

PROLINNOVA Institutional Guidelines 15:

Procedures for reviewing funding opportunities and for reviewing and submitting concept notes and proposals made in the name of Prolinnova

The partners in the Prolinnova network bring together their own resources – financial and in kind – to be able to exchange with and learn from each other and to promote an approach of farmer-led innovation, research and development in agriculture and natural resource management. They may also seek external funding for jointly exploring new thematic initiatives and methodologies and for supporting especially South–South learning / mentoring and international networking. Any individual or organisation in a Country Platform (CP) recognised by the Prolinnova Oversight Group (POG) may submit concept notes (CNs) or proposals for external funding (i.e. from outside the partner organisations in the CP) with specific reference to its Prolinnova affiliation, if they follow these procedures agreed within the Prolinnova Community of Practice.

A. Procedures for review of a funding opportunity by the IST

A funding opportunity (calls for proposals, small grant schemes etc) may be identified by members of the International Support Team (IST), e.g. a Subregional Coordinator (SRC), or by individuals or organisations within a CP or by members of the Prolinnova Oversight Group (POG) or the Friends of Prolinnova.

Once a funding opportunity has been identified by or made known to the IST, and provided there is at least two week's advance notice before the deadline for submitting, the IST should do the following before sharing the information with the CPs:

- A designated member of the IST or the POG should read through the call and then share it with all IST members, indicating to them:
 - the fit between the donor's orientation and the strategic objectives and approach of Prolinnova
 - the clear linkage with Prolinnova's vision, mission and values
 - the feasibility, focus and scope of activities as they relate to the objectives
 - the eligibility criteria, especially with regard to type of organisations to lead and be involved in the project, and the eligible countries
 - the possibility of a multi-CP application
 - the deadline for application.
- The funding opportunity will then be discussed during the next monthly IST meeting. If the submission deadline is very close, the IST could schedule a specific meeting to discuss the opportunity and whether or not to share it with the CPs; if necessary, this could also be discussed asynchronously by email.

Only in very exceptional cases, e.g. when a call fits Prolinnova perfectly but is at shorter than two weeks' notice, should the opportunity be considered without following the procedure described above.

B. Procedures for CP partners preparing to submit a CN or proposal in the name of Prolinnova

In the case of external funding opportunities identified by individuals or organisations in CPs themselves,

- The individual or organisation that intends to submit a CN or proposal using the Prolinnova name/ affiliation shall, where possible, obtain the endorsement of the National Steering Committee (NSC) in that country and inform the relevant subregional or regional coordinator of the Prolinnova network. This also applies to involvement in a consortium responding to a call for proposals, even if the Prolinnova member organisation is not the lead organisation of the consortium.

- The (sub)regional coordinator can then advise the individual or CP about what s/he sees as the potential interest from a Prolinnova viewpoint and whether other Prolinnova entities are approaching the same donor or competing for the same call. S/he can also advise how other CP members or other CPs might be included.
- If using the Prolinnova name in fundraising efforts, a host organisation of a CP will include at least one and preferably more than one other CP member organisation in the proposal. Wherever possible, opportunities for including more than one CP in a proposal should be explored.
- The aim and activities in the work included in any CN or proposal in the name of Prolinnova must be in line with the Prolinnova principles and approach (see E. Guidelines for reviewers). If a large consortium is submitting a CN or proposal that makes specific reference to Prolinnova, some of the Prolinnova lines of work or components of its strategic plan must be clearly visible in the CN or proposal.
- Early drafts of the proposal can be sent to members of the IST for comments and advice, who may also request POG members or Friends of Prolinnova to comment.

In the case that the SRC informed one or more CPs about an external funding opportunity:

- The informed CPs should express their interest to the SRC within **five working days** or sooner, to allow sufficient time for the review process. The CP coordinator shall inform the NSC about the opportunity and the intention to be involved in submitting a CN or proposal.
- The SRC will hold a briefing session with the interested CPs so that all can gain a deeper understanding of the funding opportunity (objectives, target groups, expected outcomes, relevant topics etc).
- The SRC will assist the CPs to assess the relevance for them to submit a CN or proposal and their ability to handle the project, in case it is approved.

C. Ensuring quality of CNs and proposals submitted in the name of Prolinnova

In order to ensure that the quality of the CNs and proposals is in line with the principles and standards of the network, the following procedures should be followed for reviewing CNs and proposals with specific reference to Prolinnova affiliation before they are submitted.

Africa region and subregions¹

- An **individual CP** intending to submit a CN or proposal will send the draft to the relevant SCR at least 10 days before the submission deadline. The SRC and the POG member for the subregion will review the draft within five working days and decide whether or not the draft can be submitted in the name of Prolinnova. This will give the submitting CP five days to take on board the comments before submitting or – if the go-ahead is not given – to revise the proposal so that it is not affiliated with Prolinnova.
- In the case of a CN or proposal involving **multiple CPs in one or both of the African subregions**, the relevant SRC(s) will discuss with the interested CPs to reach a common understanding of the objective and to decide what will be included in the CN or proposal. The SRC(s) will draft the CN or proposal together with the CP coordinators or other resource persons designated by the CP coordinators. At least the POG member(s) for the subregion(s) will review the CN or proposal and decide on the go-ahead to submit. Other interested POG members may also review and comment on the proposal.

Asia region

- A CN or proposal drawn up by **an individual CP** will be reviewed by the regional coordinator before being sent to the Asian regional coordinator and POG member representing the Asian CPs, who will make comments and decide on the final go-ahead to submit.

¹ These guidelines are currently more detailed for the case of CPs in Africa, as they are more numerous and are also further advanced in the process of network regionalisation than are the CPs in Asia or the Andes.

- The regional coordinator will co-draft CNs or proposals involving **multiple CPs in Asia**, in consultation with the CPs concerned. The POG member representing the Asian CPs will review the CN or proposal and will decide on the final go-ahead to submit.

Andes region

- A CN or proposal drawn up by **an individual CP** will be reviewed by the POG member representing the region and one member of the IST, who will decide on the final go-ahead to submit.
- A CN or proposal drawn up by **multiple CPs in the Andes** will be reviewed by a POG co-chair and one member of the IST, who will decide on the final go-ahead to submit.

Multi-regional

- In the case of a **multi-regional** CN or proposal, at least two persons from a review panel of four (two from the IST and two from the POG) will review the document and give the final go-ahead.

D. Timeframe for reviews

The leader for the CN/proposal will send the draft to the reviewers at least two and if possible **three weeks or more** before the submission deadline, to allow time for feedback and interactions with other potential collaborators within and outside the CP. The reviewers will provide feedback within **five working days** of receiving the draft. If a reviewer realises that s/he cannot complete the review within five days, s/he will find another suitable person within the Prolinnova Community of Practice to make the review within the timeframe. If the reviewers have not responded within this timeframe, the initiator of the CN or proposal should continue to make the application, so as not to miss the opportunity. However, the submitted CN or proposal should be shared with the (sub)regional coordinator and (sub)regional POG member, and all efforts should be made to include their comments and suggestions in a final, revised version of the proposal.

E. Guidelines for reviewers

1. The reviewers will ensure that the content and language in the CN or proposal is ***in line with the Prolinnova approach and the current strategic plan***. For example, it should deal with one or more of the following elements:
 - identifying and recognising local innovation
 - facilitating farmer-led joint research & innovation (Participatory Innovation Development / PID)
 - building multistakeholder partnership to promote local innovation and PID
 - facilitating the use of Local Innovation Support Facilities/Funds (LISFs)
 - sharing and learning within and between countries about local innovation and PID
 - advocacy or policy dialogue to integrate the promotion of local innovation and PID into agricultural policy and practice
 - building or strengthening governance arrangements that provide sufficient space and voice for farmers and their organisations and for NGOs.
2. The reviewers will ensure that all CNs and proposals incorporate sufficient attention to gender & social (also disability) inclusion issues, in particular:
 - How women will **participate** in the project activities
 - How women are expected to **benefit** from the project activities
 - How women are involved in the **governance** of the project activities
 - How less well-off households that are more vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity will participate and benefit
 - How people who are marginalised/disenfranchised because of ethnic, racial, religious, sexual, political or any other orientation are included in project activities (where applicable)

- How people with disabilities are included in project activities
 - Whether the M&E system includes disaggregated data and indicators to measure the above.
3. The reviewers will check and suggest that each CN or proposal, whether for individual or multiple CPs, includes activities and budget lines to **allow for sharing and learning between countries** (e.g. International Partners Workshop, regional workshop – at least one such event each year), as well as for (sub)regional coordination and monitoring and, if necessary, for backstopping by other IST members or experienced partners in other CPs (South–South mentoring). If this is not possible, e.g. in the case of small CP proposals that support farmer innovation but cannot carry such costs, there must be an explanation for not including such inter-CP sharing and learning activities and budget lines.
 4. The reviewers will check the CN or proposal for aspects related to **governance** (transparency, accountability, feedback mechanisms, farmer and NGO leadership – see also Prolinnova Institutional Guidelines No. 2) and **safeguarding** (measures to prevent and respond to exploitation, harassment and abuse of anyone engaged in the project – organisational staff and community members).
 5. The reviewers will check the CN or proposal for attention to **sustainability**, including social sustainability (changed behaviour and improved social wellbeing of communities engaged), environmental sustainability (activities do not cause damage to the environment or deplete natural resources, i.e. do no harm) and economic sustainability (supporting communities to improve their livelihoods).
 6. The reviewers will provide feedback on the general quality of the proposal:
 - realism of the budget amounts in relation to the planned activities
 - completeness in addressing all the needed sections
 - clarity and appropriateness of the governance and management structure
 - any “red flags”: issues or use of language that could reflect poorly on Prolinnova as a whole (e.g. unduly derogatory description of government/public service officials, references to corruption)
 - aspects of the proposal likely to affect acceptance: coherence, structure, flow, relevance and readability (grammar, spelling, clarity).