

Prolinnova Guidelines 13

Selecting a host organisation for a Prolinnova Country Platform

In the context of Prolinnova, a host organisation is an entity that belongs to the national Prolinnova multistakeholder network (Country Platform, CP) and is willing to provide administrative and financial services to the CP. Funds and assets for CP activities under the Prolinnova umbrella are managed by the host organisation, but important decisions of the CP on financial and administration matters need to be made by the CP's National Steering Committee (NSC) members. The host organisation needs to develop a procedure for the decisions made by the NSC to be brought to the attention of the head of the host organisation, who may have the authority to approve financial and administrative requests.

A representative of the host organisation (a relevant staff member, preferably the head of the host organisation or someone in a leading position in the organisation) should be a member of the NSC. The coordinator of the CP, who could be recruited by the NSC, may or may not be a regular staff member of the host organisation. If s/he is a regular staff member of the host organisation, then s/he would be released for the tasks of CP coordinator. S/he may also be hired in on a part- or full-time basis for the task and paid through Prolinnova-related project funds. S/he is an *ex-officio* member of the NSC and plays the role of a secretariat; this involves handling of all Prolinnova documents, information and communication materials, and external communications, as well as coordination of the national network and any projects carried out under its umbrella. The representative of the host organisation in the NSC will supervise the CP coordinator on behalf of the NSC.

For ease of communication and better interactions, it is advisable that the CP coordinator (in case s/he is recruited) works in the office of the host organisation. In this case, the host organisation would be expected to provide office space for the CP coordinator. However, a CP coordinator may also work from his/her own office/organisation, i.e. not necessarily in the office of the host organisation.

The host organisation, the CP coordinator and the NSC need to familiarise themselves with Prolinnova's guidelines (<https://prolinnova.net/prolinnova-guidelines/>) and communicate them to the CP partners. These guidelines are to be followed in facilitating the operations of the country network.

Choosing an appropriate host organisation is extremely important, as it has a tremendous impact on the work of the network. The following criteria and principles should help to guide the CP in choosing an appropriate host organisation.

A CP host organisation needs to be:

- An organisation that shares the principles of Prolinnova; it should have experience in carrying out Prolinnova-like, participatory community-development activities on its own, and its management should be aware and supportive of and open to the principles and approaches of Prolinnova;

- An organisation with a flexible and uncomplicated institutional culture with respect to financial and administrative matters, but also one with good oversight and integrity that exercises due diligence. This is a key factor while choosing a host organisation. Experience has taught Prolinnova that nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) are often more suitable in this respect. However, non-NGO members of the CP could also be proposed as a candidate for host organisation, as long as the NSC members unanimously agree that the financial and administrative systems of the organisation are rigorous but not bureaucratic;
- An organisation in which the leaders are capable of and are recognised for their ability in networking and advocacy with multiple stakeholders in agricultural research and development (ARD);
- An organisation that has a high level of acceptance and respect among the potential stakeholders who could/would join the CP in the future. If the host organisation has a poor reputation in financial, staff and general management, communication, administration and similar matters, this will have a negative effect on expansion of membership and on being able to engage and succeed in ARD policy dialogue and fundraising;
- An organisation that is promoting approaches and activities that do not contradict with Prolinnova's concepts of ecologically oriented and sustainable agriculture, participatory approaches and gender issues; it should be operating at the grassroots, particularly in projects relevant to small-scale family farmers, gender equity and environmental concerns;
- An organisation that has a strong fundraising capacity and enjoys a high level of trust among many donors that are supporting ARD;
- An organisation that has well-functioning Internet and telephone facilities to enable communication with partners within and beyond the country;
- An organisation that is willing to contribute to the budget of the network, at least, in kind, and seek creative ways of financing the work of Prolinnova;
- An organisation that is registered with the given (local/national) authorities in the country and is certified as a legal entity;
- An organisation that has been operational for at least two years with a minimum of four staff members who have experience in conducting participatory agricultural development activities among small-scale farming communities;
- An organisation that has transparent financial administration with annual audits and reports that are in the public domain and an unblemished financial track record;
- An organisation that can provide referees and is willing to undergo due diligence as required by the Prolinnova Oversight Group (POG).