

CSIR-FOOD RESEARCH INSTITUTE



CSIR-FRI/AuthorAID

**REPORT ON THE PROPOSAL WRITING TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR RESEARCH
SCIENTISTS**



HELD AT

**CSIR-INSTITUTE FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL INFORMATION ON
28th – 29th July, 2015**

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AUGUST, 2015

Table of Content

Table of Content	1
Acknowledgement	3
Acronyms	4
Chapter 1	5
1.1 Background	5
1.2 Participants	5
1.3 Introduction to AuthorAID Deputy Director, CSIR-INSTI	6
1.4 Address by Deputy Director, CSIR- FRI	6
Chapter 2	7
2.1 Lessons on Proposal Writing	7
2.1.1 Introduction to Proposal Writing	7
2.1.2 Impact of donor-funded project – The FRI experience	7
2.1.3 Writing the sections of a project proposal	8
2.1.4 Submission and Post submission of a grant proposal	8
2.1.5 Online Resources	9
Chapter 3	10
3.1 Individual Assignments and presentation	10
3.2 Group discussions and presentations	10
3.2.1 Group 1:	10
3.2.2 Group 2:	10
3.2.3 Group 3:	11
3.2.4 Group 4:	11
Chapter 4	12
4.1 Evaluation of workshop	12
4.2 Presentation of certificates	12
Chapter 5	13
5.1 Lessons learnt	13
5.2 Closing remarks by Deputy Director, CSIR-FRI	13
5.3 Recommendations	13
APPENDICES	14

Appendix A: List of Participants 14
Appendix B: Participants Group List..... 15
Appendix C: Training Evaluation Questionnaire..... 16

Acknowledgement

Sponsorship from AuthorAID is highly acknowledged. AuthorAID is a free international research community based at INSAP and is supported by the DFID and SIDA.

Acronyms

CSIR	- Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CTA	- Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation
DANIDA	- Danish International Development Agency
DFID	- Department for International Development
FAO	- Food and Agricultural Organization
FRI	- Food Research Institute
INASP	- International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications
INSTI	- Institute for Scientific and Technological Information
SIDA	- Swedish International Development Agency
STEPRI	- Scientific and Technology Policy Research Institute
WRI	- Water Research Institute

Chapter 1

1.1 Background

The event of dwindling government allocation of funds for research in most developing countries has necessitated the need to strengthen the capacity of researchers to write and secure winnable proposals to support research. It is for this reason that the INASP established AuthorAID to provide support for researchers in developing countries by creating a platform for training and skill development in proposal writing and also help them communicate their research findings through publications.

AuthorAID is a free international research community based at INSAP and is supported by the DFID and SIDA. It is a global network that provides support for researchers in developing countries. Its goals are to increase success rate of developing country researchers in achieving publications; and to increase the visibility and influence of research in the developing world. AuthorAID accomplishes this through networking, provision of resources, training and mentoring.

Through the AuthorAID initiative, a train-the-trainer workshop was organized for selected research scientists to equip them with the skills and tools to enable them write and present competitive and winnable grant proposals. With the hope of institutionalizing AuthorAID's training in proposal writing in research organizations, these research scientists were tasked with training other researchers in their institutes/organizations.

This training workshop was therefore geared towards embedding AuthorAID Research and Proposal Writing in four Institutes under the CSIR, namely; Food Research Institute, Institute for Scientific and Technological Information, Water Research Institute and Scientific and Technology Policy Research Institute. The 2-day training was aimed at improving the skills and strengthening the capacity of research scientists in these institutes to write competitive and winnable grant proposals in order to enhance the continuity of research in the CSIR.

1.2 Participants

Twenty Research Scientists from four Institutes under the CSIR attended the 2-day training workshop in Proposal Writing. A self-introduction of Facilitators, Guest Speakers and Participants was done before the beginning of workshop proceedings. The participants indicated that improving their proposal writing skills and winning grants by writing competitive proposals was their major goal for attending the training. Their expectation was that at the end of the training, they would have learnt and developed the skills of proposal writing. They also hoped that acquiring these skills would enable them write better proposals that will win them grants to further advance research work in the CSIR.

1.3 Introduction to AuthorAID by Deputy Director, CSIR-INSTI

Dr. Coffie, Deputy Director, CSIR-INSTI gave a brief introduction of AuthorAID and its activities on behalf of Dr. Sam, Director of INSTI and co-ordinator of AuthorAID, Ghana. In his speech, he mentioned that CSIR-INSTI has been in the forefront of enhancing the capacity of personnel from different agencies through training. He said over the years INSTI has worked in collaboration with agencies such as CTA, FAO and INASP. He reiterated the fact that the proposal writing workshop is a collaboration between FRI and INSTI, under the sponsorship of AuthorAID – INSAP.

Dr. Coffie stated that the idea behind the program, was to train the new generation of scientists and technologists to meet the requirements for increasing IGF, meeting the goals of CSIR's commercialization agenda and providing materials for writing technical reports and publishing papers. He also said the workshop sought to introduce techniques to meet the requirements that sponsors and donors require of proposals.

Finally, he thanked INASP for their support and expressed the hope that by the end of the training workshop, every participant would be endowed with the skill of writing good and winnable proposal. He warmly welcomed participants, once again and wished them a fruitful session.

1.4 Address by Deputy Director, CSIR- FRI

Dr. Mary Obodai, Deputy Director of CSIR-FRI thanked AuthorAID and the local team of organizers/facilitators for presenting a wonderful opportunity to train Research Scientists in proposal writing. She welcomed participants and gave a brief background to AuthorAID-INASP scientific and grant proposal writing in the CSIR. She said this workshop was being organized as part of a process of embedding scientific and proposal writing in the 13 Institutes under the CSIR. She hinted that the Council plans to introduce newly employed scientists and technologists to grants proposal and scientific writing to enable them get started and familiarized with research.

Dr. Obodai advised participants to begin to write proposals after the training and fine-tune it in the course of time so that it would become competitive enough for funding. She stressed further, the need for interdisciplinary projects in order to ensure institutional collaboration, because that is more likely to receive donor funding. She concluded by congratulating participants for enrolling and wished them a successful 2-day proposal writing workshop.

Chapter 2

2.1 Lessons on Proposal Writing

2.1.1 Introduction to Proposal Writing

Introduction to proposal writing was delivered by Dr. Mary Obodai (Principal Research Scientist, CSIR-FRI). She started with a general overview and importance of proposal writing before touching on the grant application process. She said grant applications could be made by two major approaches; by writing the proposal before seeking funding or by writing a proposal to meet the criteria for a particular call. She advised participants that regardless of the approach, the proposal should be written early, a realistic budget provided and instructions strictly and carefully followed.

Dr Obodai also took participants through concept note writing and curriculum vitae/resume/biography. She mentioned that a concept note describes a project idea in concise form and is very critical for many grant calls. She said it helps funding agencies in selecting proposals and also guides applicants during the writing stage. It is usually limited to 2-3 pages and has all the components of a full proposal and should, in most cases, have a summary of the proposal budget.

Dr Obodai concluded her session with some useful tips for preparing a resume, curriculum vitae and short biography. She stated that very often, grant agencies require that CV be attached to proposals. She said these documents should also be carefully written to highlight applicants' remarkable achievements which are relevant and related directly with the project being proposed.

2.1.2 Impact of donor-funded project – The FRI experience

Dr. W. Amoa-Awua (Chief Research Scientist, FRI) was the main guest speaker at the training workshop. His lesson focused on the impact of donor funded projects on research activities at FRI. He started by sharing with participants, trends in R&D investment worldwide. According to him R&D support by government is lowest among African countries and therefore donor support is the most plausible option of attracting funds for research. Due to this situation, he said it has become imperative for researchers to develop competitive proposals that will attract the attention of donors.

Dr. Amoa-Awua shared his experience of writing proposals to attract support from DANIDA and other funding agencies. He said that these projects have benefitted FRI and other Institutions in many ways. He told participants that through some of these projects, some personnel were sponsored for further studies, equipment were procured and some laboratories were upgraded. Other benefits he shared include generation of in-depth scientific knowledge, development and transfer of key technologies that have benefitted Ghana and other African countries immensely.

He advised participants to network, build cordial relationships, collaborate and develop teams which are skilled in proposal writing. He said doing so would result in the development of winnable project proposals which would help advance the course of research in Ghana and Africa as a whole.

2.1.3 Writing the sections of a project proposal

The session on “writing the sections of a grant proposal” was treated by Dr. Charles Tortoe. This lesson covered the complete structure of a project proposal and how to write them up. He started the lesson by addressing the title and abstract/executive summary. He told participants that these sections are as important as the main body of the proposal. He said the title is the first to be read by reviewers and therefore must be crafted carefully to reflect the content of the proposal. Dr. Tortoe told the trainees that the abstract presents a summary of the proposal in a single paragraph. He was quick to add that word limitation for abstract or executive summary varies from one funding agency to another and should be adhered to strictly.

Dr. Tortoe said the introduction section of a proposal provides background, literature, problem statement and justification of the research. He told participants that the statement of problem and the objectives are two key components that determine the success of a proposal. He advised them to have objectives that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound. Concerning the methodology, he said this describes how the proposal hopes to systematically solve the identified problem. It also details the equipment requirements, population and or study area as well as statistical tools and analysis to be used. He recommended the inclusion of a statistician or a biometrician in the proposal writing team to ensure that the project is well designed.

He also talked about the proposal budget and its accompanying statement. He mentioned that a good proposal must have a realistic budget and advised participants to refrain from over- or under-budgeting. He explained that over- or under-budgeting would make the proposal unrealistic and unattractive for donor support. He noted that the most appropriate way of preparing the budget is to cost every activity, even if funding would not be sought for it.

Dr Tortoe concluded his session with a discussion on monitoring and evaluation, dissemination of project findings, project beneficiaries and sustainability plans. He maintained that these components make grant applications very competitive and attractive for donor support. He also advised participants to carefully follow the instructions presented for each call for proposal, since a deviation from these instructions could lead to an outright rejection of a project proposal no matter how feasible the proposal might be.

2.1.4 Submission and Post submission of a grant proposal

Dr. Margaret Owusu took participants through the lessons on submission and post-submission of grant proposals. Topics discussed under this lesson were; reviewing grant proposals, writing cover letters and submission of proposals and handling grant decisions.

Dr. Owusu told participants to revise their proposal by checking grammar, spelling, logical flow of ideas, accuracy etc, and also advised them to make good use of feedback from team members and colleagues. She told participants to develop a checklist that would guide them when preparing a proposal for submission. This would ensure that no documentation is left out. With regard to handling grant decisions, she said participants should be ready for criticisms, contrary opinions and suggestions or even outright rejection of their proposals. She advised participants to

be polite and courteous when making enquiries about decisions concerning their proposal, should the need arise.

In her concluding remarks, she hinted that proposals are rejected for several reasons and therefore urged participants not to despair if their proposal is rejected. She mentioned that in some instances, a proposal may be revised and re-submitted in the next funding cycle. She concluded by cautioning participants to stick to submission guidelines and deadlines, as set out by the funding agency.



A section of participants at the training workshop

2.1.5 Online Resources

Participants were introduced to useful online resources which are related to grant proposal. These included websites that provide guidelines for writing proposals such as www.authoraid.info, www.grants.nih.gov and www.grandchallenges.ca. Others, including the websites of some funding agencies, were made available to participants to aid them in their search for calls and developing good proposals.

Chapter 3

3.1 Individual Assignments and presentation

At the close of the first day's proceedings, the participants were presented with a hypothetical call for proposal and made to develop a short biography and a one-paged resume, as part of the proposal requirements. One participant volunteered to make a presentation on behalf of the other trainees, and thereafter, comments and suggestions made.

3.2 Group discussions and presentations

After the session on research writing (Day 2), participants were put into 4 groups (Appendix B) and each group assigned to a specific topic for discussion. The group assignment lasted nearly 2 hours, after which each group was made to share its findings through a presentation. Five minutes were allowed for questions and discussions after each group's presentation.

3.2.1 Group 1:

Group 1 worked on the risks associated with projects and the mitigation measures and assumptions that may arise as a result of these suggested risks. A summary of their findings is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Risks, mitigation measures and assumptions associated with a 5-year project

Risks	Mitigation measures	Assumptions
Provision of capital and skills in rearing pigs was not done	Baseline studies should have been conducted	No baseline studies was carried out
There was no sustainability plan	Stakeholders should have been consulted	Needs assessment of the social groups was not done properly
Cultural beliefs were ignored in the project planning stage	Capacity building should have been provided for beneficiaries	

3.2.2 Group 2:

Group 2 were detailed to draw a sustainability plan for a donor funded project, after the funding period of the project had elapsed. Salient aspects of their plan for sustaining the project include the following:

- Beneficiaries should be made to pay a token for use of the facility
- A percentage of the proceeds should be invested
- Other sources of funding should be identified to train local artisans in repair and fabrication of graters

3.2.3 Group 3:

The 3rd Group was also tasked with the development of a monitoring and evaluation plan for a particular activity under a donor funded project. A summarized version of their plan is presented in Table 2:

Table 2: Monitoring and evaluation plan

Activity	Impact
Project technical and financial reporting (quarterly and annually)	Improved record-keeping
Progress review meetings	
Impact assessment of technology on beneficiaries	

3.2.4 Group 4:

The last group (Group 4) was asked to design an impact assessment plan for evaluating the impact of a project, 5-years after its completion. According to the group, the impact of the project would be assessed based on 5 key outcomes namely;

1. Adoption of improved mushroom cultivation techniques
2. Increased revenue generation from mushrooms
3. Improved household income and nutrition
4. Increased asset wealth of farmers
5. Community participation of farmers in producing good mushrooms

Chapter 4

4.1 Evaluation of workshop

In the final activity of the 2-day training, participants were made to evaluate the workshop, using a questionnaire (Appendix C). The questionnaire contained both open and closed ended questions and also had a section for collecting brief background information of participants. Each participant was made to complete and return one questionnaire for collation, data entry and analysis.

All 20 participants agreed that the training workshop and the course content were relevant to their work. They conceded that their knowledge had been improved markedly after the training. The participants said the venue was convenient and conducive and their assessment of the facilitators was positive. According to them the facilitators had a good command of the art of proposal writing and were also able to teach the topics very well. They agreed unanimously that having acquired the skills in proposal writing through this training, they hoped to practice, develop further and engage themselves in writing successful proposal.

Some of the suggestions given by participants for improvement of the course in future were as follows:

- a. Participants should be made to try their hands on at least concept notes or a draft proposal so that facilitators could review and make their comments.
- b. Training should be held over 5 days so that a lot more time could be dedicated to each topic.
- c. Better accessibility to internet connectivity to facilitate the lessons on e-resources.
- d. Course should be made more participatory and practical and the time for hands-on sessions should be stepped up.

4.2 Presentation of certificates

Presentation of certificates was done by Dr. Mary Obodai, Deputy Director of CSIR-FRI, with assistance from Dr. Charles Tortoe, Facilitator of the training workshop. All 20 participants were presented with a certificate of participation and a pen-drive which contained all presentations made at the 2-day training workshop.

Chapter 5

5.1 Lessons learnt

- Participants agreed that training in proposal writing is key, in order for researchers in the CSIR, to attract funding for research activities.
- The training workshop helped the participant to gain more knowledge, to understand, grasp and develop the skills in writing competitively to attract funding for research.
- Refresher workshops in grants proposal writing should be organized frequently for research scientists and technologists of the CSIR

5.2 Closing remarks by Deputy Director, CSIR-FRI

The Deputy Director, FRI, Dr. Mary Obodai congratulated participants for successfully attending the training workshop and also thanked them for their contribution to making the programme a success. She admonished them to begin to practice the skills acquired from the training in order to develop it further. She also assured participants of the facilitators support and urged them to approach the facilitators when they encountered any difficulties in proposal writing. Finally she thanked INASP /AuthorAID for their sponsorship of the training workshop.

5.3 Recommendations

Training research scientist and technologists in proposal writing is essential for equipping them with the tools to write winnable grant proposals to complement government support for research activities. This workshop has revealed some important issues, which will improve future training workshops aimed at building the capacity of researchers. These include, but not limited to, the following:

- The need for future workshops to be residential so that participants could meet and have more time to discuss group assignments and related activities.
- Training be held for at least one week, because of the nature and volume of the content to be covered.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of Participants

No	Name	Institute	Email
1	Amy Atter	FRI	amykuus@yahoo.com
2	Anthonia Andoh Odoom	FRI	
3	Charlotte Oduro-Yeboah	FRI	adwoaadom3@gmail.com
4	Deborah Narh Mensah	FRI	
5	Elvis Baidoo	FRI	
6	Evelyn Buckman	FRI	evesah@yahoo.com
7	George Anyebuno	FRI	
8	Hannah Obeng Oduro	FRI	
9	Nina Bernice Ackah	FRI	
10	Benjamin Yao Folitse	INSTI	
11	Christian Kwabena Lettu	INSTI	
12	Collins Opoku-Dwomoh	INSTI	
13	Doreen Appiah	INSTI	
14	Jeffrey Yeboah	INSTI	
15	Seth Awuku Manteaw	INSTI	
16	Mavis Akuffobea	STEPRI	
17	Portia Adade Williams	STEPRI	
18	Rose Omari	STEPRI	
19	Collins Okrah	WRI	
20	Patrick Amankwah Mainoo	WRI	

Appendix B: Participants Group List

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
George Anyebuno	Nina Bernice Ackah	Christian Lettu	Collins Okrah
Amy Atter	Jeffrey Yeboah	Collins Opoku-Dwomoh	Seth Manteaw
Portia A. Williams	Hannah Obeng	Deborah Narh Mensah	Benjamin Folitse
Evelyn S. Buckman	Mavis Akuffobe	Patrick A. Mainoo	Doreen Appiah
Elvis Baidoo	Rose Omari	C. Oduro-Yeboah	Anthonia Andoh

Appendix C: Training Evaluation Questionnaire

FRI-AUTHOR AID TRAINING ON PROPOSAL WRITING WORKSHOP EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Age:.....

Gender: M/F

Institute:.....

1. Was the training relevant?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure

2. Was the duration of the training adequate?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure

3. Were the presentation topics relevant to your needs?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure

4. Was the time allotted for each topic adequate?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure

5. Was the venue convenient/conducive?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure

6. What was your knowledge of proposal writing just before you attended this workshop?

- a. I knew a lot
- b. I knew a moderate amount
- c. I knew little
- d. I knew nothing

7. At the end of the course what do you think of your knowledge of proposal writing?

- a. I know a lot
- b. I know a moderate amount
- c. I know a little
- d. I know nothing

8. Do you feel you are now ready to write a winnable grant proposal?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure

9. What are your assessment of the facilitators and their style of presentation

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10. Can you suggest any changes for improvement of the course?

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