

TEN WAYS FUNDERS CAN INFLUENCE EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS

1**Inclusive agenda-setting**

Working with governments, funders and research communities in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) to develop research programmes that meet their needs. This requires taking the time to develop strategic priorities independent of budgetary pressures and being open and honest about the objectives of funders.

2**Funding new research questions and valuing complementary skills and knowledge:**

New questions answered using complementary competencies are more likely to lead mutual benefits to all. Funders can value the contributions that each partner brings including resources such as access to local biodiversity and genetic resources, data, networks and local knowledge.

3**Setting the tone**

Funders can set the tone around expectations of equity within partnerships. This includes providing clear guidelines and recognising the time and costs of building international collaborations.

4**Rewarding skilled project managers and team players**

Managing diverse research teams that are equitable, culturally-sensitive yet rigorous and impactful requires skills that are under-emphasized in academic training. Funders can ask project leaders about their approach to managing collaborations and build in project management resources.

5**Looking for equality beyond the leaders**

Equity for a wider group engaged with the research including non-academic partners, students, technicians and contractors is important. Institutional diversity, with the inclusion of a wide-range of perspectives, has been observed to be an important factor in successful collaborative initiatives.

6**Equitable budgets, research and financial management**

Funders should be consistent in funding allowable to Northern and Southern partners, including for overheads, equipment costs and salary levels. Directing financial and research management through Northern institutions is perceived to influence power relations and equitability. Funders can directly fund Southern institutions, partner with Southern governments or work with regional funds such as the Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESA). However, flexibility is also important, enabling teams to develop structures that respond to different capacities and challenges.

7**Providing ongoing institutional capacity strengthening**

The ability of research organisations to support and manage international research projects plays a major role in whether they are successful. To ensure these projects lead to longer-term sustainability funders need to plan their role in programmes to monitor the partnerships and build institutional capacity.

8**Widening participation**

Supporting research partnerships beyond the 'usual suspects' requires reaching untapped excellence in LMICs and more proactively building research networks, both North-South and South-South. This also requires a nuanced understanding of the varying research abilities, infrastructure and contexts in different countries.

9**Investing for the long-term**

Trust is a vital component of research collaborations and takes time to build. There is some evidence that longer-term research partnerships are more successful, but funding systems do not always support sustained North-South research collaborations.

10**Working closely with other funders and agencies in the North and South**

Improving consistency and join-up amongst funders is needed to simplify application systems and reduce duplication. This includes increased partnership and communication with Southern ministries and agencies about projects in their country and more matched-effort or co-funded programmes.

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For more information on equitable partnerships

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