

# Project Management Unit

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Project Management Unit

The synergy between the delegations, directorates, divisions and units of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)

has been instrumental in identifying donors and mobilizing external resources for the development of technical cooperation.

## General statistics

### Open calls dashboard

**13** opportunities announced



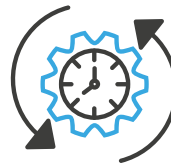
**66** Accumulated (2018-2020)

**3** Mission Travel



**22** Accumulated (2018-2020)

### Opportunities for Mobilizing External Resources



opportunities Accumulated (2018-2020)<sup>1</sup>

**256**

**USD 1 237 million**



**99**

opportunities approved (Feb-Nov 2020)

**USD 201 million<sup>2</sup>**



1. This amount includes all opportunities at various stages of development (identified, negotiated, formulated and approved), under the direction of the delegations. The app is available on the Intranet at the following link: <http://apps.iica.int/OCR/Default>

2. Includes opportunities approved by the financial counterparts and whose corresponding legal instrument is in the process of being signed.



## Collection of External Resources

### Lessons learned from different stages of development

Established in March 2018, the Project Management Unit is a multidisciplinary team operating out of Headquarters and in five strategically located focal points in each of the regions of IICA. It was conceived as a work team to assist the 34 Delegations of the Institute and its specialized units, by providing technical support in identifying and formulating projects to capture external funding.

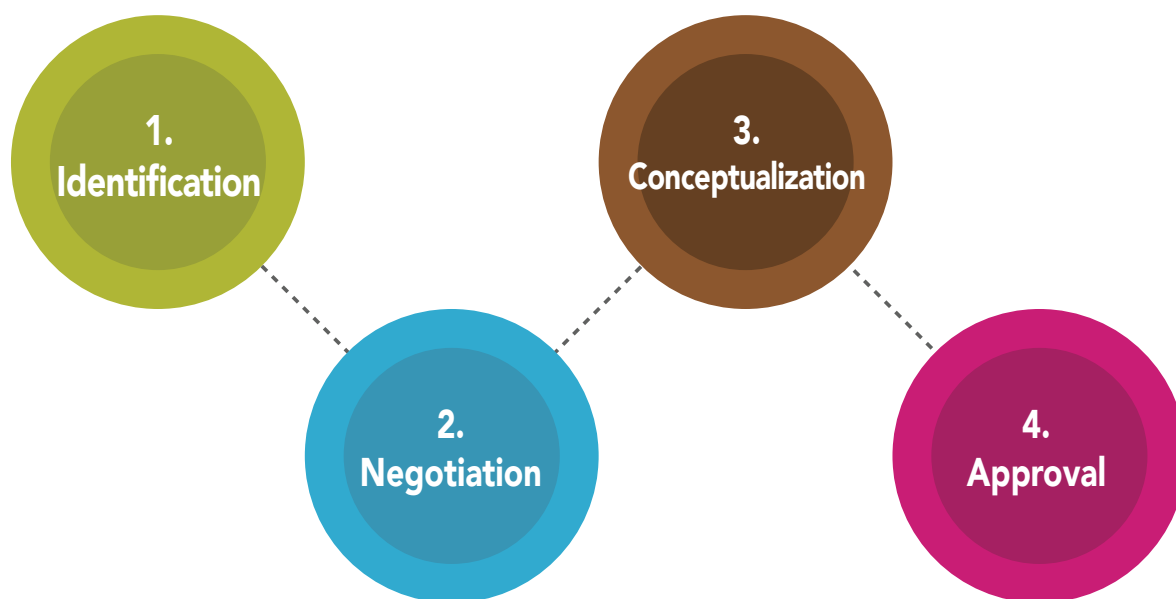
During the more than 30 months since its creation the Unit has learned many lessons from the multiple processes that it has undertaken and completed in all the regions, achieving all types of results and impacts. The following is a summary of the main lessons learned in each

phase of the process to mobilize external resources and in the different initiatives in which we have participated.

The summary provides a shortlist, which we feel will be useful in preventing errors and adopting successful practices that will increase the efficiency of IICA staff who wish to become involved in procuring external resources, by presenting technical proposals or production development projects to international cooperation agencies.

This is not a definitive list, but it will no doubt be expanded as we encounter new lessons along the way.

#### Phases in the collection of external resources



## Phase 1. Identification

### 1. Due diligence prior to developing the proposal:

This helps to determine if a proposal offers a real opportunity/ possibility for IICA. Consider undertaking an analysis of the following: competitors, previous projects awarded in this area, key requirements of those awarding the project or the background or context for implementation (the interest expressed by one or more Delegations is the most important aspect), among others.



### 2. A process/ procedure to formalize decision-making:

once the due diligence has been completed, the Institute should determine if it will or will not participate in a call for proposals, assessing the following: a) real opportunities that were identified and the institutional arrangements that will be required to interact with partners and other actors to participate in the process, b) the total amount of the call for proposals and c) the institutional capacity available at that time. This will serve as a filter that will facilitate continuous improvement in the identification phase. During this decision-making process, it is also useful to carry out a cost-benefit analysis of participating in the call, for example, to define the relationship between the effort that will have to be extended and the resources to be invested by the Institute versus the expected returns from the investment (execution amount/ effective ICR). An additional element that



could be considered is the time period to carry out certain administrative matters, such as the inclusion of IICA clauses, that the donor may sometimes not have considered including, but that are mandatory for the Institute, such as the clause on Immunities and Privileges.



### 3. An updated database of partner cooperation agencies:

Having an updated map of actors is strategic, providing the Institute with an understanding of the characteristics, conditions and opportunities offered by partner cooperation agencies at the national and regional levels. Coupled with this, a process of prioritization of and rapprochement with those actors that are considered to be key partners is something that will contribute significantly to identifying and managing external resources.

### 4. Conceptual support instruments:

It is important to have records and instruments to assist in the structuring of conceptual briefs, expressions of interest and advanced proposals, enabling IICA to determine the conditions and variables requested by partners, when the team is developing ideas to access external resources. These instruments also provide a simple template to present project ideas for short-term windows or processes. For example, the use of a conceptual brief format to begin the conceptualization phase or of the references of past experience formats of EuropeAid have proven extremely useful and have assisted the Unit to respond within a short time period.



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## Phase 2 Negotiation

- 1. Lobbying Strategy:** Devising a lobbying strategy is as or more important than developing an internationally competitive technical proposal. Empirical evidence has shown on several occasions that preparing a technically sound project proposal, while necessary, is not always sufficient. Ongoing lobbying in the capital cities and/ or work locations of the major development cooperation agencies is a crucial component in the rating and approval of technically sound and innovative proposals. Having an ongoing relationship strategy with our main consortium partners is essential to strengthen and foster an environment of confidence, friendship and camaraderie among the members, ensuring that the "IICA" brand remains foremost in their minds. Also important to this effort, is the need to develop simple but attractive promotional material that includes



key information on IICA and its technical cooperation strengths. This is a task which falls to the IICA Delegations, primarily, with the support of Headquarters.

- 2. Participation in consortiums:** Membership in consortiums is becoming an increasingly more important condition to access external resources. Thus, IICA should implement a strategy to promote linkages with partners with recognized technical and operational capacities. This would allow the Institute to have a map of related actors with which it can forge partnerships when it is assessing the conditions of the call for pro-

posals. It is also advisable that at least one of the members of the consortium be of the same nationality as the organization providing the funding. As such, coordination between the Permanent Office in Europe, the Delegations of the United States and Canada and the technical programs will facilitate the Institute's membership in consortiums and networks of important partners for open calls and opportunities that are funded from these regions.

- 3. An information database about key variables in the negotiation phase:** During the negotiation phase, it is important that IICA have at its disposal average direct costs for its technical staff, as well as the costs associated with location and logistical facilitation in the member countries. This will provide

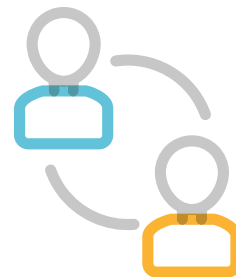


the Institute with the basis for a concerted response to act and confirm the Institute's participation in an external resources' opportunity. These elements reinforce processes to analyze the feasibility of the

Institute's participation in a particular call.

## Phase 3 Conceptualization

- 1. Establishment of a work team with staff from the Delegations and the technical programs involved:** In formulating proposals, it is critical that all the necessary institutional actors be involved from the very beginning. This will ensure the development



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of comprehensive proposals, from a technical perspective, satisfying the requirements of donors and beneficiaries, while capitalizing on the field knowledge (territories) of the Delegations. It is also advisable to determine the most efficient and practical operational mechanism for the team to carry out this process.

**2. Implementation of quality controls:** Prior to submitting the proposal, the Institute



should establish a process for review, both by actors involved in this area as well as actors related to the donor (where possible), which can verify if the proposal complies with the requirements requested in the call and if the

approach is coherent. It is critical to bear in mind certain details, in terms of structure and content, such as the writing, editing, coherence and accuracy of the content, as well as to respect the submission deadlines, as these elements ultimately affect the image of the Institute. A check list template, which will enable the team to monitor compliance with the main requirements of the call, is a simple tool that assists in the control process and facilitates monitoring of the quality variables defined in the call or by the donor.

**3. Review and anticipation of compliance with institutional directives and instruments:** It is important to have a detailed understanding of the



provisions of the new Manual for the Management of External Resources and to determine if there is any condition in the conceptualization process that that one can foresee will be an exception to institutional rules and regulations. Early consideration of certain legal instruments and matters, determination and use of transitory funds, compliance with ICR, aspects related to exchange rate differences, counterpart contributions and requirements for hiring and deadlines, among others, are fundamental aspects that should be coordinated ahead of time to avoid delays in the subsequent phases of the project cycle.

**4. Understanding of requests for rectification in selection processes:** On some occasions, the documents that are presented do not provide all the required elements indicated by the contracting agency, and thus the agency makes a direct request to the candidate to remedy the omission or to provide the necessary documents within a specified time period.

**5. Maintenance of a database:** A database of ongoing or completed projects or initiatives over the last five years is a valuable resource that will assist those who



are preparing new proposals to gather information. Additionally, establishing a database (network) of technical experts in various thematic areas is an important resource to complement the profiles of members of the team submitting the proposal, in keeping with the requirements of each call for proposals.

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## Phase 4 Approval

- 1. Systematization of lessons learned:** Once a proposal that has been presented to a potential donor has been approved or rejected, it is important to organize a meeting to reflect on the process undertaken to determine areas for improvement; identify demonstrated strengths; analyze the evaluation of the proposal; and to determine aspects for implementation, among other areas. This will allow the team to document lessons learned and to provide feedback to



the entire institute about future processes, thereby ensuring continuous improvement in capturing and managing externally funded projects.

- 2. Promotion of communications:** It is critical that the Delegation that is spearheading the proposal maintain the work teams that assisted in its formulation abreast of the progress and results of the process. This will allow the team to gradually create the necessary framework to launch and implement the actions contained in the project.



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