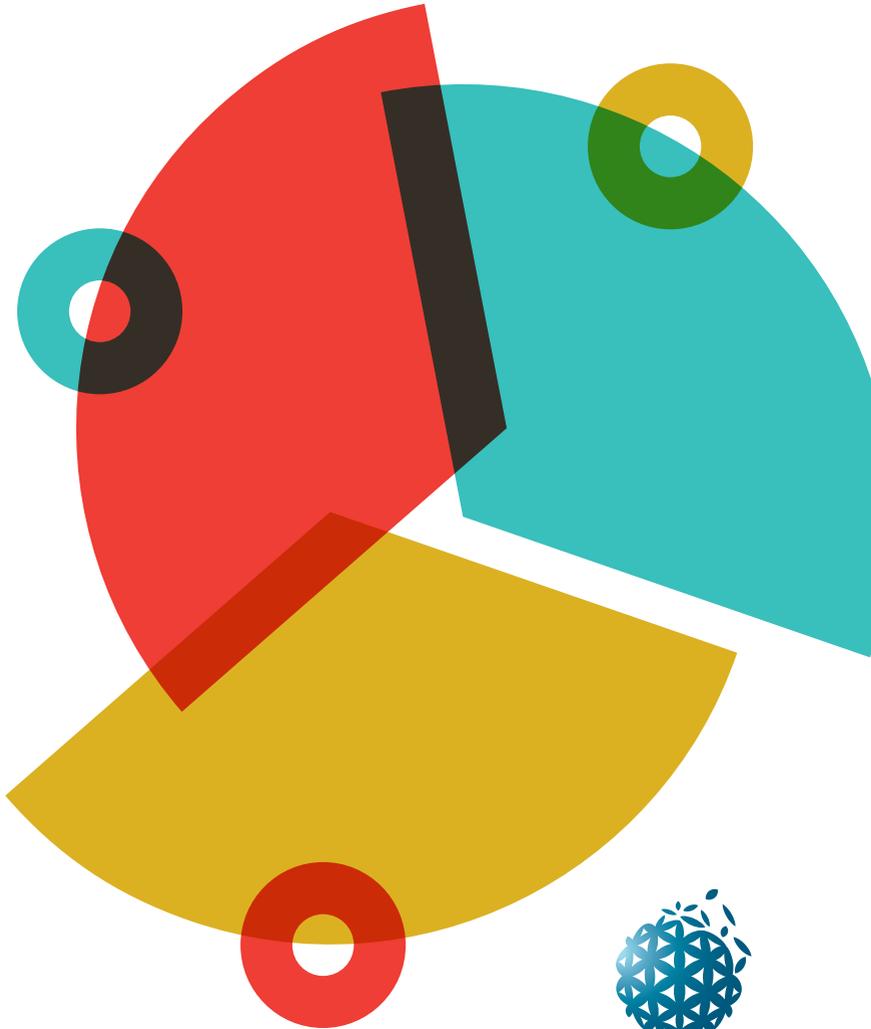


SCIENCE EUROPE

PRACTICAL GUIDE TO
**THREE APPROACHES TO
CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATION**



**SCIENCE
EUROPE**
Shaping the future of research

Foreword by Professor Paul Boyle, President of Science Europe



I am pleased to introduce this *Practical Guide to Three Approaches to Cross-border Collaboration*, which is the result of the work of the Science Europe Working Group on Cross-border Collaboration. The aim of this Guide is to provide research stakeholders with definitions and examples of a selection of models already in use, in an attempt to facilitate international circulation of funding for research.

The report *Comparative Benchmarking of European and US Research Collaboration and Researcher Mobility* (September 2013), prepared in collaboration between Science Europe and Elsevier, provides evidence that the level of collaboration in European research is comparable to the level observed in the US. These numerous partnerships are initiated by researchers, and it is for their sake that complex administrative and financial processes need to be managed so that co-operation can be made as simple as possible.

Many efforts are still needed to obtain simplicity when collaborating across borders whilst adapting to the multiple needs of the research communities. This Guide is a crucial step in understanding certain approaches, but further steps are needed in order to analyse the many challenges that organisations face, ranging from practical implementation to aligning strategic interests. Science Europe will consider such challenges going forward.

January 2014

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Boyle', written over a light blue grid background.

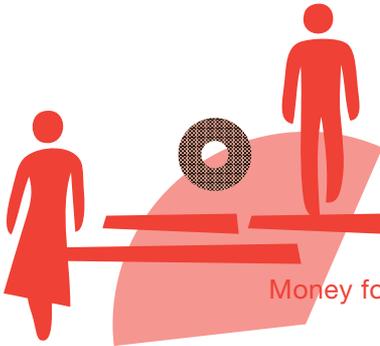
Professor Paul Boyle,
President of Science Europe



SCIENCE EUROPE

PRACTICAL GUIDE TO **THREE APPROACHES TO CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATION**

Money follows **Researcher**
pages 7-15



Money follows **Co-operation Line**
pages 17-23



The **Lead Agency** Procedure
pages 25-41



**SCIENCE
EUROPE**
Shaping the future of research

THREE APPROACHES TO CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATION

Science Europe is taking important steps towards the facilitation of cross-border collaboration through the work of its Cross-border Collaboration Working Group, consolidating and building on previous work by the European Science Foundation (ESF) and the European Heads of Research Councils (EUROHORCs). Significant and concrete progress can be seen in the shape of this 'Practical Guide', developed for the use of Science Europe Member Organisations and other research organisations inside or outside of Europe. It offers conceptual as well as practical elements to help facilitate the organisational and administrative processes associated with the conduct of scientific work in more than one country.

The aim is to provide better and more efficient means for organisations to apply a set of optional models, and to help them achieve more successful and easier implementation of these different models, where they are in tune with their interests and strategies. The Cross-border Collaboration Working Group will include investigation of the challenges in the implementation of these models in its future work programme.

The models included in this guide are:

-  **Money follows Researcher**, which allows researchers to take with them the remainder of a grant to another country;
-  **Money follows Co-operation Line**, which allows part of a grant to be used to fund participation of a researcher from another country; and
-  **The Lead Agency Procedure**, which enables researchers to avoid 'double jeopardy' in bilateral or multilateral co-operation through evaluation by a single Lead Agency.

This guide is not intended to be exhaustive. It should be considered as work in progress and could be complemented by consideration of other models, including multilateral initiatives and approaches that address the needs of research performing organisations.

Each one of these models is addressed in the Practical Guide with a similar approach:

- I. Definition and description:** a clear understanding of each of these models is necessary to build a strong basis for collaboration.

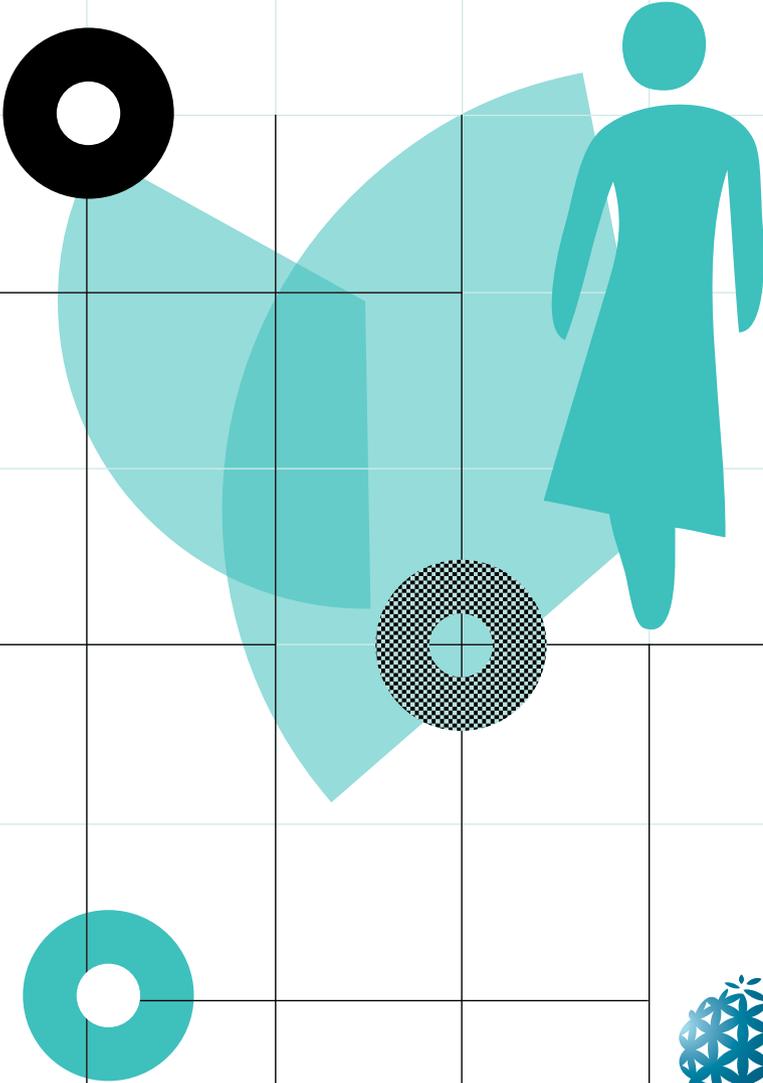
- II. Example(s), where available:** the aim is not to create new tools which would bring more complexity, but to take stock of what is already happening and share good practice, which can act as an incentive for collaboration.

- III. A tool to help concrete implementation, when possible:** the nature of this varies accordingly to the different models presented.

Overall structure of the guide:

 Money follows Researcher	 Money follows Co-operation Line	 Lead Agency Procedure
Definition	Definition	Definition
Examples		Examples
Letter of intent and list of issues to clarify before signing	Example proposal letter	Recommended procedures

MONEY FOLLOWS **RESEARCHER**



**SCIENCE
EUROPE**
Shaping the future of research

MONEY FOLLOWS RESEARCHER

National organisations share with each other the responsibility of pursuing excellence in European research, based on strong national traditions and successful funding schemes. One contribution is the beneficial use of research grants for European scientific career paths.

Principle

The ‘Money follows Researcher’ (MfR) scheme allows for the portability of research grants. Under the terms of this agreement, it is possible for researchers moving to another country to take with them the remainder of their national grants. The grant can then be continued and completed at the new research institution within the original terms and objectives.

History

In 2003 the main research funding organisations of Germany, Austria and Switzerland – DFG, FWF and SNSF – signed an agreement, allowing the transfer of national grants between the three countries. In 2004, 27 EUROHORCs member organisations in 18 countries signed an MfR Letter of Intent.

Rationale

The MfR agreement allows for research projects started in one country to be completed even when the Principal Investigator (PI) moves abroad. Thus, the project is not interrupted prematurely and the full value of the investment into the project can be reached. Additionally, the start at a new host institution and in a new country is easier for the scientists if they are able to bring along their own research funds in a simple and non-bureaucratic way.

Procedure

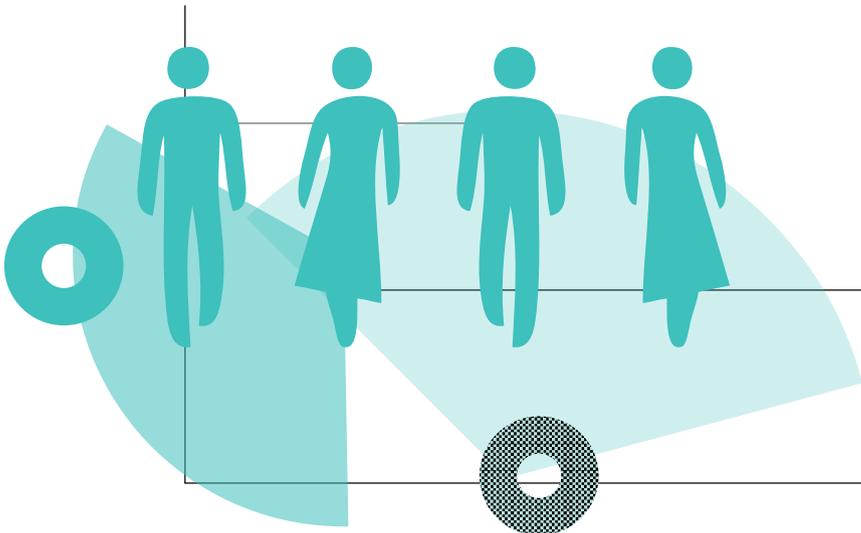
Application and administrative procedures should be in accordance with the conditions which are in place for the allocation of grants. In general, to initiate the process, a request should be made to the organisation which is currently funding the researcher for the use of the remainder of a current research grant for the continuation of the research abroad. There should be confirmation from the destination organisation that the project may be finalised in the new environment. This includes assessing the impact on the associated research group in the sending institution. On the basis of the information given by the PI on the conditions of continuation at the new host institution, the funding organisation will check whether or not all criteria are fulfilled. If they are, the funding organisation issues a letter declaring that the remainder of the grant is transferred to the new host institution. Due consideration should be given to the associated administrative burden, including for example whether the length to the end of the grant justifies the costs of transfer. The PI continues to be responsible for all financial and scientific reporting obligations to the awarding organisation until the project is completed.

In principle, individual applications for MfR have to be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking into account specific framework conditions of the scientific project, as well as the new and the old host institutions.

Conditions and requirements for MfR, as well as the components of a grant that are transferable, are to be defined according to national rules and regulations. Usually personnel costs, smaller research equipment, consumables and travel funds are included. Indirect costs are usually excluded. Transfer of major investment requires specific considerations. Budgetary requirements may be impacted in some cases because of currency issues, higher salaries or different costing practices; this requires discussion in advance.

The actual implementation of MfR may vary according to national administrative rules and practices. For organisations concluding funding contracts directly with the PI, applying MfR requires only an amendment regarding the change of the PI's Host Institution (HI). If contracts are concluded with the HI, it might be advisable to include a clause regarding the portability of the grant, similar to the policy on grant portability of the European Research Council (ERC) (see ERC Model Grant Agreement – Article 56a: 'Transfer of the Agreement to a New Beneficiary – Portability of the Grant').¹ Applying MfR would require both terminating the contract with the original HI and concluding a contract with the new HI. Alternatively, the money could be transferred directly between the host institutions. Another option – regardless of the contract partner – is to terminate the contract with the original funding organisation and transfer the remaining budget to the new funding organisation who issues a new contract.

Each organisation participating in the MfR scheme will have to define in advance the specific administrative issues associated with the transfer of grants. For example in terms of handling the funds, they can be transferred to an account specifically put in place by the PI in his or her new country of practice, or directly to the new host institution which manages it.



¹ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/mga/erc/h2020-mga-erc-multi_en.pdf

Examples

Some of the MfR arrangements in place as of August 2013:

▶ Organisation (country)	▶ MfR arrangements in place
DFG (DE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Currently informal letter requesting transfer.▶ Increase of staff costs is possible if confirmed by destination organisation.
FWF (AT)	Information to be provided upon submission: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Timeframe of movement;▶ Details of new host institution (including infrastructure relevant for project);▶ Confirmation by new host institution that infrastructure will be supplied;▶ Details of effects that movement will have on the project design;▶ If equipment is taken along, confirmation that the property rights will be - transferred to new host institution.
SNSF (CH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Detailed application to be submitted to scientific department in charge at SNSF;▶ Case-by-case decision.
VR (SE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Application form (Swedish only), including specific requirements on equipment;▶ Handling procedure (Swedish only);▶ Reciprocity requirement (participating in EUROHORCs agreement).
MRC (UK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Details of criteria (similar to FWF above);▶ Single contact person;▶ Reciprocity requirement (participating in EUROHORCs agreement).

Proposed Tool to Help Implementation

Science Europe Member Organisations will be invited to sign this draft letter as an expression of their intention to implement MfR. In addition to declaring their intent, the signing organisations will provide information about specific rules and conditions of their implementation of MfR in an annex to the letter.

Draft Letter of Intent

Transfer of Grants – ‘Money follows Researcher’ (MfR)

1. The Science Europe Member Organisation..... is dedicated to the further development of the European Research Area (ERA) and fully acknowledges its role in the advancement of research in Europe.
2. One of the preconditions for a successful ERA is the possibility for researchers to move to, and work at, the places best suited to their needs. One way to use existing national funding across Europe is to allow researchers to take with them the remainder of their grants to their new host institution.
3. The objective of this Letter of Intent is to enable continuity of funding when researchers move locations, regardless of the reasons for mobility. This funding continuity can safeguard funding organisation investments in specific projects and minimise the disruption of work programmes.
4. In order to achieve the ambition of this Letter of Intent, shall authorise researchers moving to another country to use the remainder of a current research grant for the continuation of their research abroad.
5. This Letter of Intent covers funding as indicated by each organisation in their national annex, displayed on their own webpages.
6. The authorisation for a transfer must be requested by the Principal Investigator wishing to move.
7. The grant shall be continued at the new research institution as closely as possible to the original terms and objectives.

8. Due consideration should be given to all members of the research team directly or indirectly impacted by the transferral of funds.
9. The conditions and requirements for MfR, as well as the components of a grant that are transferable, are listed in the annex to this Letter.
10. The undersigning organisation will once a year provide Science Europe with information on the number of transfers, the amount of budget it transferred and the receiving countries.
11. The undersigning organisation agrees to make its requirements concerning MfR public on its website and through any other suitable means to make the process known both externally and internally.
12. The Letter of Intent is also publicised on the Science Europe website in order to make it transparent.
14. This Letter of Intent shall enter into force with the signing of it by the organisation's legal representative.
15. If would like to withdraw from the agreement, Science Europe should be notified three months in advance.

Date:

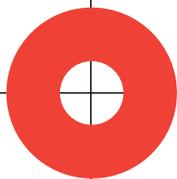
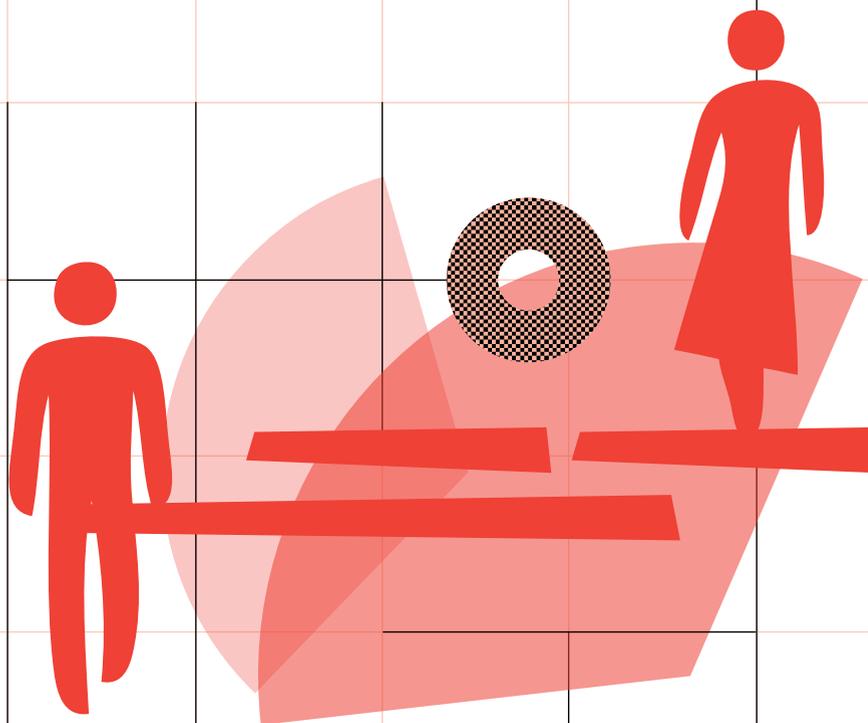
Signature:

Annex: Terms and Conditions

Each organisation must clarify the exact terms and conditions of the transferral of grants before the Letter of Intent is signed. As a minimum requirement the organisation will provide the following:

-  List of grants which can be taken abroad:
-  Parts of the grants (types of cost) which are transferrable:
-  Conditions and requirements for submitting an MfR proposal:
-  The countries to which the grants are transferrable:
-  Other relevant regulations:

MONEY FOLLOWS **CO-OPERATION** LINE



**SCIENCE
EUROPE**
Shaping the future of research

MONEY FOLLOWS CO-OPERATION LINE

Money Follows Co-operation Line (MfCL) models simplify the financing of cross-border collaborative projects by including a foreign investigator directly in a national grant. Such a policy is an effective mechanism to encourage research excellence through international collaboration. An organisation can fund a project which is partly carried out abroad; this means that a proportion of a grant may be spent on a researcher from another country. Usually, only direct costs are included; salary may or may not be included.

Rationale

An international co-investigator can receive funding if he/she is an individual from a research organisation outside the country of the funding agency in question, and who otherwise fits the normal definition of a co-investigator on a research project. In general this means that they will make a significant intellectual contribution to the design and implementation of the project. Sub-contracting of technical services is therefore out of scope of this instrument.

The policy is not a separate funding scheme and therefore requires no additional application forms or peer review. It is intended to be a simple and straightforward mechanism which allows researchers from anywhere in the world to be included on funding proposals submitted to funders that choose to apply this policy. There is no need for direct involvement from any foreign research funding agencies, or any separate international decision making process.

Implementation

All successful grants will be made to the national host institution, and it is then the responsibility of that institution to disburse funds to co-investigators, international or otherwise.

In order to strengthen the European Research Area (ERA) and to promote international collaboration more broadly, developing reciprocal agreements for such policies can be instrumental. Under such an agreement two or more agencies would agree to reciprocally open their national research project funding schemes to collaborative proposals involving researchers from the other country or countries. Researchers therefore need only to apply to one party for funding to cover the costs of the entire international collaboration.

Reciprocal agreements serve to simplify the process of applying for funding for collaborative research, by allowing collaborative projects to be funded through normal national procedures. Thus, there would be no cost implication for the other country; however, it does mean that the funding agency is willing to allow funds to be spent on 'overseas' partners (usually via the lead institution in the host country). Officials from the respective agencies may assist each other in the identification of peer reviewers for proposals, but this is not required.

The ambition of a reciprocal arrangement would be to achieve an acceptable flow of research funds between the two countries, so that neither of the research communities served by the parties would be financially disadvantaged by the scheme. Therefore, the flow of money between the two countries could be monitored by the parties, and any agreement subject to periodic review.

Example

ESRC and AHRC: International Co-Investigator Policy Letter

The following letter on an 'International Co-investigators' policy, proposed by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in the UK, represents both an opportunity to build a MfCL partnership for the organisations concerned and an example of the type of letter which can initiate such an arrangement.



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



03 May 2013

Dear Members of Science Europe,

You may be aware that the ESRC and AHRC, who deal with social science and arts and humanities research respectively, currently operate an 'International Co-investigators' policy on their research funding schemes. The policy, in alignment with the principles of 'Money follows Co-operation Line', allows any applications for funding from these Research Councils to include Co-Investigators from anywhere in the world, without the need for co-funding from agencies in those countries. The ESRC or AHRC will fund the direct costs of research associated with this co-investigator (including costs for research assistant salaries and, where specifically required, salary costs of investigators) to an amount up to 30% of the total cost of the grant. The administration is managed by the funding agency providing the award to the eligible UK institution, who then pays the institution of the international co-investigator through a sub-contract. The policy does not denote a stand-alone research funding scheme; rather it enables the inclusion of co-investigator(s) from any country(ies) on almost any research proposal to ESRC or AHRC funding calls (except fellowships or other individual grants).

The ESRC has operated the policy since 2007 and it has covered several rounds of funding. Thus far proposals which include international co-investigators have been considerably more successful than those which do not, suggesting that the international co-investigators policy is an effective mechanism to encourage research excellence through international collaboration. The AHRC developed its policy in 2012.

In order to strengthen the European Research Area, these two UK Research Councils would like to explore whether other members of Science Europe would be interested in developing a reciprocal¹ arrangement to the 'International Co-investigators' policy. If other European research funding agencies were willing to allow UK social science, arts or humanities researchers to be included with a national partner in their research grants, the ESRC/AHRC would be willing to consider increasing the current cap on its international co-investigators policy to 50%, and possibly also making indirect costs eligible (at a level to be negotiated between the agencies) for UK grant applications that include co-investigators from that country. Though money would cross borders under this joint arrangement, the aim is that overall investment will be balanced, as money that the two UK Research Councils

¹ By 'reciprocal' we mean in terms of a general policy that allows applicants to include the cost of UK researchers on grants – not reciprocal in the sense of co-funding specific grant applications.



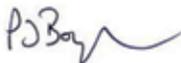
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

POLARIS HOUSE,
NORTH STAR AVENUE,
SWINDON, SN2 1UJ
TELEPHONE 01793 413000
FACSIMILE 01793 413001
<http://www.esrc.ac.uk>

spend on researchers in a partner country would ultimately be balanced out approximately by support from that country for UK researchers on other projects.

Members of Science Europe who may be interested in discussing this further are invited to contact either [redacted] at ESRC [redacted] at AHRC. We have already provided information on our international co-investigators policy to the Science Europe Grant Union Working Group, who support this policy as one approach to encouraging further collaboration within Europe, but would be very happy to discuss further our experience with the policy, and our views on the mutual benefit of developing it as a reciprocal arrangement, with individual partners.

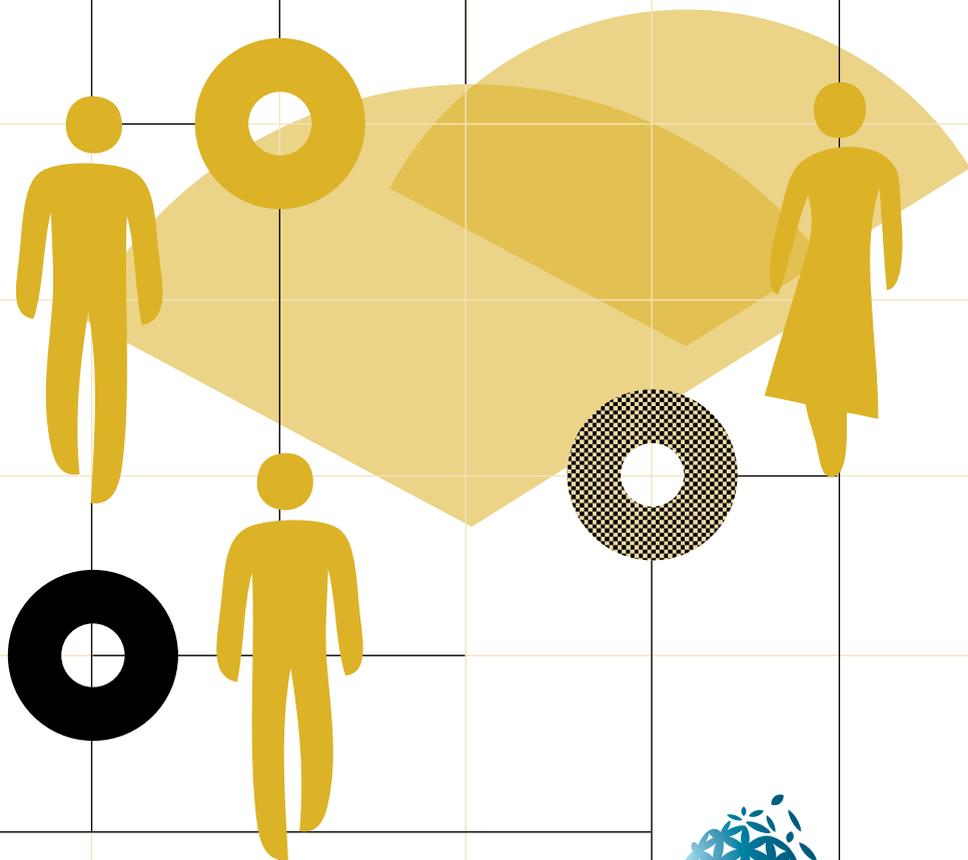
Yours faithfully,



Professor Paul Boyle
Chief Executive
Economic and Social Research Council

Professor Rick Ryland
Chief Executive
Arts and Humanities Research Council

THE **LEAD AGENCY** PROCEDURE



**SCIENCE
EUROPE**
Shaping the future of research

THE LEAD AGENCY PROCEDURE

Introduction

Providing scientists with possibilities to co-operate across national or regional borders in order to form collaborative research projects that foster the exchange of ideas and scientific expertise is instrumental in facilitating science, both outside and inside Europe. The funding of integrated research projects conducted in different countries requires arrangements between funding organisations concerning application, review processes, and funding procedures. Traditionally, project partners have to apply to their respective funding organisation, and if all organisations involved approve the application, then the transnational project can go ahead. This procedure results in, at least, a 'double jeopardy' for the applying researcher, as the national peer review procedures are carried out independently. This also implies an unnecessary financial and administrative burden. The Lead Agency Procedure (LAP) is an approach to overcome these difficulties by having a review procedure carried out by one of the partner Research Funding Organisations (RFO).

General Characteristics

The principle on which the LAP is based is the following: RFOs from two or more countries engage in a co-operation in which one of the RFOs involved takes a leading role; this means that it is in charge of carrying out the review process and making a recommendation on whether or not to approve an application. The partner organisation(s) make the formal decision on the basis of the review documentation and the recommendation of the Lead Agency. It is anticipated that the partner organisation follows the recommendation of the Lead Agency. Deviation from this recommendation should be justified. The different project parts are then financed by the respective RFOs so that no money needs to be transferred across borders.

The general characteristics of the LAP can be divided into five steps:

1. Defining the Lead Agency

Ways of defining which RFO will take the leading role.

2. Joint Application

What to take into consideration when submitting a joint application.

3. Single Review Process

Issues to consider when organising the review process.

4. Decision Making Process

How the partner RFOs need to interact when taking the decision.

5. Separate Funding

How to proceed after the approval of the project.

1. Defining the Lead Agency

In order to establish which of the RFOs involved will act as Lead Agency, different models are available:

Scientific Focus

Before the application, it is to be determined where the scientific focus of the collaborative research project is located; the RFO of this country then acts as Lead Agency. The disadvantage of this is that it is a vague criterion. Also, the notion of scientific ‘focus’ is in contradiction with the concept of truly collaborative research projects in which all sides are expected to provide substantial scientific input.

Budgetary Focus

An alternative model is provided by taking the direct costs that are applied for in the different countries as the decisive criterion. When calculating these sums, applicants must follow the guidelines of the RFO of their respective country. The application then has to be submitted to the RFO financing the larger share if the project is successful.

However, different funding mechanisms and substantial differences in national cost rates used by RFOs may be a structural reason for a skewed budget distribution.

Person-months

Due to considerable differences in salary levels that are paid by RFOs in different countries, the focus on the budgetary distribution among partners can again lead to a situation in which one RFO would have to act as the Lead Agency in most cases. Alternatively, a focus on the person-months which are necessary to carry out the research project in the partner countries can be used to establish the Lead Agency. This is also advisable in cases where parts of the budget cannot easily be determined beforehand.

In order to allow for an equal basis for comparing the person-months required for the research project, RFOs must develop a joint understanding on how to calculate the person-months; for example, this could be additional personnel months only, or all personnel contributing to the research project, irrespective of whether it is reimbursed by the RFO or not.

One RFO Acts as Lead Agency in all Cases

Finally, partner organisations may choose to decide that one of them takes the lead for all applications, irrespective of the scientific or budgetary focus, or the distribution of person-months between partners. One reason for choosing this modal may be to reduce the administrative burden for one of the partners.

Also, differing approval rates can serve as a reason to assign the role of the Lead Agency to one RFO only, usually the one with the lower approval rate. In doing so, the RFO with the lower approval rate may wish to ascertain that it need not finance project parts that go beyond its financial resources or that do not meet its scientific standards. Further details on this point are set out in the section on 'pre-conditions' below.

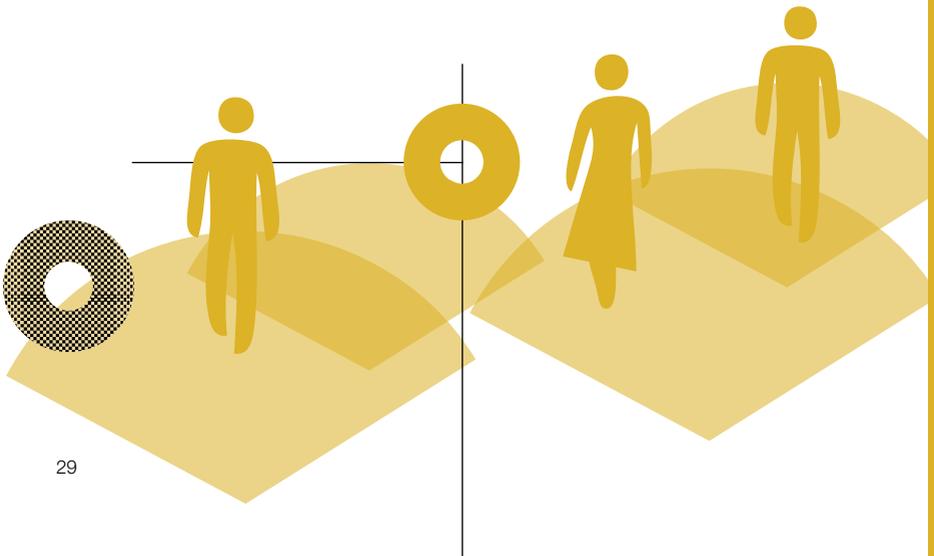
Rotating/Switching Unilateral Lead Agency

In order to share the administrative load it may be possible to periodically rotate the Lead Agency responsibility between participating agencies.

2. Joint Application

Joint Scientific Project Description

Once the Lead Agency is established, applicants from different countries who wish to engage in a collaborative research project are required to prepare one single joint application and submit it to this Agency. The application has to cover a scientific description of the entire project, including its two (or more) project parts. This application has to be prepared in accordance with the standard application guidelines of the RFO which acts as the Lead Agency. This contributes to keeping the administrative burden of the Lead Agency at a low level.



Timing

The partners of a LAP co-operation may decide to allow for applications continuously or to set a deadline (or several deadlines) for applications. The decision on which model to choose will depend on factors such as the working procedures of the RFOs involved or budget availability.

Separate Cost Calculations

While the scientific part of the joint application has to follow the guidelines of the Lead Agency, cost calculations for the different project parts must be in accordance with the rules of the RFO in charge of funding the respective part. Most RFOs require applicants not only to list the costs applied for in a form, but also to include a cost justification in the application. It is advisable to require applicants to provide separate information on budget and justification to the respective funding organisations.

Forms

Depending on the requirements of the RFOs involved, different solutions can be found for the use of application forms. The partner RFOs can choose to develop a dedicated application form that is used for the purposes of the LAP co-operation only. Alternatively, the partners can decide to use their standard application forms. If this is the case, they can require applicants to send all application forms (including cost sheets) required by the RFOs involved to the Lead Agency, together with the scientific project description. Irrespective of which option is chosen, the Lead Agency is in charge of forwarding the forms to the other RFO(s) involved. However, due to legal or administrative reasons, RFOs may be required to obtain hard copies of the application forms or to receive an application via their online system, which makes forwarding these to the other RFOs problematic. In these cases, it is advisable or necessary to submit the forms to the respective RFO directly. Whichever modalities are chosen, it must be kept in mind that from a legal point of view, an application submitted in the framework of the LAP consists of two (or more) applications.

During the review process, however, these applications are mostly dealt with as if they were one single application.

Informing the Partner RFO

Once the Lead Agency has received the application for an international collaborative project, it needs to inform its partner RFO(s) of the application and forward the entire application to them. On the basis of these documents, the partner organisation(s) can carry out a formal verification to assure that their eligibility criteria are met; the Lead Agency also checks whether the application meets the formal criteria set in its application guidelines.

3. Single Review Process

When the Lead Agency has established that the application meets the application criteria and has received the confirmation by the partner organisation(s) that the applicants in the partner countries are eligible, the Lead Agency can start the review process. Simultaneous to the eligibility check, the partner organisation(s) should have the possibility of suggesting suitable reviewers to the Lead Agency. However, the ultimate responsibility for the choice of reviewers, as well as for the review process in general, should lie with the Lead Agency.

In order to make sure that the reviewers suggested by the partner organisation are useful to the Lead Agency, partner organisation(s) must make sure that they have a shared understanding of the criteria that have to be met by reviewers, regarding issues such as conflicts of interest between applicants and reviewers. It is also possible to ask reviewers who are not from any of the partnering countries to make the selection. For the sake of time efficiency, it is advisable that partner organisations send their suggestions for reviewers to the Lead Agency at the same time as the results of the eligibility check.

4. Decision Making Process

When the Lead Agency has finished the review process, it should forward the complete review documents (reviews, protocols, names/affiliations of the reviewers, etc.) to the partner(s) so that the transparency of the review process is guaranteed. The Lead Agency will then take a provisional decision, and will immediately inform the partner organisation(s). The partner organisation then makes a decision autonomously, on the basis of the review documentation and the recommendation provided by the Lead Agency; generally the partner organisation follows the recommendation of the Lead Agency. Appropriate external and internal communication is essential in order to manage the expectation of the applicants as well as the administrative staff of the RFOs involved. Once agreement on the funding of a project is reached, each RFO can follow its own procedures in establishing the funding for the project part for which it is responsible.

After the decision has been officially endorsed by the partner agency, this decision must be communicated back to the Lead Agency. At this point, the decision making process is concluded and the partners can each issue contracts with successful applicants or inform them that their application was rejected.

Appeals

Some RFOs allow for the possibility of appeals against the decision, or against the procedures and reviews leading to a decision. In order to avoid conflicts of timing, the partners engaging in a LAP co-operation need to develop a common understanding on how to handle feedback and appeals to rejected applicants. Issues that should be taken into account include the impact of appeals at the Lead Agency on the timing of the formal decision making process at the partner organisation, as well as potential legal or procedural issues that are relevant to the partner RFO(s).

5. Separate Funding

All post-award management is dealt with by the funding partner agencies and should be set out in the Lead Agency agreement.

Further Variations

Joint Decision Making

An alternative to the endorsement of the Lead Agency's decision by the partner RFO is a joint decision making process, for example by making use of a joint panel which ranks the applications on the basis of the reviews obtained by the Lead Agency. The best-ranked applications are approved by both the Lead Agency and the partner RFO. The use of a joint decision making procedure is an alternative for RFOs who wish to remain more closely involved in the evaluation process. However, deviation from the LAP's standard procedures has a disadvantage: generally, the organisation of a joint panel demands more resources than following standard procedures. Also, a decision making model involving a joint panel is likely to be applicable only for calls that cover either a specific topic or a scientific discipline.

Decision Making with Target Approval Rates

When the approval rates of the RFOs are different the Lead Agency can, in its decision making process, take into account a target approval rate, or target budget, defined in advance with its partner RFO. This variation has the advantage of still keeping the trust and simplicity of the LAP while accommodating different approval rates amongst RFOs. It has also the advantage of keeping the same average approval rate regardless of the LAP.

Discussion of Pre-Conditions

While the LAP provides a number of advantages, both for the applicants and for the RFOs involved, it requires that the RFOs engage in a far-reaching co-operation which can only be successful if a number of pre-conditions are met.

Compatibility of Funding Instruments

Collaborative projects that are handled according to the LAP are composed, from a legal point of view, of at least two projects in different countries. These projects are financed independently, but are closely interlinked scientifically so that they form a truly joint research endeavour. Therefore, RFOs engaging in a Lead Agency co-operation need to have funding instruments that can be combined with each other. Most notably, matching is required concerning the content of the research projects (basic research or applied research, topic of individual calls, bottom-up calls, etc.), as well as concerning the duration of the research project and the level of funding provided by each side.

Similar Peer Review Standards

A cornerstone of the LAP is the acceptance of the outcome of the review procedure of the Lead Agency by the other RFO(s) involved. This, to a large extent, depends upon existing shared standards concerning the peer review process. These standards relate to issues such as the selection of reviewers, the review criteria used to assess the applications, regulations concerning conflicts of interest, confidentiality rules, and so on (see the ESF 'European Peer Review Guide' for a discussion of these factors).² Given the current diversity across RFOs, it can be expected that any two organisations engaging in a LAP co-operation will have differing regulations. The LAP requires a certain degree of flexibility on the side of the partner organisations to accept review procedures which differ from their own standard procedures. The on-going discussion on common principles of peer review processes, however, may lead to a more favourable context in the future.

² http://www.esf.org/fileadmin/Public_documents/Publications/European_Peer_Review_Guide_01.pdf

Available Funding Budget

The acceptance of the Lead Agency's recommendation by the partner organisation(s) does not only depend on the review standards applied, but also on the funds available to finance collaborative research projects. In order to avoid a situation in which the Lead Agency approves an application, but the partner RFO is not able to endorse this decision due to lack of funds, it is crucial to develop a joint understanding on the number of collaborative projects that can be funded in the framework of the LAP.

Approval Rates

Approval rates vary greatly between RFOs. Great differences in approval rates may lead to difficulties – most notably in cases in which the Lead Agency has a higher approval rate than its partner organisation(s). These difficulties can either relate to the available funding budget (see above) or to concerns about different quality standards. However, approval rates should only be used cautiously as an indicator of the scientific quality of the approved projects. Low approval rates do not necessarily indicate a high scientific quality of the projects, while higher approval rates do not necessarily imply a lower scientific quality. Organisations may need to introduce mechanisms to manage cut-off limits for funding where approval rates differ.

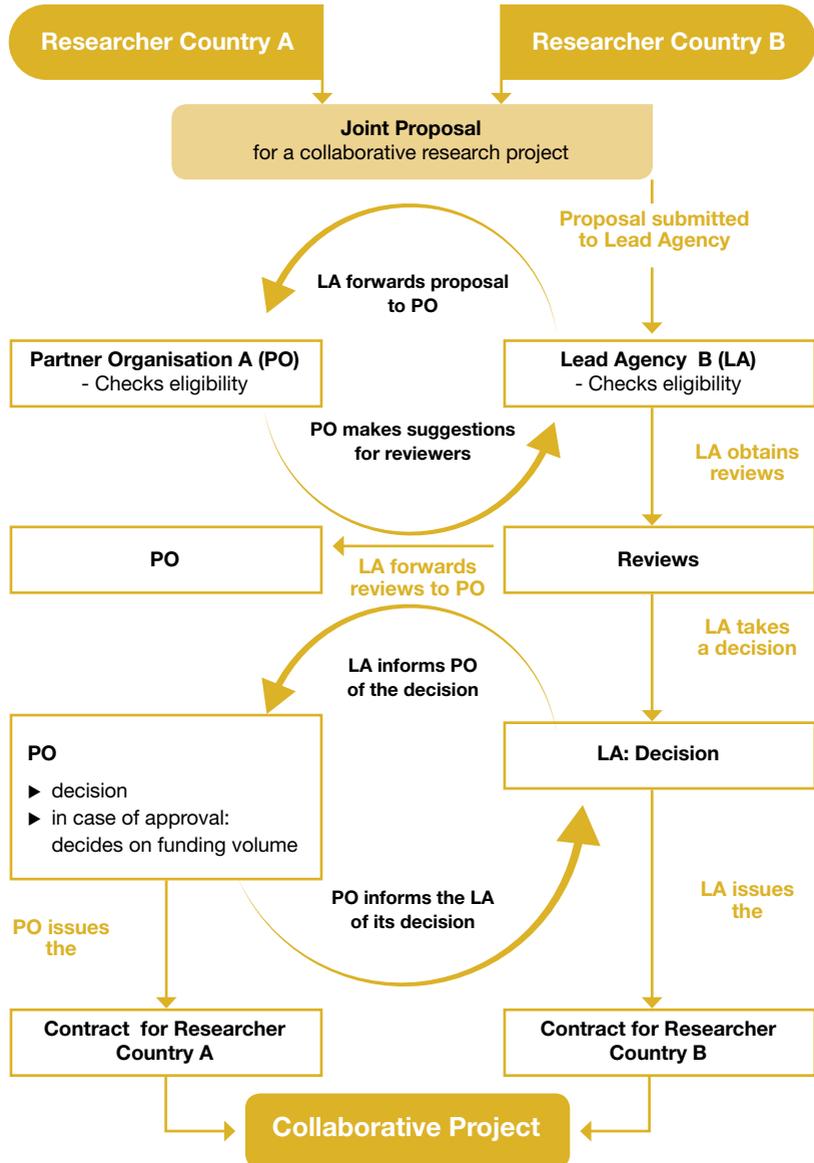
Knowledge about Partner Organisations and Mutual Trust

Compared to other forms of international co-operation, the LAP requires a higher level of interaction and of exchange of information between the RFOs. For this communication to be successful, partner organisations need to develop their knowledge about their internal procedures, their timing and the distribution of work between the different services within the partner RFOs. Basic knowledge about these issues helps to identify potential problems in the application, review and decision making processes. Personal contacts also greatly contribute to the development of the necessary mutual trust.

Conclusion

The LAP is a far-reaching co-operation between RFOs that pre-supposes a high degree of interaction and mutual trust. One of its main advantages is that it does not require creation of new funding instruments, but rather builds on existing funding schemes. To a large extent, RFOs can use standard procedures when engaging in a LAP co-operation. Due to the single review process, the LAP reduces the administrative burden in comparison with classical bilateral co-operation schemes requiring parallel review processes. It could be argued that the communication needs between partner RFOs in a LAP co-operation outweigh the administrative relief obtained thanks to the single review process. However, once a LAP co-operation is well established, the communication needs are limited to a few routine matters. In the following graphical representation, which shows a standard LAP between two agencies, these exchanges are represented with arrows linking the Lead Agency and the Partner RFO(s). The researcher only applies once and the double jeopardy of the funding decision is reduced significantly.

Lead Agency Standard Procedure (two agencies)



Examples

Some existing Lead Agency Agreements involving European funding agencies, taken from a 2012 Science Europe survey on the 'European Grant Union' and international co-operation:

Partner RFOs/ Name of Co-operation	Switching Lead Agency?	Thematically Open?	Deadline or Permanent Call
ANR-FWF	Yes	Yes (though with thematic focus)	Annual deadline
DFG-FNR	Yes	Yes	Permanent
DFG-FWF-SNSF (DACH)	Yes	Yes	Permanent if DFG or FWF are LA; two annual deadlines if SNSF is the LA
DFG-STW	Yes	Chemistry	Deadline
ESRC-FWF	No: ESRC acts as LA	Social Sciences/ Economics	Permanent call
FNR-FWF	Yes	Yes	Permanent call
FWF-ARRS	Yes	Yes	Permanent if FWF is the LA; annual deadline if ARRS is the LA
FWF-OTKA	Yes	Yes	Permanent if FWF is LA; two annual deadlines if OTKA is the LA
FWO-FNR	No: FWO acts as LA	Yes	Annual deadline
FWO-NWO	Yes (switching annually)	Humanities	Annual deadline
NWO-NSF	No: NSF acts as LA	Chemistry (ICC – International Collaboration in Chemistry)	New deadline to be determined
NWO-NSF	No: NWO acts as LA	Arts-related physical and chemical research (Science4Arts)	Annual deadline
SFI/HRB-NIH/ NSF-HSC /DELNI/ InvestNI	No: NIH/NSF act as LA	Yes	Permanent
SNSF-FNR	Yes	Yes	Two deadlines/year

Organisations Mentioned in the Practical Guide

AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK
ANR	French National Research Agency
ARRS	Slovenian Research Agency
DELNI	Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland, UK
DFG	German Research Foundation
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council, UK
FNR	National Research Fund, Luxembourg
FWF	Austrian Science Fund
FWO	Research Foundation Flanders
HRB	Health Research Board, Ireland
HSC	Northern Ireland Health and Social Care, UK
InvestNI	Invest Northern Ireland, UK
MRC	Medical Research Council, UK
NIH	National Institutes of Health, US
NSF	National Science Foundation, US
NWO	Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research
OTKA	Hungarian Scientific Research Fund
SFI	Science Foundation Ireland
SNSF	Swiss National Science Foundation
STW	Technology Foundation, Netherlands
VR	Swedish Research Council

Colophon

January 2014

Practical Guide to Three Models of Cross-border Collaboration:

D/2014/13.324/1

Author: Science Europe Working Group on Cross-border Collaboration

For further information please contact the Science Europe Office:

office@scienceeurope.org

Design: PRIK, www.prikonline.be

Science Europe
Rue de la Science 14
1040 Brussels
Belgium

Tel +32 (0)2 226 03 00
Fax +32 (0)2 226 03 01
office@scienceeurope.org
www.scienceeurope.org

