact across the six strategic GCRF Challenge portfolios:

- Cities and Sustainable Infrastructure
- Education
- Food Systems
- Global Health
- Resilience to Environmental Shocks and Change
- Security Protracted Conflict, Refugee Crises and Forced Displacement

The programme is being delivered by UKRI and steered by the [GCRF Challenge Leaders](#). Interdisciplinary research excellence is central to the GCRF and Investigators from all disciplines are encouraged to apply for calls within the parameters of each call regardless of the primary discipline focus. This collaboration between DfID and GCRF will maximise scope for outputs to influence future programming and research to enhance the lives of people at risk living in developing countries through strengthening resilience to compound climate risks. All proposals received will be shared with other constituent parts of UKRI as necessary to assist with processing. This Network Development Scoping call will be managed by ESRC on behalf of all UKRI research councils and DfID. Further information about the ESRC's approach to GCRF and details of other current GCRF calls is available on our [website](#).

### **Call details**

A step change is needed in both adaptation and the strengthening of resilience of the poor and marginalised to climate risks. Climate change has the greatest impact on these groups when it interacts with other risk drivers and consequences including economic shocks, social or political conflict, population displacement, resource and environmental pressures as well as ecological collapse. Life for the poor and marginalised in rural and urban contexts exposed to climate change is dominated by decisions or forced acts that trade-off one risk for another, this is most extreme for women and children, those with disabilities and for ethnic

or religious minorities exposed to social and political exclusion and violence. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) identify resilience as a key mechanism for Eradicating Poverty (SDG1) as well as a strategic element of Climate Action (SDG13).

The [UNDRR Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#) is illustrative of a global demand for resilience to extend from the direct impacts of climate change to encompass the more challenging compound effects of climate change and development. The Framework recognises the increasing impact of disasters and their complexity in many parts of the world, and that many recent disasters have exceeded national response capacities.

DfID's [Climate And Resilience Framework Programme \(CLARE\)](#) sets out an ambitious multi-year programme of applied research. The results and partnerships from this call will support the evolution and outcomes from CLARE, providing a direct line of sight to global policy impact. Beyond GCRF-DfID collaboration, close alignment with the UNDRR Sendai Framework and the Global Risk Assessment Framework (GRAF) will provide an opportunity to inform global thinking and policy articulation.

The compound nature of complex climate risk opens this call to inputs from all GCRF and DfID portfolio areas. The call will be complementary to several existing investments including the [DfID/NERC Science for Humanitarian Emergencies and Resilience programme](#) which seeks to reduce vulnerability through improved understanding of risk; [NERC's MultiHazard and Systemic Risk call](#) which seeks to understand the drivers of multi-hazard events and how the impacts of these events cascade through socio-economic systems, and; [ESRC's Equitable Resilience call](#) which explored how climate change adaptation, humanitarian action, risk management and resilience could enable pathways for transition to sustainable development.

Research will be supported that improves climate risk characterisation and identifies and explores network-held risk associated with climate events, in order to enhance understanding and policy development in contexts where multiple decision-makers are acting on intersecting risks. In local contexts the themes outlined below will be deployed and capacity built to include marginalised natural resource-dependent societies exposed to climate and associated conflict risks, including displacement; poor urban communities exposed to climate change impacts through changing dynamics of public health, disaster risk and land tenure. Decision-making at other scales is as important, for example on the behaviour of global and national organisations regulating or speculating on food commodity prices when exposed to climate shocks, and scope for national or local resilience building among developing countries.

Climate Resilience Network Development Scoping grants are intended to support the building of new researcher-practitioner-policy maker teams to search for novel solutions for complex climate risks. Successful teams will be invited to apply for a second stage round of larger Climate Resilience Network Plus awards to co-design solutions. The Climate Resilience Knowledge Manager (call for applications to be advertised separately) will support both stages through mentoring on co-production methods, enabling interaction across grants and with associated GCRF and DfID activity.

**Themes:**

The call is structured around 3 non-exclusive, themes, with successful projects expected to deploy at least one or, ideally more, approach. These draw on existing research frontiers addressing multiple risk problems – sometimes described as wicked problems - for which no one solution is readily available. Such problems require interdisciplinary approaches to observe, analyse and interpret complex scenarios and to facilitate the voice of multiple stakeholders through which new relationships can be built for practical outcomes that are informed, inclusive and integrate across policy domains. This requires excellent science working in innovative ways with research users. The 3 themes, all addressing the consequences of climate change, are: (1) system behaviours and responses including the amplifying or dampening effect of external pressures; (2) Institutional capacity for decisionmaking across risk domains; (3) Managing complexity in disaster response and recovery.

- (1) *System behaviours and responses including the amplifying or dampening effect of external pressures*; e.g. identification of metrics and observation systems to systematically track direct and indirect loss and damage including intangibles to describe the ways in which connectivity within livelihood or production systems shape loss spreading, or containment, between sectors and implications for poverty. This could include local systems, e.g. to track loss spreading or containment within livelihood or production systems and value chains; or global e.g. focusing on tracking the functioning the macroeconomics of commodity market speculation following climate events that intensify food insecurity for the poor in LMICs.
- (2) *Institutional capacity for decision-making across risk domains*; e.g. to optimise of risk tradeoffs including through the consideration of social justice and ecological integrity; the institutional context and cascading implications for wellbeing of forced decision-making, especially amongst the poor. This is especially important for making resilience more sensitive to gender and intersectionality and working with decision-makers to consider trade-offs operating over different scales of time and space and dis-articulated geographies.
- (3) *Managing complexity in disaster response and recovery*; e.g. complex management of emergencies involving multiple agencies, local priorities and timescales of responsibility at the nexus of food and water insecurity, conflict, displacement and environmental crisis.

This call follows a two-stage Network Plus model to stimulate a wide range of in-depth empirical contexts and to maximise scope for growing challenge-based global leadership groups. It is designed as part of a joint GCRF initiative with DFID to allow for problem definition at the interface of existing research/policy communities; the adaptation of networks in response to emerging empirical and policy demands; and the cross-fertilisation of networks with one another and associated GCRF and DFID programmes. It will bring together what have been mainly exclusive topics: a) largely sectoral resilience to climate change; and b) the compound experience of risk and risk management deployed by the

poor. Beyond a focus on LMICs, there are no geographical, scale or topic constraints in the scoping of the networks; diversity is to be welcomed. These are not exclusive, applicants can propose additional strategies.

The call will support up to 8 Network Scoping awards which will lead to up to 4 full Network Plus awards following a later invitation only commissioning phase. The Network Scoping awards will run from October 2020.

### **Research Ethics**

All GCRF projects must be underpinned by a strong research ethic based on mutual respect and understanding for different cultural, ethnic, social and economic beliefs and practices. Solutions to any development challenge(s) must be rooted in, and acceptable to, the institutions, communities and societies where they will operate.

Ethical issues should be interpreted broadly and may encompass areas where regulation and approval processes exist as well as areas where they do not. Applicants must ensure that the proposed research will be carried out to a high ethical standard and must clearly state how any potential ethical and health and safety issues have been considered and will be addressed, ensuring that all necessary ethical approval is in place before the research commences and all risks are minimised. More guidance can be found in the [ESRC Framework for Research Ethics](#).

### **Capacity Building**

An important aspect of GCRF is capacity development, UKRI and DfID strongly encourage all proposals to this call to identify research capacity-building activities as part of, and not separate to, the approach towards the network development. The focus should be on the quality and impact of the activity of the project, and how increasing capacity contributes to this. Examples of building capacity include:

- opportunities for those with relevant skills who have not previously worked on development relevant research projects to orient their research towards global issues
- support and mentoring for more junior team members
- co-design of research and related activity, and implementation with developing country partner staff

Please note that studentships are not eligible under this call. Further information on capacity development in relation to GCRF is available on the [ESRC website](#).

### **Equitable Partnerships**

Partnerships are a key pillar of the GCRF strategy. UKRI developed the following statement of expectation for research partnerships in consultation with researchers from East Africa. “Partnerships should be transparent and based on mutual respect. Partnerships should aim to have clearly articulated equitable distribution of resources, responsibilities, efforts and benefits. Partnerships should recognise different inputs, different interests and different desired outcomes and should ensure the ethical sharing and use of data which is responsive to the identified needs of society.”

## Funding

Applications are invited up to a maximum value of **£200,000 (100% fEC) and 15 months duration**. Please see Je-S Guidance for more information regarding costs and eligibility.

Successful projects will be eligible to apply for the second (Network Plus) stage of the process which will be launched in 2021.

### Funding of international Co-Investigators

GCRF calls will follow standard ESRC policies in that they will fund 100% of the justified costs for international co-investigators from established research organisations. ESRC's policy on the [inclusion of international co-investigators](#) will apply, with the exception that for the GCRF Collective Fund Programme calls **there is no cap on costs** associated with international co-investigators' contribution relative to the total project cost; no upper limit will be applied. This applies to all international co-investigators from all countries, whether on the [DAC list](#) or not, but all costs need to be fully justified.

We strongly encourage international co-investigators from countries not on the DAC list to make a significant contribution to their own research costs. Please see FAQ document for more information on non-UK non-DAC list organisation costs. If a co-investigator is from a country flagged as likely to graduate from the DAC list during the course of the project this should be treated as a country NOT on the DAC list.

The overhead rate for DAC list country co-investigators is **up to 20%** of the total direct costs (e.g. staff costs, T&S, conferences) incurred by that organisation. If a co-investigator is from a country flagged as likely to graduate from the DAC list during the course of the project this should be treated as a country NOT on the DAC list.

Further guidance is provided in the call-specific Je-S Guidance.

### ODA compliance statement

To comply with ODA requirements, proposals must make clear how their primary purpose is to promote the economic development and welfare of a developing country or countries. There are no priority countries, proposals may relate to any country or countries on the DAC list except those which are flagged as likely to graduate from the list during the course of the proposed project. If a country is flagged as likely to graduate it cannot be the primary focus of a proposal, although it can be included as an additional case study or comparison.

Applicants must clearly articulate their impact plans, demonstrating how they meet ODA requirements throughout their 'Case for Support' submission. In addition, all proposals must include a mandatory 'Non-UK Components' attachment addressing the following four questions:

- I. Which country/ countries on the OECD DAC list of ODA recipients (DAC list) will directly benefit from this proposal and are these countries likely to continue to be eligible to receive ODA for the duration of the research?

2. How is your proposal directly and primarily relevant to the development challenges of these countries? Please provide evidence of the development need and articulate how the proposed activity is appropriate to address this need.
3. How do you expect that the outcome of your proposed activities will promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the DAC list?
4. What approach(es) you will use to deliver development impact within the lifetime of the project and in the longer -term. Please consider the potential outcomes, the key beneficiary and stakeholder groups and how they will be engaged to enable development impact to be achieved.

Further guidance on how to submit the ODA compliance statement as an attachment is provided in the call-specific Je-S Guidance. General advice on ODA and links to other useful sources of information are provided on the [ESRC website](#) and UKRI guidance on ODA in relation to GCRF is available [here](#).

Initial ODA compliance assessment will take place within the ESRC, though final decisions may include input from commissioning panels as well as external sources of ODA expertise.

### **ODA transparency and reporting**

As part of the government's commitment to ODA transparency and in line with DfID ODA reporting requirements, UKRI is responsible for publishing information about UKRI ODA grants including project titles and summaries via the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) registry and via DFID's national statistics. The purpose of publishing information via the IATI registry is to make information about ODA easily accessible to governments, stakeholders and other relevant groups in beneficiary countries. All UKRI funded projects from this programme will be published in this way. Please therefore write your project title and summary in such a way that they are meaningful and accessible to non-specialist audiences, following publication. We would be grateful if you would ensure that the project title and summary are written in plain English and avoid the use of jargon, acronyms, puns and plays on words. Please also make clear in your project title and summary how your project is ODA compliant, for example by identifying the development challenge(s) being addressed, the aims of the project and the beneficiary countries.

Please note: Policy on ODA funding is under review and may affect this call. If applicants are planning to include Chinese partners, please contact the ESRC office for further guidance **before submitting your proposal**.

### **Eligibility**

**Lead research organisation** – exceptionally, for this call, principal investigators based at established overseas research organisations **are eligible** to apply in addition to those from UK organisations that are [eligible for UKRI funding](#). Proposals may be submitted by individuals who are not established members of the proposed host institution. In these circumstances, by submitting the proposal the RO confirms that it guarantees to provide facilities for the applicant as if an established member of staff for the duration of the grant.

The lead organisation will be responsible for the overall management of the award including control, disbursement and assurance of funds, including financial reporting of funds going overseas.

Co-investigators may be based anywhere in the world, but the international co-investigator's research organisation must submit a 'Letter of Support'. (Further information is provided within the Je-S guidance.) This is to ensure comparability of standing between international organisations and UKRI recognised UK research organisations and to ensure research capacity and commitment to the project.

The ESRC does not allow the resubmission of previously unsuccessful proposals to any schemes, unless the applicant has been explicitly invited to do so.

### **Due Diligence**

As part of UKRI funding assurance, non-UK research organisations which have successful applications will be required to complete a UKRI Overseas Due Diligence Questionnaire.

For UK organisations hosting non-UK co-investigators, due diligence checks are for UKRI's assurance purposes only and do not replace the due diligence requirements of the lead organisation. However, when obtaining information from non-UK research organisations UKRI will request permission to share the information provided with the lead organisation. The lead organisation can then use this information for their own due diligence processes should they wish.

### **Safeguarding**

UKRI condemns all forms of harm and abuse, including bullying and harassment. We take a zero tolerance approach to harm and abuse to any individual employed through or associated with our programmes in all contexts; whether in humanitarian or fragile and conflict-affected settings, in other field contexts, or within the international or UK research and development community which we fund. We expect institutions to promote the highest standards in organisational culture, and have in place the systems and procedures required to prevent and tackle all incidents of harm and abuse. Applications must detail how they will identify and manage safeguarding risks and what policies and procedures will be in place to enable reporting and investigation of allegations when they arise.

### **Reporting**

Successful applicants will be required to report research outcomes on Researchfish in line with standard UKRI Terms and Conditions. In addition to the standard outcomes all award holders will need to complete sections under the 'GCRF Collective Fund' outcomes.

### **Assessment criteria**

Applications to this call will be assessed in accordance with the following criteria:

Capacity building and International partnerships

- Assessment will consider the degree and quality of pathways to engagement with appropriate developing country partners (including researchers, practitioners and policy makers) and how they would play a leading role in challenge identification and the design and implementation of a future Network Plus project.
- The proposal should identify an appropriate range of relevant partners, demonstrating how these partnerships are beneficial to the award, ethical, equitable and sustainable beyond the initial award. For example, is their engagement meaningful, substantive and clear? How motivated are they by the potential benefit of the research for them?
- The applicant should clearly articulate to what extent the award will lead to new or enhanced research capacity for addressing international development challenges in the relevant partner countries. For example, is the proposal informed by evidence of previous impact research?

### Impact

- Assessment will consider the clarity and significance of the impact from the scoping activities proposed. Does the proposed award identify realistic pathways with the potential to deliver a breadth of highly significant and measurable impacts?
- Have the applicants taken into consideration relevant developing country contexts and demonstrated local appetite and capacity to implement solutions? Is there potential for the partnerships, resources, capacity and capability to be developed through a future Network Plus and be sustained and strengthened beyond the end of the award?
- What are the benefits for the researchers and non-academics taking part? Will the project inform future research, establish or strengthen relationships with partners, or increase impact from research already undertaken?

### Management capability and strength of the proposed award

- Reviewers and panel members will assess the applicant's capacity to manage the project by considering whether they have demonstrated the appropriate skills and experience to deliver the proposed vision and effectively develop the award through to a future Network Plus proposal.
- Is there a demonstrable expertise across the relevant areas of the call and beyond? Is there an appropriate balance of leadership and management between the proposed partnerships, including an appropriate balance between developed and developing country partners?
- Does the proposed future Network Plus have the potential to act as an exemplar of research excellence and innovation in the field, to define and drive forward the agenda for the role of interdisciplinary research in international development?

### Quality and coherence of the proposed activities

- Assessment will consider the quality and coherence of the activities proposed and determine whether they meet the requirements of the GCRF, particularly in relation to ODA compliance.
- Are the activities proposed appropriate to the impact opportunity identified? Are the aims of the project realistic/achievable? Is there a clear explanation for the scale, timing and resources requested?



- Does the proposal demonstrate flexibility to adapt over the lifetime of the award with a clear view of building a future Network Plus which will respond with agility to opportunities arising? Does the proposal outline an appropriate framework for monitoring and evaluation, and identify a robust set of deliverables, indicators and measures for success?

#### Value for money and sustainability

- Assessment will consider whether the proposed award is good value for money i.e. the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcome. This will include 'economy' considerations (the cost of inputs such as meeting room hire, procuring services), 'efficiency' measures such as the number of participants that benefit, and 'outcome' measures such as the extent to which a positive change has taken place.
- Is the scale of impacts reasonable for the funding requested and staff time included? Are activity costs reasonable? Is the partnership building potential of the project, the likely contribution to the utilisation of knowledge, and the wider societal benefits commensurate with the requested resources?
- Is there a clear plan for further developing the project and/or its outputs into a future Network Plus award?

Applications will be considered by a specially convened panel of academic and non-academic experts at a meeting in June 2020 with the funders reserving the right to shortlist proposals for assessment in the event of a high number of applications being received. The panel will be asked to assess the proposals against the fit to the call and the assessment criteria above. The panel will then make formal recommendations to the funders. Funding decisions are expected to be announced in July 2020 and awards are expected to commence on 1 October 2020. Successful applicants will have the opportunity to provide input to the selection process for the Climate Resilience Knowledge Manager.

#### **Application process**

The closing date for proposals is **16:00 UK time on 25 March 2020**. No proposal received after this deadline will be considered for funding.

All proposals must be made through the [Joint Electronic Submission \(Je-S\) system](#), only those proposals submitted through the Je-S system will be accepted for processing. Proposals must be costed and approved by the relevant institutional authority at the research organisation before submission.

In order to use the Je-S system, principal investigators, co-investigators and their organisations need to register on the system a minimum of 1 week before the call closing date. Registration of both the principal investigator's organisation and their own details must be completed before the proposal can be formally submitted to the ESRC.

Care and attention must be given to completing the online form correctly. Proposals that are not completed correctly may be rejected by the ESRC office.

The ESRC may require applicants to amend parts of proposals, such as the length of attachments or the inclusion of missing mandatory attachments, as a condition of accepting the proposal for processing.

All applicants are strongly advised to follow the Je-S guidance for this call and consult the ESRC's [Research Funding Guide](#), which sets out the rules and regulations governing its funding.

### **What we will do with your information**

UK Research and Innovation understands the importance of protecting personal information and is committed to complying with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR). It is committed to fostering a culture of transparency and accountability by demonstrating compliance with the principles set out in the Regulation.

GDPR sets out the rules for how organisations must process personal data and sensitive personal data about living individuals. It gives individuals the right to find out what personal data is held about them by organisations and to request to see, correct or erase personal data held.

UK Research and Innovation needs to collect and process personal data about the people (including employees and individuals) it interacts with to carry out its business effectively. UK Research and Innovation is committed to ensuring that employees are appropriately trained and supported to achieve compliance with GDPR. Click [here](#) to read UKRI's full GDPR Policy.

Please be aware that by submission of a proposal, the applicants and organisations involved will be giving consent to the sharing of data between the funders involved in this activity – this is the Research Councils that are part of UKRI and DfID.

### **Commissioning timetable**

January-March 2020	Call open for Network Development Scoping grants
March-May 2020	Call open for Knowledge Manager position
June 2020	Commissioning panel for Network Development Scoping grants
July 2020	Interview panel for Knowledge Manager
October 2020	Successful Knowledge Manager and Scoping grants start
June 2021	Call closes for Network Plus applications
September 2021	Commissioning panel for Network Plus applications
January 2022	Successful Network Plus applications start
December 2023	Knowledge Manager role and Network Plus grants end

### **Contacts**

All queries or comments about this call should be addressed to:  
[climateresilience@esrc.ukri.org](mailto:climateresilience@esrc.ukri.org)

Enquiries relating to technical aspects of the Je-S form should be addressed to:

- Je-S Helpdesk  
Email: [jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org](mailto:jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org)  
Telephone: +44 01793 444164

The Helpdesk is staffed Monday–Thursday 08:30–17:00, Friday 08:30–16:30 UK time (excluding public and other holidays).