

SANREM CRSP Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
August 16 and 17, 2005
The Inn at Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, VA

Participants:

David Acker, Associate Dean for Academic and Global Programs, Iowa State University
Bob Bates, Provost and Academic Vice President, Washington State University (via teleconference)
Jess Lowenberg-Deboer, Interim Associate Dean and Director of International Programs in Agriculture, Purdue University
Sharron Quisenberry, Dean of College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Virginia Tech
Alton Thompson, Dean of School of Agriculture and Environmental and Allied Sciences, North Carolina A & T State University
George Wilson, Vice Provost for International Affairs, North Carolina State University
Chris Kosnik, USAID CTO (ex officio, voting)
S.K. De Datta, Director, Office of International Research, Education and Development (OIRE); Vice Provost for International Affairs, Virginia Tech; Administrative Principal Investigator SANREM CRSP (ex officio, non-voting)
Theo Dillaha, Program Director SANREM CRSP, Virginia Tech (ex officio, non-voting)
Keith M. Moore, Associate Program Director SANREM CRSP, Virginia Tech (ex officio, non-voting)
John Lipovsky, SANREM ME staff
Kirk Neal, SANREM ME staff

Agenda:

Tuesday, August 16, 2005

1:00 – 1:30 PM	Welcoming Remarks and Introductions, S.K. De Datta
1:30 – 2:30	SANREM Overview and Progress Report, Theo Dillaha
2:30 – 3:00	Board Discussion, S.K. De Datta, Moderator
3:00 – 3:15	Break
3:15 – 4:00	CRSP Governance Structures, Keith Moore
4:00 – 5:00	Board Discussion, S.K. De Datta, Moderator
5:00	Adjourn
7:00 – 9:30	Dinner at S.K. De Datta's Home

Wednesday, August 17, 2005

8:00 – 8:30	Board Discussion, S.K. De Datta, Moderator
8:30 – 8:40	Election of Board Chairperson, S.K. De Datta, Moderator
8:40 – 10:15	Revision and approval of SANREM POP Manual, Alton Thompson, Board Chair
10:15 – 10:30	Break
10:30 – 12:00	Review and approval of potential EEP and ERP members, Alton Thompson, Board Chair
12:00	Closing Remarks and Adjourn, S.K. De Datta

Minutes:

Tuesday, August 16, 2005

Welcoming Remarks and Introductions, S.K. De Datta

The first meeting of the Board of Directors of SANREM CRSP Phase III was called to order at 1:10 PM, August 16, 2005 by S.K. De Datta. Dr. De Datta welcomed the Board and made introductions of those attending. He commented on the quality of the Management Entity (ME) staff, and the quality and makeup of the Board. He discussed the process through which Virginia Tech received the ME contract and reaffirmed the ME goal of following an open and transparent process in making all subawards. He indicated that the SANREM CRSP is working closely with USAID and following the guidelines stipulated in the Request for Applications (RFA) and specified in the ME's proposal and subsequent cooperative agreement. He stated that the working relationship with USAID's Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) Chris Kosnik has been excellent.

Dr. De Datta stated that the SANREM CRSP ME's goal is to devote the maximum amount of USAID funds to programs rather than management, and that the ME has encouraged its partners to do the same. He reported that the SANREM CRSP Technical Committee (TC) met on December 6 and 7, 2004 and approved the policies requiring the use of off-campus indirect cost research rates (with a cap of 30%) and no lead institution indirect costs on sub-awards to host country institutions. He also mentioned that Virginia Tech is cost-sharing a large amount of the ME staff costs and that the ME includes a full-time gender equity specialist. Dr. De Datta requested that the Board ensure transparency in its discussions and decisions, and asked for the Board's help and guidance for the Management Entity.

SANREM Overview and Progress Report, Theo Dillaha

Theo Dillaha, Program Director, then reviewed the goals of the SANREM CRSP, accomplishments to date, current and upcoming activities, the SANREM CRSP budget, and challenges faced. He highlighted the early initiation of bridging awards: just three months after project start-up. He also described the process and results of the competition for planning awards. Seventy-four applications were reviewed by a seven member External Review Panel. Eighteen were accepted for awards. An additional 17 teams have submitted letters of intent to submit Long-Term Research Applications, making a total of 35 applications for an expected four to six awards.

Dr. Dillaha also mentioned the intent of SANREM CRSP to link all program activities to USAID Mission objectives as much as possible. He stated that the evaluation criteria for research applications and proposal writer's checklist had been developed and posted on the SANREM CRSP web site to assist research teams in developing high quality applications that address SANREM CRSP goals and program themes. He also described the Associate Awards program, how it will function, and its potential to finance additional SA and NRM related activities to support Mission needs.

Dr. Dillaha then opened a discussion concerning the Long-Term Research Program applications. He indicated that the large number of the applicant teams, incorporating numerous institutions (31 known major universities and 18 IARCs and major international NGOs), has made it extremely difficult to find qualified individuals without conflicts of interest. He stated that the ME is searching for reviewers with both scientific and development expertise and agricultural and natural resource management.

Board Discussion, S.K. De Datta, Moderator

Dr. David Acker noted that SANREM application review panels face a real challenge in that they must consider quality, complexity, and cost. For example, how should the reviewers decide what constitutes a more valuable contribution: an application covering one country in depth, or an application covering 3 or 4 countries in less depth, and how does the proposed coverage affect the amount awarded? It was noted that proposals would need to show broad application, that is, that the results must be transferable to other areas, regions and countries. While the External Evaluation Panel (EEP) and External Review Panel (ERP) are recommending bodies, the ME must ensure that the final program package meets the program goals specified in the SANREM CRSP Cooperative Agreement. The ME needs to ensure the development of a holistic program, not 4 to 6 independent projects.

Dr. De Datta stated strongly that the ME will encourage the review panels to focus primarily on potential research impact. Consequently, the development goals of the applications must be clearly defined.

It is expected that there will be some negotiation of budgets based on review panel recommendations concerning the strengths and weaknesses of individual applications. For example, an application may propose research at three sites, but the ME and EEP recommend reduced funding to support research at fewer sites. This flexibility may be needed to meet overall SANREM CRSP program goals. The importance of mission support for the proposed research was also discussed. Chris Kosnik, USAID CTO, stated that the interaction between research teams and missions is essential and seems to be developing well during the application development phase.

CRSP Governance Structures, Keith Moore

Keith Moore then initiated a review of alternative CRSP governance structures by reviewing the governance structures of the eight other CRSPs. He indicated that USAID has placed a high priority on open, competitive projects, thus eliminating the perception of CRSP entitlements. Consequently, the CRSP MEs are increasing the roles of external advisors to avoid the appearance of conflicts of interest and their Technical Committees are assuming a more scientific role. Dr. Moore reviewed the five functions of advisory bodies as specified in the CRSP Guidelines: (1) managing research programs; (2) setting policies and dealing with policy issues; (3) ensuring technical oversight of research program; (4) evaluating research proposals and research progress; (5) protecting the interests of institutional partners. He then illustrated how these functions were assigned in the different CRSPs.

Board Discussion, S.K. De Datta, Moderator

The Board then discussed various governance options for the SANREM CRSP. De Datta pointed out that the advisory structure of the SANREM CRSP as described in the Cooperative Agreement was functioning and that a major overhaul was not required. Several Board members expressed concern that the technical committee's evaluation of their own projects could still be perceived as a conflict of interest. Lowenberg-Deboer countered that project review and program development assured the full engagement of Technical Committee members. It was concluded that while the TC could provide an internal monitoring system, the EEP would also need to evaluate all projects annually based on the quarterly and annual activity reports and feedback from the ME. This feedback will be considered if funds must be reallocated due to changes in CRSP funding or sub-standard performance by individual activities. The Board members agreed that the multiple committee structure provided a valuable system of check and balances. The EEP provides external continuous long-term assessment of individual activities and the overall program. The ERP is an ad hoc group and provides short term support to the EEP during assessment activities. The TC's primary responsibility is continuous assessment, coordination, and dissemination of the science generated by the individual activities and overall program. The RAC assessment and management responsibilities are research activity specific. Board members did not feel that their role was that of institutional representation. They agreed that the Board is the primary body providing policy advice to the ME and that their primary responsibility was to the program as a whole. This confirms what has been stated in the draft Policy and Operating Procedures Manual. There was a general discussion of carry over fund policies for the project. The ME was instructed to prepare a draft carryover funds proposal for discussion the next day.

Wednesday, August 17, 2005

Board Discussion, S.K. De Datta, Moderator

The role and responsibilities of the Board were discussed. The Board agreed that the terms of the initial Board members from institutional partners would extend one more year. Members will serve 2 years and consist of representatives of partner institutions, one representative from an IARC, and 1 from a host country. As partner institutions change, new ones will be rotated in. The total number of voting board members will be nine (including the USAID CTO), with ME representatives serving on an ex officio, non-voting basis.

Discussion ensued related to assessing the impacts of CRSP activities. De Datta stated that the quality of the research in itself is not important unless it results in development impacts. Some board members expressed concern that NRM issues are longer term, and may not produce measurable impacts in four years, while USAID would like to see results in 4-5 years. It will be important to encourage comparative studies, for instance, comparing treatments/conditions of different ages and in different locations in order to obtain quantifiable and significant results within the research timeframe. The linking research activities with ongoing development activities was also discussed and encouraged since the limited budgets will make it difficult to fund both implementation and assessment activities.

Election of Board Chairperson, S.K. De Datta, Moderator

The Board elected Dr. Alton Thompson, the Dean of the School of Agriculture and Environmental and Allied Sciences at North Carolina A&T State University as the Chair of the SANREM CRSP Board of Directors.

Revision and Approval of SANREM POP Manual, Alton Thompson, Board Chair

Discussion ensued as to the desired governance structure for the SANREM CRSP. The Board reiterated the important roles of the advisory bodies. Several changes to the draft POP Manual related to the advisory panels were discussed and approved. The role and responsibilities of the Board were reviewed and accepted as proposed with minor editing. The composition of the TC was clarified to account for the transition between Landscape System Coordinators and long-term research awardees and an additional external member was added. Technical Committee responsibilities were streamlined and made more consistent with internal scientific review and program leadership. The Board requested an additional section be developed to specify the role of the Research Activity Leaders (RALs) as representatives of the Research Activity Committees (RACs) on the TC and as leaders of their respective research activities.

The roles and responsibilities of the External Evaluation Panel (EEP) were reviewed. The Board recommended an additional responsibility - an annual evaluation of individual research activities and the overall SANREM CRSP program. Other responsibilities were also reviewed and refined to clearly specify the EEP's role in providing external quality assessment.

The draft carry-over funds policy was discussed and approved. Carry over funds are those funds allocated, but for which no invoices have been submitted to the ME during previous budgetary year(s). The following carry over funds policy was adopted:

When unexpended funds from the previous year's budget exceed 10 percent of the year's allocation, the excess will be de-obligated from the current year's research activity budget and re-obligated to new activities by the ME. Exceptions may be made if they are requested in writing 30 days before the end of the previous budget year and approved by the ME.

The Board also requested that the ME develop a POP Manual section describing how TraiNet must be used when foreign nationals travel to the U.S. on SANREM CRSP funds. This will be added to the POP Manual section on International Travel Coordination and Clearance.

On the basis of the agreed upon changes and subject to review of those changes by the Board, the Board of Directors approved the POP Manual.

The makeup and potential candidates for the EEP and ERP were then discussed. It was decided that the criteria for selecting review panel members would include: stature in their research field; discipline balance, gender balance, geographic experience, and development experience. A pool of individuals to serve on these bodies was discussed and approved and other possible candidates suggested. The list of candidates in the attached table was approved and it was left to the ME to select the actual members for the panel before submission to USAID for final approval.

The Board meeting was adjourned at 12:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Theo Dillaha, Program Director SANREM CRSP

Board Approved SANREM CRSP EEP/ERP Candidates		
Name		Expertise
Agustin	Arcenas	Agricultural/NRM/Environmental Economics
Conner	Bailey	Rural Sociology
Revathi	Balakrishna	Rural Sociology, gender
Robyn	Burnham	Botany, biodiversity,
Billie	DeWalt	Anthropology, development
Kent	Elbow	International Development
Bill	Flinn	Rural Sociology
Kathleen	Galvin	Anthropology, ecology, gender
Richard	Harwood	Sustainable agriculture, soil quality
Charlotte	Johnson-Welch	Gender, nutrition, Africa
Gurdev	Khush	Agriculture
Susana	Lastarria-Cornhiel	Sociology, development, gender
Hank	Shugart	Ecology
Irma	Silva-Barbeau	Gender and nutrition
Thomas	Thurrow	Rangeland Ecologist
Jeffrey	Vincent	Natural Resource and Environmental Economist
Mark	Winslow	Plant breeding, genetics, international development
Lydia	Zepeda	Ag Econ

Additional Candidates Recommended by Board Members		
Donald	Pluncknett	Agriculture
Edward	French	Plant Pathology and Breeding
Jose	Benitez	Agriculture
Leslie	Swindale	Soil Science
Wanda	Collins	Horticulture
Eugene	Terry	Plant pathologist
Ronald	Cantrell	Plant breeding and geneticist
Pedro	Sanchez	Soil science, sustainability