

06 April 2016 PB AGENDA ITEM 7

## **WUN Integrated Research and Development Program**

Dear Colleagues

Over the past year we have further integrated our research and partnership development through the **WUN Research Development Fund**, the **Global Challenge Development Fund**; and the follow through in strengthening "Funding Ready" programs in bids supported by the **WUN Sustainability Fund**.

The AAG (Chair: David Hogg) will report in Maastricht on a further analysis and direction of funding strategies.

I am providing this summary to present a joined up approach, while incorporating ideas and suggestions that I have received during wide consultations during WUN partner visits, governance teleconferences and stakeholder advice. These also raised issues where clarity is missing and where we need to understand the overall strategy. I welcome any feedback and suggestions for greater shaping and sharpening.

**1. WUN Research Development Fund.** This seed fund takes 35% of WUN subscription income and invests in a catalytic fund to build research and education partnerships across the network. The program establishes distinct interdisciplinary research groups (IRGs) to advance our work in the four Global Challenges and associated research. The call for proposals, competitive review and award are annual, commencing June 1st with closure 31 October, with awards funded in December. A priority criterion for award of the RDF is that there is a clear plan for resource bids. Overall, the WUN Research Portfolio has a steady state globally of **90-100 Interdisciplinary Research groups**, with about 15 being initiated each year through the RDF, and about 15 completing and retiring having met their targets, or due to institutional or personnel changes.

**2. Global Challenge Development Fund.** Each of the Global Challenges is awarded £15000 per annum to develop the program as they consider best in the year ahead. These proposals come from the Chair of the Global Challenge Steering Group to the Executive Director, and are normally reviewed through the AAG.

The outcomes of these investments are designed to advance the Global Challenge overall, map relevant research strengths across WUN and through WUN Plus associates, hold strategic research workshops and implement research programs appropriate to a global network of researchers, students and allied governments, business, international stakeholders or NGOs. Recently funds have supported Research Fellows who work in joint programs between WUN and International Agencies (WHO, Institute of Migration).

**3. WUN Sustainability Fund.** This fund, approved by the Partnership Board in 2013 for an annual contribution from each member of £10000 for three years 2013-15, is for accelerating research programs that are "funding ready" in identifying sources of funding and supporting the expert preparation of bids. The fund is led and managed by the Executive Director in consultation with the Chairs of the Global Challenge Steering Groups and the AAG. The Partnership Board contributions have now closed and no further funds will be requested. The fund is managed prudently and is expected to extend to end 2018.

A "WUN top ten fundable programs" list is maintained and the lead programs are prepared for bids by the research leaders, with the help of expert bid managers familiar with the supply-demand dimensions of the agencies being approached. This initiative has proceeded rather slower than expected, with Global

Challenge Chairs requesting more time to build program strengths. Requests for support can be made at any time of year through the Global Challenge Chairs. As with all WUN funding, proposals are reviewed for quality, feasibility, impact and sustainability.

**4. Annual Reporting and Impact.** Each year, we request that the leader of each Interdisciplinary Research Group provides a short annual report with a summary paragraph on progress against objectives, together with any publications, grants, conferences or mobility arising from WUN support. This information is vital and is used in annual reports, communications and media, marketing and funding bids.

We are grateful that we have achieved a near 100% reporting this year, thanks to the support of the IRG heads. However, the reminders and pursuit required from the small Secretariat is too high.

There have been comments from a few who feel that this reporting is too onerous from an RDF award that averages only £10-15000. Some have questioned the request for the annual summary reports after 2-3 years.

The reason is that we want the seed fund to grow trees and for those trees to be visible. The initial small investment can stimulate a significant program in the subsequent year or two, and this can attract major funds from other sources (a criterion of the RDF) or with further support from the sustainability Fund. In any event, when we approach governments, business for major foundations for international funding, it is absolutely essential that we can provide a track record that shows we produce results.

Please do comply with this minimal reporting so that we can maximize our impact, results and future support.

**5. Success Stories.** There are examples of remarkable success that have grown from the modest investments and interdisciplinary teams of WUN. These include some major international programs that lead their fields (Critical Zones - Steve Banwart; INFLAME – Susan Prescott; Farm Platforms – Mark Eiser), and others that have brought evidence and influenced global policy options (Public Health – NCDs in the Sustainable Development Goals – Mark Hanson; Internationalisation of Higher Education and Research – OECD).

It is interesting to note the prime characteristics of success in these and other examples. The criteria are strong leadership and vision; a truly interdisciplinary and international team; often an association and leadership with an international research association or society; and usually a very strong commitment and persistence.

In further developing the capacity, competitiveness, and contributions of WUN in addressing pressing Global Challenges, and in our team approach that can achieve much more together than is possible as individuals, we will continue to learn, focus and strengthen the quality of the research and education portfolio, the opportunities for emerging and established researchers, the influence on international thought and policy leaders, and the attraction of funds to deliver on our objectives.

Yours sincerely



John Hearn