

Minutes of virtual meeting of the WLE Independent Steering Committee (ISC), 22 January 2020

Present

Ann Tutwiler (Chair)
Brent Swallow
Claudia Sadoff
Izabella Koziell

Observers/ Presenters

Emma Greatrix

Apologies

Diane Holdorf
Jo Puri
Sasha Koo-Oshima

1. WLE 2020 Plan of Work and Budget (POWB)

Slides summarising the 2020 POWB were circulated to the ISC the week prior to the meeting. ISC members on the call made the following suggestions to improve the POWB document before submission:

- Reviewing the terminology used throughout the narrative on FP5 and being sure to specify the expected outputs. For example, the 'interactive road map' is not clear for an external reader. WLE needs to specify what this is, whether it will be available in online format when completed, and if so, where the site would be hosted.
- The Commission text appears below general Flagship 5 language around 'what works.' We need to make clear that 'what works' is not a key focus for the Commission, but rather, the Flagship.
- ISC would have expected to see more in the POWB about synthetic products and processes that prepare the program for the necessary transition to a new program modality from 2022. This should also involve making clear and strong cases for the continuation of 'front-running' WLE themes, based on the strength of what has been achieved. The content is there in the program (e.g. gender and land restoration, small reservoirs, watersheds) as well as in the new proposed investments, but this is not explicit in the POWB text.

The Move to approval of the 2020 POWB is agreed by Brent, Claudia, Ann, Sasha (by email)

2. Proposals for use of additional Windows 2 Funding

Windows 2 funding from SIDA confirmed in late 2019 means that WLE has additional funding to distribute in 2020-21. Three concepts were presented to the ISC, noting that these ideas are still at an early stage and all need work in terms of specificity and use of budget. These concepts cover: synthetic products on Landscape Restoration, Agricultural Water Management, and on impact pathway development for Ecosystem Health/ greenhouse gas production, addressing food security and nutrition.

There is also a fourth concept under Flagship 5 which is still under development, which was not presented.

The ISC feels that there is insufficient detail and content available to be able to approve any of the three concepts at this time. It is suggested that the WLE management reconsider the options for funding and return to the ISC with more detailed ideas. The ISC invited WLE to consider the following when planning the additional funding:

- To be more 'directive' and 'specific' on requirements.
- To ensure that each initiative is strategic and responsive to new and evolving demands and context, whilst closely responding to the demands of users and clients.
- Exploring closer links to the commodity Centers/CRPs.
- Reviewing the proposal and considering whether there are any critical gaps remaining that would affect WLE success by 2021. What is it that WLE still needs to invest in and work on, to complete its 'mosaic'? At the same time, WLE should think about what might be presented differently if the proposal were to be written today.
- Look not only at OneCGIAR opportunities, but also focus on external opportunities. There is currently a major focus on food, environment and climate change, and a willingness to invest. The 2021 Food Summit could be a key opportunity.
- Synthetic products that are both forward but also backward looking, demonstrating the wealth of research and success of WLE, and how it could continue to support decision making on sustainable agricultural intensification in the future.
- Rather than barrier analyses, which feature in the concepts on landscapes and AWM, reviews of promising *practices* could lend better to synthetic products showcasing WLE science. The risk with wider reviews that focus on the 'enabling environment' is that this can be either very general or very context specific.

Other points noted were that there are concerns about the capacity of senior WLE researchers to deliver on these initiatives in the time available. It is essential to determine that research staff have sufficient time available to dedicate to this work, as it must be completed by end 2021.