

DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDIZED MTP APPLICATION FOR CENTER SUBMISSION AND CGIAR INFORMATION SHARING

The Need

The CGIAR lacks a System-wide application that allows easy access to information on research and research-related activities (as well as the analysis of such information) pertaining to the CGIAR Centers and Challenge Programs over time.

Existing applications like the Financial Information System (FIS) and the Performance Measurement System (PMS) have been developed to serve specific System-wide needs and are used by all Centers. At the same time, Centers have been using local applications, such as the CIAT-developed Project Manager, for local grant management purposes. For the implementation of CGIAR System Priorities and the development of a more programmatic approach to research and for information sharing in the CGIAR, a System-wide project information management system is needed.

Based on the above need, the ICT-KM Program organized a three-day workshop hosted by the CGIAR Science Council Secretariat at FAO. Participants included Centers that have already developed or are developing applications in the areas above, as well as representatives from several of the CGIAR System Office Units. Participants identified the compilation of System-wide MTP information and the linkage of this information with financial and performance data as a potential solution to address this need. Existing applications used by the Centers were examined and compared with CGIAR System requirements, enabling gaps and areas of need to be identified. The need for new application to be compliant with current workflows without adding any additional administrative or programmatic burden to Centers was also highlighted.

Meeting the Need

A system that compiles project information generated by the Centers and Challenge Programs into a System-wide MTP database was proposed as the best model to serve the purposes identified above. The recommended application will build on the Centers' internal workflows and facilitate the development and submission of MTPs to the Science Council, link the project information with the respective financial information submitted into the FIS and streamline reporting in the PMS by linking the relevant standardized data fields, thereby removing the need to re-enter information. The proposed system includes a local, Center-level application (modeled on an MTP module developed by Bioversity International), which will communicate and submit information to a centralized MTP HUB that will be accessible to System users such as the CGIAR Secretariat, Science Council, etc. The final application will allow Centers to generate a fully formatted and ready for submission MTP report with one click, linking relevant information from the appropriate databases.

Both the local and MTP HUB modules will follow the structure and terminology that is laid out in the MTP guidelines (provided by the Science Council Secretariat) and standardized across all Centers and Challenge Programs, thereby providing a single, System-wide "language" of communication. Design will also consider the potential expansion of mandatory fields and information requested of Centers during MTP submission in order to increase analytical and research abilities.

Objectives

- Facilitate MTP development, submission and assessment
- Align data and information in the MTP, FIS and PM Systems
- Capture standardized information across all Centers and Challenge Programs for analysis at the System level by the CGIAR Science Council, Secretariat and other users
- Improve access to project information for communication, marketing and advocacy purposes

Expected Outputs

- Centers and Challenge Programs will have a local MTP application that facilitates MTP submission to the Science Council
- The CGIAR will have a centralized MTP HUB application that serves as an access point for all Center and Challenge Program MTPs, allowing aggregation, review and monitoring of project information at System Priority and multi-partner program level
- Aggregation of data and information across Centers will facilitate regional planning and the identification of research gaps
- Centers will be able to share and access selected information with other Centers and external parties
- Bodies such as the Science Council and the Marketing Group will be able to quickly prepare reports and analysis on Center and Challenge Program projects and research activities over time
- Individual users will be able to quickly find out if other Centers are working on similar projects
- External users will eventually be able to access information related to activities carried out by Centers and Challenge Programs

Activities

The CIO office on behalf of the ICT-KM Program will coordinate and supervise the project activities, while the technical development of the application will be assigned to Centers based on interest, experience and commitment.

Process for Project Approval (February – March 2007)

- Obtain Concept Note approval from ADE and AE
- Contact IM and IT communities for input on strategy, objectives and needs
- Draft user needs specifications
- Draft Systems Development Life Cycle (SDLC) and timeline
- Share information and specifications with ADE Research and Science Council for feedback

Pre-System Development (March – May 2007)

- Finalize user needs and specifications
- Develop necessary linkages and interfaces with existing applications (FIS and PMS)
- Obtain approval from AE for final applications specifications

System Application Development (May – November 2007)

- Identify tables to be centralized (donors, countries, partners, etc.)
- Develop standardized and centralized tables with new input capability
- Further develop MTP local application using Bioversity International MTP module
- Develop MTP HUB
- Develop Web Services linkages
- Develop necessary linkages between FIS, PMS, and MTP
- Test application through in Center(s)

Finalize applications and system and launch at CGIAR AGM (December 2007)

Duration: April – December 2007

Beneficiaries and Impact

Center and Challenge Program Benefits

- Locally controlled standardized MTP application
- Decrease administrative workload by making it easy to accumulate, submit and access project information
- Centers will need to only update MTP information that has changed over the year, thus eliminating need to re-enter information that remains constant
- Mechanism to identify other Center and Challenge Programs projects for potential collaboration and sharing of information

CGIAR Benefits

- Centralized access for all Center and Challenge Program MTPs
- Application that provides tools for System-wide MTP analysis across years for planning, monitoring and decision-making
- Application that allows cross-Center analysis and reports
- One-stop location for marketing and public relations information on regions of work, outputs, etc.
- Standard MTP reports across all Centers
- Easy identification of all CGIAR partners, donors, etc.

External Party (including donors) Benefits

- Easy access to information from all Centers and Challenge Programs about projects (transparency, accountability)

