

ISPC Chair comments on 12 March draft of Options paper

We commented on the February draft – the remarks below are on specific points we noted in the March draft but there has been no time to consult on this version and hence these are comments from the Chair alone.

In all of the options, it is not just the Chairs of the Boards/Council who need to have sufficient time and standing to raise the profile of the CGIAR but the person specifications and the job descriptions of the Heads of the various offices need to be carefully defined (and agreed by all entities within the System), particularly for Option 5b. Centre participation in the recruitment process might be advisable.

Para 190: It is proposed that the Board consist of members representing the following groups: Center Board members and Center DGs

See comments under Annex 1 below but I believe that CRP Leaders need to be represented on the Board.

Para 247: In options 4 and 5, which include one administrative/management office with a single director, it is proposed that the IEA and ISPC secretariats could usefully be housed at the same location as the central office.

I am not convinced that the benefits would justify the disruption during a critical period of multiple evaluations for the IEA and reviews of the CRP proposals for the ISPC. In this age of electronic communications relations between geographically separate offices can be as good as those co-located.

Para 254: ISPC should play a stronger or enhanced role in (a) priority setting; (b) contributing to the development of the SRF and CRPs; (c) undertaking foresight studies and impact assessment; and (d) assessing and reporting on research results and the quality of science, particularly in relation to IEA

We will add these 4 areas to the Terms of the Reference of the Task Force we are in the process of convening and seek their advice on whether and how these roles might best be formalised.

Para 262: to maintain the lead role of IEA for all evaluations, while calling for stronger links with the ISPC

IEA have been invited to participate in the ISPC-led Task Force and we will be happy to explore how to strengthen the links between the 2 entities.

Para 276: The panel therefore recommended that the Fund Council seek the assistance of contributors and key organizations engaged in research with a global reach to assist CGIAR in developing guidelines of identifying, establishing, managing and reviewing partnerships. It called for the guidelines to be clearly tailored to meet the strategic objectives and results delineated in the SRF. The ISPC has been requested to develop the guidelines.

The ISPC has a study underway which will help in developing guidelines on partnership but developing the guidelines per se needs to involve consultation across the System.

Para 279: see comments below on Annex 1. I am not convinced that ‘responsibility for building and strengthening partnerships’ was ever seen as the sole responsibility of the ISPC and I am not

convinced that two individuals dedicated to partnership building is the best way to achieve good science and stakeholder partnerships.

Para 298: New time-line for SRF and CRPs

I intended that we would learn from the Task Force on time-lines on research programmes and strategies adopted by similar organisations.

Annex I

Challenge: Inadequate participation and ownership of key stakeholders

Addressed by: The majority of the options include ‘Center’ representation on the proposed Boards,

Comment: The Reform process moved towards a ‘matrix’ approach, with CRPs driving the integrated science. CRP Directors are therefore ‘key stakeholders’ but they don’t appear to be represented on the proposed Boards?

Challenge: Lack of Trust

Addressed by: Shift partnership role from ISPC to CO and FO and have dedicated staff for private sector and non-governmental partners to better promote consistent outreach and communication with outside partners.

This is interesting feedback! The expected (as defined by Funders) role of the ISPC (and indeed of its predecessor the Science Council through its Standing Panel on Mobilising Science) in mobilising science was never clearly articulated. The best ‘science partnerships’ are forged at the level of individual science teams. Facilitating partnership with stakeholders is clearly seen as the role of GFAR. The ISPC has never defined its role as leading on partnerships on a day to day basis as might be interpreted as the expectation of ‘dedicated staff’. Rather the ISPC has defined its own role in partnership/mobilising science very much at the strategic level and has defined its involvement as:

1. Organising a biennial Science Forum which aims to broker interactions between the CGIAR science community and relevant science communities from other disciplines/sectors (e.g. the environment sector in 2011 and the nutrition and public health sector in 2013). An evaluation of the contribution of these Fora was commissioned in 2013, which gave positive feedback. It is unlikely that the same success could be achieved by an administration unit – the best science speakers are more likely to respond to requests from their peers (i.e. other scientists).
2. Assessing partnership strategies in the research programme proposals. It would not make sense to separate assessment of partnership strategies from the overall assessment of the science in the proposal.
3. Commissioning of studies which include learning from successful partnerships in other sectors or disciplines.

The nature of this recommendation does not, therefore, accord with the ISPC’s remit on partnership. Its experience of trying to identify where best to add value to partnership at the system-wide level would not support the value of this recommendation.