How To Develop Research Function In a Non-Profit Organization

loveLife Data/Research team:
Bo Young Han, Katherine A Krontiris, Megan Christine Wilbur, Ryohei Takao
Agenda

I. Purpose of this document

II. Thought process to develop research function

III. Practical tips to develop research function
Purpose of this document

IS...

- **General** recommendation to start discussion to develop research function
- One solution option, which should be customized by each organization
- Instruction for non-profit organizations, taking global health delivery actions

IS NOT...

- **Specific** recommendation to follow to develop research function
- Ready-made solution, which can be applicable to any organization
- Instruction for profit organizations and pure research non-profit organizations*

* Researched profit organizations and pure research organizations as case studies to extract insight for non-profit organization with global health delivery actions

Source: Team discussion
Definition of “Research Function”

- “Research Function” in this document is
  - To extract learning, expertise and insight from organizations’ experiences
  - To deliver them to external communities
  - To leverage them to design new activities of the organizations

“Research Function” in this document is different from evaluation of impact from organizations’ activities only for their internal reviews

Source: Team discussion
Issues discussed in this document

1. How does thought process to develop research function look like?
   - What kinds of thought steps are required?
   - What are key issues in each step of the thought process?
   - What kinds of activities are required to solve the issues?

2. What are practical tips to develop research function?
   - What are common pitfalls in research function development?
   - What are useful information sources?

Source: Team discussion
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Overview of thought process

1. Set goal of research function
   - What is the aspiration of the whole organization?
   - How could the research function contribute to the aspiration?

2. Identify research areas
   - What are the potential research areas?
   - How should the research areas be assessed?

3. Design partnership structure
   - Who are potential research partners?
   - Who are potential donors?
   - How should the relationship be designed?

4. Develop long term plan
   - How does the five year plan look like?
   - How should the progress be monitored?

Key issues
- Clearly written goal statement
- Shortlist of research areas
- Shortlist of potential partners
- Options of partnership structure
- Five year strategic plan with KPI*

Expected outcome

* KPI: Key Performance Indicator
Source: Team discussion
Set goal of research function
- Checklist to validate goal of research function

1. **Alignment:** Is the goal aligned with the aspiration of the whole organization?

2. **Agreement:** Is the goal agreed by key stakeholders?

3. **Assessment:** Is the goal measurable by any direct/indirect indicator?

4. **Appreciation by external communities:** Is the goal appreciated by donors, research communities, and other non-profit organizations in the related field?

- Goal should be discussed based on a clearly written goal statement to avoid repeating “vague” discussions

Source: Team discussion
## Identify research areas
- Framework to assess research areas

### Framework structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal capacity/feasibility</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Quick Win</td>
<td>Core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Long-term target</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How to assess the axis

- **Internal capacity/feasibility:**
  Based on organization experience and research staff capacity/capability

- **Relevance to the organization priority:**
  Based on organization aspiration and external expectation

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Source: Team discussion
Design partner relationship structure
- How to find potential academic partners

**Approach 1: Leveraging public databases**

1. Search on public databases (e.g., Google Scholar, PubMed) by relevant keywords
2. Identify the highly relevant papers (e.g., top 10 papers) and those authors
3. Screen out the researches for developed countries
4. Identify the research intuitions of top papers (e.g., top 5 papers) in the research field

**Approach 2: Leveraging experts**

1. Contact with authors of papers, which are highly related to the organization’s research interest
2. Ask the authors about active research institutions in the research field

*Source: Team discussion*
### Design partner relationship structure
- **How to find potential donors**

**Approach 1: Identifying donors of potential research partners**
1. Identify potential research partners
2. Look for donor information of those research institutions through their published reports (e.g., annual reports and website)

**Approach 2: Identifying donors of research programs of similar non-profit**
1. Identify non-profit organizations, which are conducting research programs related to the organization’s interest
2. Look for donor information of those research programs

**Approach 3: Identifying donors active in related researches all over the world**
1. Identify active donors to related non-profit initiatives all over the world
2. Check their donation programs
3. Identify donors, which donate to similar research programs with the organization

Source: Team discussion
Design partner relationship structure
- Example of potential relationship structure

Option 1: Non-profit lead model

- Structure:
  - Existing/new donors
  - Funding
  - Collaboration
  - Research partner

- Pros/Cons:
  - More flexibility to select partners
  - Difficulty to convince donors without credentials
  - Review of contracts with existing donors needed

Option 2: Partner lead model

- Structure:
  - Existing/new donors
  - Funding
  - Collaboration
  - Research partner
  - Non-profit

- Pros/Cons:
  - Broader and easy reach to funding especially in early stages
  - More marketing of the organization to research fields needed
  - More flexibility to select partners and donors
  - Trust from partners needed
  - Complexity in collaboration with partners in early stages

Option 3: Joint collaboration model

- Structure:
  - Existing/new donors
  - Funding
  - Collaboration
  - Research partner
  - Non-profit

- Source: Team discussion
Case study of partner relationship (1/2) - Center for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia

**Background**
- The Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ) is a non-profit organization affiliated with the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)
- Mission of CIDRZ is to battle against HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases in Africa
- CIDRZ takes three-pronged approaches; clinical care, research, training

**Partnership and result**
- CIDRZ research group comprises:
  - 6 faculty members from UAB
  - 16 Zambian investigators
  - Numerous collaborators from 3 local (e.g. University of Zambia) and 8 international (e.g., Columbia University) partners
- CIDRZ has a central research operations group with units dedicated to study regulation, training, data management, and quality control / quality assurance
- The research group meets weekly
- CIDRZ has completed 43 research projects, has another 20 ongoing studies and another 20 being planned

**Implication**
- Appropriate mix of local and international partnership would be valuable to be recognized globally
- Internal research and training functions would be needed to attract potential partners

Source: Fogarty International Clinical Research Scholars Program website, CIDRZ website, Team discussion
Case study of partner relationship (2/2) - Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare

**Background**
- The Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare (AMPATH) is Kenya's most comprehensive initiative to combat HIV
- AMPATH is dedicated to all 3 academic missions; service, teaching, and research

**Partnership and result**
- **AMPATH Consortium** was established in 1997, including 7 international medical related academic institutions (e.g., Indiana University School of Medicine, Brown University School of Medicine, Lehigh Valley Hospital Allentown)
- Partnership includes “Student, Resident and Faculty Exchange” and since 1990, over 190 medical residents at Indiana University have taken elective rotations in Kenya
- **25 active research grants** total $20 million in direct costs (founders include NIH, NIAID, Lilly Endowment, etc)

**Implication**
- Structured exchange program for students, residents, and faculties could be attractive to international research institutions
- Appropriate partnership could give additional access to donors

Source: AMPATH website, Team discussion
Develop long-term plan
- Example of five year plan

Phase 1
1st Year

- Start to contact research partner and donor candidates
- Decide first focus research areas
- Start marketing of the organization to research/donor communities

Phase 2
2nd and 3rd Year

- Develop research partner consortium (e.g., 5-10 research partners)
- Give feedback to other dep. on program design

Phase 3
4th and 5th Year

- Make a proposal to International global health delivery community

Milestone

- Selected first research partners and donors
- Start of the first research project

Action

- Research reports/papers
- Programs designed based on research results
- Reputation in the related global health delivery community

Source: Team discussion
Develop long-term plan
- Example of key performance indicators

Qualitative indicators

- **Feedback** from other departments in the organization (discussion in board meetings)

- **Feedback** from external research institutions
  - E.g., Hearing in meetings and conferences
  - E.g., Direct mails with surveys
  - E.g., Discussions between the organization CEO and heads of research partners

Quantitative indicators (Key Performance Indicators)

- **Number of research reports**
  - Academic papers and presentation
  - Reports for the organization program design
  - Reports for donors

- **Number of meeting attendances**
  - Research conferences
  - Forum/speaker sessions/breakfast session hosted by the organization

- **Amount of funding for research projects**

Source: Team discussion
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## Common pitfalls in research function development

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<th>Potential solutions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Stuck to set a goal for research function, repeating the same and vague discussions</td>
<td>• <strong>Write down</strong> the goal first and revise it during iterating the thought process (keep in mind that “goal” discussion never ends)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Difficult to make other “implementation” departments involved</td>
<td>• Emphasize that research function is valuable to <strong>receive feedback</strong> from external for future activity design of the other implementation departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Spend too much time to conduct comprehensive analysis to find potential partners</td>
<td>• <strong>Talk with researchers</strong> in the field first, which may not be comprehensible, but will be enough to start discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Try to tackle with all ideal research areas from the beginning</td>
<td>• Think about what the organization <strong>need to give up</strong> especially in the early stage (funding for research programs is very tough)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Don’t design how to measure the result of research function</td>
<td>• Set measurable key performance indicators, which will be useful for <strong>revising the strategic directions</strong></td>
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Source: Team discussion
Useful information sources

Academic paper database

- Google Scholar: http://scholar.google.com/
- Ebscohost: http://search.ebscohost.com/
- ProQuest: http://www.proquest.co.uk/en-UK/
- ScienceDirect: http://www.sciencedirect.com/
- JSTOR: http://www.jstor.org/

Donor

- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation: http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Pages/home.aspx
- William J. Clinton Foundation: http://www.clintonfoundation.org/

Non-profit in case studies

- Center for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ): http://www.cidrz.org/