

Council of Councils Common Fund Evaluation Response

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Overview

2013 – Council of Councils (CoC) established the Common Fund Evaluation Working Group (CFEWG)

- To evaluate principles and processes used to manage CF
- To review information from programs to assess impact of CF-supported science
- To provide recommendations to optimize the success and impact of CF

CFEWG Charge

- Assess and advise on two areas
 - Processes for strategic planning
 - Processes for managing CF programs



Overview (cont)

- June, 2014 - CFEWG provided 47 recommendations
- CoC discussed and concurred with the CFEWG report at its meeting in September, 2014
- NIH Director accepted and approved recommendations
- OSC developed responses to recommendations

Strategic Planning

(summary of recommendations 1-21)

- Engage a broad group of stakeholders to gather and shape ideas
- Clarify criteria for new CF programs, including those which address urgent needs and those that involve allocation of funds to Intramural Research Program (IRP)
- Provide opportunities for richer participation by the Institute and Center Directors (ICDs) as concepts are developed and selected
- Enhance partnership between OSC and ICs through improved working relationships, communication, and transparency as concepts are formed and selected

Engage a broad group of stakeholders to gather and shape ideas

OSC RESPONSE:

- Phase 1 planning has used, and will continue to use, a variety of approaches to gather input
 - local and regional meetings of external scientists
 - broad solicitation of input via social media or RFIs
 - national conferences
- Moving forward, OSC will:
 - Enhance opportunities for ICDs to provide input prior to concept clearance
 - Discuss all concepts in person with the CoC to allow richer input
 - Identify skeptics during Phase 2 planning

Clarify criteria for new CF programs

OSC RESPONSE:

- Enhance interactions between OSC and external stakeholders and between OSC and NIH staff to help define CF criteria in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 strategic planning
 - OSC staffing to increase to allow greater interaction with internal and external stakeholders
 - OSC to enhance outreach to the scientific community at national conferences to increase awareness of the Common Fund and to gather ad hoc input on challenges/opportunities
- Enhance interactions between IC Directors and Working Groups (WGs) for new concepts
 - Discussions will clarify criteria with teams who are developing the concept and ensure program proposal is broadly relevant
- Ensure that programs that form in response to urgent needs are held to CF criteria and processes, albeit on a faster timeline
- Reinforce current policy that states that scientific goals determine a CF program, with decisions about intramural or extramural funding being a strategy to achieve the goals
 - Expectations for intramural-only projects will be clarified via Memoranda of Understanding between OSC and the relevant IC

Provide opportunities for richer participation by ICDs and the CoC in concept development and selection

OSC RESPONSE:

- OSC discussed this recommendation with the IC Directors at the annual NIH Leadership Forum in November, 2014.
 - IC Directors will be invited to participate via small groups at multiple points during the planning process to help shape new programs and provide input during decision-making
 - Prior to concept clearance
 - Prior to finalization of the program proposal
 - During the presentation of the proposal to the NIH and DPCPSI Directors
 - The entire group of IC Directors will have the opportunity to provide high level input on new concepts as they are selected for Phase 2 planning and midway through Phase 2 planning.
- Fewer, but more well developed, concepts will be discussed with the CoC for concept clearance. All concepts will be discussed in person.

Enhance OSC /IC partnership to improve working relationships, communications, and transparency as concepts are developed

OSC RESPONSE:

- Enhance OSC staffing to support increased interaction; meet in small and large group settings with IC staff to discuss CF criteria, processes, and plans for program management
- Engage in fluid dialog with IC colleagues as concepts are planned and managed
- Devote OSC staff time to orchestrate portfolio analyses with WGs
- Support orientation and team building activities with WG coordinators

Program Management

(summary of recommendations 22-47)

- Work fluidly with CF WGs to develop a common understanding of goals, milestones, and program management plans
- Communicate in diverse ways to ensure general familiarity with CF and ensure grantees, NIH staff, and end-users are aware of goals and deliverables
- Ensure evaluation plans are developed early in program lifecycle, ensure grantees are fully familiar with end goals and plans to assess the program
- Engage ICDs throughout program lifecycle

Work fluidly with CF WGs to develop a common understanding of goals, milestones, and program management plans

OSC RESPONSE:

- OSC and experienced IC program staff will mentor new WGs on Best Practices in the CF Handbook and cover expectations for working together
- Enhanced staffing in will allow OSC/IC program staff to work as partners to develop a program management plan with flexibility to adapt to changing scientific issues
- Annual program review and operating budget planning will be an interactive, bidirectional activity with OSC PLs and team working together to develop strategy
- OSC PLs will work closely with less experienced CF IC coordinators to relay experiences and lessons learned
- MOUs will be developed with intramural-only programs and initiatives

Communicate in diverse ways to ensure familiarity with CF and to ensure grantees, NIH staff, and end-users are aware of goals and deliverables

OSC RESPONSE:

- OSC will develop and implement an outreach strategy for the CF as a whole
 - Information at conferences, professional society meetings, or other venues of relevant audiences
- OSC will ensure that each CF program has an outreach plan that will target relevant investigator communities
- OSC will initiate a seminar series, to coincide with CoC meetings, highlighting CF program accomplishments and deliverables
- IC Directors will be briefed on programs prior to decisions to renew support. They will be invited to CF seminar series; slides and other communications materials will be shared with ICDs via a Sharepoint site.
- PIs and IC program staff will be able to review descriptions of CF processes in the CF Handbook

Ensure that evaluation plans are developed early in program lifecycle and that grantees are fully familiar with end goals

OSC RESPONSE:

- Phase 2 strategic planning will continue to emphasize the establishment of goals and milestones
 - Plans for evaluation will be enhanced during this phase of planning
- Increased emphasis will be placed on negotiation of specific goals and milestones for individual awards via the Notice of Grant Award for all cooperative agreements.
- Kickoffs and annual grantees meetings will be standard for CF programs
- Mid-point before funding ends, OSC and WG will perform a critical assessment of accomplishments and program impact, with emphasis on end-user community

Engage ICDs throughout program lifecycle

OSC RESPONSE:

- Plans provide opportunities for:
 - Richer discussion of CF programs by ICDs during planning stages for new or continuing programs, and
 - Substantive discussion of program accomplishments near mid-point and/or closeout of each program or its transition from CF support
 - Regular updates on ongoing programs via seminar series



Questions?