

PROLINNOVA Guidelines No. 12

Guidelines for selecting and coordinating communication with Friends of PROLINNOVA

During an Open-Space session at the PROLINNOVA International Partners Workshop (IPW) in June 2015, the idea of setting up a group of “Friends of PROLINNOVA” was discussed in small groups and agreed in the subsequent plenary session. This new structure is meant to help the network and specific country/subregional/ regional platforms in terms of mentoring, acquiring funds, improving multistakeholder partnerships and enhancing public relations. It should complement and reinforce the guidance that the PROLINNOVA Oversight Group (POG) gives to the network, without having the responsibilities of supervision and arbitration held by the POG. The Friends of PROLINNOVA should be made up of volunteers who have been closely associated with PROLINNOVA in the past and would like to continue to add value through their particular skills and linkages.

Roles of Friends of PROLINNOVA

Roles of the Friends of PROLINNOVA could include some or all of the following:

- Mentoring in selected areas of PROLINNOVA work in which the individuals have expertise
- Assisting in network strategy development
- Providing feedback on guidelines drawn up for the operation of the PROLINNOVA network
- Advising the network or specific Country/Subregional/Regional Platforms (CPs/SRPs/RPs) with regard to funding opportunities (e.g. drawing attention to opportunities; giving their assessment of probability of success in pursuing certain funding opportunities; offering suggestions regarding content, strategy and links to enhance probability of success in acquiring funds)
- Helping improve the quality of proposals drawn up by the CPs/SRPs/RPs and the International Secretariat by providing feedback on concept notes and proposals
- Linking with new potential partners and donors
- Helping improve PROLINNOVA products and disseminating them more widely
- Making the work of PROLINNOVA more widely known (as “champions”), e.g. by bringing concepts and examples of PROLINNOVA work into international discussions and meetings, and thus increasing the influence of the network internationally.

Composition of Friends of PROLINNOVA

The group will initially be small (8–10 persons). It will be composed of people from a range of stakeholder groups and continents and will have a good gender balance.

All persons currently active as CP coordinators, POG members and IST members are not eligible to become a member of this group of Friends, but some of them could join later, if they so wish, e.g. after stepping down from the POG. Over time, some degree of overlap may develop in terms of the people regarded as Friends of PROLINNOVA, International Support Team (IST) members and experienced Southern partners mentoring other Southern partners – but this should not be a problem, as long as all are engaged in providing support to the network in promoting farmer-led research and innovation.

Procedure for nominating and inviting Friends of PROLINNOVA¹

Anyone in the PROLINNOVA CPs, SRPs, RPs, IST and POG as well as Friends of PROLINNOVA themselves may suggest people to be included in the group.

¹ With time, as subregional and regional PROLINNOVA platforms develop, this procedure will be adjusted.

Suggestions are to be sent to the International Secretariat, based currently at the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), and should include: name of person; institutional affiliation, if any; nationality; country of residence; email address; Skype ID; telephone number; justification for inviting this person to be a Friend of PROLINNOVA. The International Secretariat will check that all necessary information has been provided and then send the suggestion to the POG. The POG can decide by email or during a Skype or face-to-face meeting on each suggestion as it comes.

The POG Chairs will invite the proposed Friend of PROLINNOVA to join the group. If an individual accepts, the POG will ask her/him for a bio-sketch and a brief statement about why the individual would like to be in the group. The name, biosketch and statement will be circulated via the Yahooogroup to the PROLINNOVA network and will be posted on a dedicated webpage on the PROLINNOVA website under "About Us".

Criteria for selecting Friends of PROLINNOVA

Persons selected to be Friends of PROLINNOVA will be those who have been closely associated with the PROLINNOVA network for several years. Individuals will be selected primarily on the basis of their outstanding contributions in recent years in terms of collaboration with and/or advisory support to the PROLINNOVA network, particularly their contributions to PROLINNOVA strategy discussions.

Mode of operation of Friends of PROLINNOVA

The term of office will be indefinite, i.e. until the Friend requests to leave the group.

Only a select group of people will be invited to become Friends of PROLINNOVA, but there will be no limit to the size of the group.

The time inputs of the Friends of PROLINNOVA would depend on their readiness to reflect and communicate with the PROLINNOVA Platforms and IST – and the time they can create for this.

PROLINNOVA CPs, SRPs, RPs, IST and POG members may pose questions or requests to one or more Friends of PROLINNOVA, and the Friends may offer any suggestions they may have to the PROLINNOVA network, at any time.

The IST will ask for volunteers among the Friends of PROLINNOVA to provide peer review of major publications of the network. It will also share all major reports of the network (e.g. annual report, project reports, updated 4-pager) and publications with the Friends in order to keep them updated about network achievements.

Unless individuals in the group prefer to have direct contact, the communication between them and the Platforms and POG will be made through a person in the IST. Communication between the Friends of PROLINNOVA and the IST – and possibly with the Platforms and POG, if desired by the Friends – will be primarily by electronic means (email, Skype or other Web-based communication platform).

However, if a PROLINNOVA meeting is being held in a country where a Friend of PROLINNOVA resides, this person will be invited to join the meeting to allow direct communication with network members. Where possible, local travel costs may be covered out of the budget for the workshop. Other Friends of PROLINNOVA – i.e. also those not residing in the country where the meeting is held – will be invited to join the annual IPW, but on their own costs, as PROLINNOVA does not have a budget to cover their costs.

There are currently no plans that the IST will facilitate interaction among the Friends of PROLINNOVA. However, all Friends will be provided with a list of group members together with contact details and may choose to interact with each other, e.g. to develop an idea together to support, stimulate or challenge PROLINNOVA network members.