Australian Government

Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research

Preliminary Project Proposal

ACIAR Program(s) area	ACIAR to complete
Project Title	ACIAR to complete
Project Number	ACIAR to complete
prepared by	Project Leader to complete
ACIAR Research Program Manager	ACIAR to complete

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Summary Information

Version # and date of this document	Project Leader to enter
Project number	ACIAR to complete
Full project title	ACIAR to complete
Budget ($)	ACIAR to enter Project budget
Commissioned Organisation	ACIAR to complete
Project Leader	ACIAR to complete
Country 1 Coordinator	Project Leader to enter
Country 2 Coordinator	Project Leader to enter
Proposed start date	ACIAR to complete
Proposed end date	ACIAR to complete

The guidelines in italics in each section of this template will assist you in developing your Preliminary Project Proposal. Please delete guideline text before submitting your Proposal.

ACIAR uses the Preliminary Project Proposal to assess the initial project team response to an ACIAR Design Brief. In the Preliminary Project Proposal, ACIAR is seeking an overview of the architecture of the research project, and responses should be succinct. More detail will be required in a Full Proposal, which will provide the basis for a more detailed quality assessment, contracting of the project, and guiding the implementation, monitoring and review of the project.

ACIAR will assess the Preliminary Project Proposal along the lines of the scientific credibility of the proposed research, the appropriateness of the project's technical design and partnerships, the relevance and significance of the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts, and the project's 'value for money'.

In the Preliminary Project Proposal, Sections 1 & 2 must not exceed 15 pages.

The document should be prepared using Arial, 11-point font.

Provide a list of all the abbreviations and acronyms used in the project proposal here – but please limit your use of both.

Contents

1. Project Justification

Sections 1 & 2 must not exceed 15 pages.

This section should explain <u>why</u> the proposed research will be a valuable part of Australia's Official Development Assistance.

1.1 Project Aim

A single sentence summary of what the project is intended to achieve. This Project Aim needs to make sense on its own as it will be used in other documents such as the Project Factsheet on the ACIAR website and in partner country agreements.

1.2 Development Issue and Research Opportunity

What is the development issue this project seeks to address? Briefly describe the context of the development issue, including what we already know about this issue and how it's been addressed to date. What is the opportunity for further research to address the development issue? Provide a concise explanation of the research opportunity, including what is new research and what is ongoing research on an existing topic. Support these statements with relevant references. It may be helpful to consider why a research project is needed to address the development issue rather than a development project.

1.3 Partner country and Australian research and development priorities

Explain how this project addresses national priorities and/or development priorities in the partner country/countries (and in Australia for projects with an Australian research component). Cite references to support these claims. What further evidence can you provide to demonstrate this problem is a priority for the partner country or countries and for Australia? If the project is to be commissioned through a CGIAR centre, you should also indicate how it will relate to relevant OneCGIAR initiatives.

1.4 Relationship to other ACIAR investments and other donor activities

How will this work complement other Programs and Projects? Provide a description of the relationships that this project would have to other relevant programs and projects (if any),

including national programs, other ACIAR projects and any other related activities in the partner country/countries. For other ACIAR projects, focus on those projects that have a strong link to the proposed research and indicate how the new research will complement or add to previous or current activities.

2. Project Theory of Change

Sections 1 & 2 must not exceed 15 pages.

The purpose of this section is to present a brief articulation of the project theory of change and the constitutive strategies (Research, Gender & Social Inclusion, Capacity Building, and Knowledge Exchange) that will guide project implementation. Project teams should focus on demonstrating coherence between activities, outputs, cross-cutting strategies and intended short, medium and long-term development outcomes.

2.1 Overview

Please provide a clear Theory of Change, including:

- *A set of clear, expected end of project outcomes. These outcomes should articulate the project's expected contribution to the research program theory outcomes identified in the design brief. They should be as specific as possible, identifying the nature and extent of change that you anticipate the project will have during the funding period.*

- *A description of the main 'impact pathways' in the theory of change. This should be a description of the chain of results that will lead to the end of project outcome. This description should start with the research/activities that will be undertaken and explain what we expect these activities to lead to, and how this will contribute to the end of project outcomes. This should involve identifying a range of intermediate outcomes that can be used as progress markers between the activities and end of project outcomes. These are the outcomes that will be the focus of your monitoring plan and annual reporting.*

- *Key assumptions. At this stage, we are asking you to identify those assumptions that underpin the project theory of change. The project team will need to reflect and report on what they have learned about these assumptions annually. These assumptions can be identified at two levels:*

  1) *The context and development theory assumptions made in the design brief – e.g. that the arrangements of the prevailing market system are such that farmers could see benefit from investing in project promoted practices; that project interventions accurately diagnose and align with the aspirations of small holders for their farming systems.*

2) *The causal assumptions relating to the internal logic of your theory of change – e.g. that a combination of structured training and supervised work-based application of new skills will result in the capacity to independently undertake improved laboratory practices; that iterative engagement with policy makers from the project design stage will improve the likelihood of engagement with, and uptake of, research findings.*

It may be useful to include an anticipated time-horizon for ACIAR involvement and initial thinking about an exit strategy and/or avenue for scale-out of knowledge.

2.2   Research Strategy

This section should present key information about how the project will be implemented to address research questions and deliver project outcomes.

2.2.1 Research questions

Provide a set of clearly worded research questions that will guide and be answered by the research activities. Each research question should be supplemented by brief explanatory text, which outlines the links to research focus and key project outputs.

2.2.2 Addressing research questions

Summarise the proposed approaches (i.e. research methods) for conducting the research. ACIAR will use this information as a key part of determining the case for investment, including whether the proposed level of funding represents value for money. Provide a description of the disciplinary methods that will be used, approaches to inter-, multi-, or trans-disciplinarity (where appropriate). Where experiments, trials or surveys are to be used, provide an indication of scale.

2.3   Gender & Social Inclusion Strategy

Describe how the research will contribute to increased gender equity and social inclusion, and how this will be tackled in the project design and implementation. Describe the approaches to be used to: (i) increase gender equity and social inclusion as a result of the research; (ii) address gender equality and social inclusion beyond the project life; and (iii) engage the private sector and/or relevant community groups and partners.

ACIAR has Gender Guidelines (https://www.aciar.gov.au/Gender-Guidelines), which are designed to assist researchers to ensure proposals present project outcomes, research activities, methods, capacity building activities and outputs that can effectively address women's empowerment and improve understanding of gendered social relations.

ACIAR requires proposals to undertake research to include consideration of opportunities to (i) increase gender equity as a result of the research; (ii) address gender inequality subsequent to the research; and (iii) engage the private sector and/or relevant community groups and partners. This includes a requirement for research teams to include, at a minimum, 40 per cent of female or gender-diverse team members.

2.4   Capacity Building Strategy

Outline current thinking concerning the capacity building modality (individual skills & competencies and/or organisational strengthening and/or influencing institutional environment) that will be utilised to deliver this project. You may wish to consider outlining how the project will:

- *accurately diagnose the nature of the skills and/or capacity problem we are seeking to address and the institutional environment in which the project will operate*

- *cultivate ownership of, and commitment to, the capacity building agenda with partners*

- *assess the appropriateness of proposed skills and/or capacity building approaches*

One of ACIAR's overarching development objectives is 'Building scientific and policy capability within our partner countries'. Many ACIAR projects, therefore, include elements of research capacity building. ACIAR has prepared [project development guidance for capacity building planning and reporting](#) to support ACIAR project leaders and project team members.

Postgraduate research students can play an important role in ACIAR research projects. Improving the integration of postgraduate students on ACIAR projects can benefit the students themselves, research teams, and partner countries. ACIAR has prepared [guidance on the integration of PhD and Masters students in ACIAR projects](#). This aims to support ACIAR project leaders and project team members to clearly articulate a student's role whilst setting out the risks.

2.5   Knowledge Exchange Strategy

This section should present key information about how the knowledge exchange strategy will be implemented during the project to deliver anticipated end of project outcomes.

Who (excluding the project team) do you anticipate being the key stakeholders and end-users of the knowledge generated through this project, and what strategies or activities will be used to engage them?

Please consider and outline:

- *At what point will key stakeholders and users of knowledge generated by the project be engaged?*

- *What activities or strategies will be employed to engage them for the purposes of knowledge exchange?*

- *How will the knowledge generated be positioned for use by users, and for what intended result?*

This strategy only needs to be indicative and can be revised, in consultation with ACIAR, as the project moves forward. Also note that the ACIAR ICCON (In-Country Communications Officer Network) exists to provide in-country outreach support and help create overarching visibility of in-country projects. Projects are encouraged to engage with the relevant In-Country Communications Officer, but you cannot rely on the ICCON or ACIAR Outreach budget for proposed project level activities.

3. Resourcing

There is no page limit for Section 3.

Note that the budget is provided in a separate document to this Preliminary Project Proposal.

The budget template provides space for explanatory text. This could include explanation of the proposed funding distribution between partners, in-kind contributions, the magnitude of the travel budget, an explanation of the need for capital items and allocations for outreach activities, monitoring and evaluation activities and accessing gender expertise etc.

3.1 Project team and partnerships

Please copy the following Table from 'All personnel' worksheet in the budget template and remember to update if you make further changes in the budget.

Name	Gender	Organisation	Discipline	Roles and responsibilities in project	% Time on Project	ACIAR Funding of time input %

Provide a description of each of the project team, including the commissioned organisation and partner organisations that will implement this project.

This might include the leadership structure for the project team, including who will be responsible from both the Australian/CGIAR team and the in-country partner(s) for implementation of the activities and the way the different researchers will work together. Where a component of the planned activities requires specialist skills (for example: soil science, value chain analysis, genetics or molecular biology, product development) indicate which team members will lead this component and be accountable for delivery.

In doing so, consider relevant aspects including the balance between the Australian/CGIAR and the in-country organisations and individuals, as well as diversity and balance with respect to female and male participation (including women's active participation in all aspects of project governance, leadership and implementation) and early/mid/late career researchers.

Describe the role of each partner organization, at the level that it relates to the planned project, and the comparative advantage that it brings to the project team. Describe any governance or advisory structure involving stakeholders that will be used to support project implementation and to ensure that the project's activities have the appropriate level of 'ownership' within the key in-country partner organizations.

3.2 Collaboration

Please outline how the relationships identified in Section 1.4 will be translated into collaboration and communication between this project team and (1) other relevant ACIAR work, (2) relevant external work in progress (e.g. DFAT), and/or (3) potential development scaling actors.

3.3 Budget

Provide a brief narrative to explain the logic behind the development of the figures contained in the budget spreadsheets. This could include information about the proposed funding distribution between partners, in-kind contributions, the magnitude of the travel budget, and an explanation of the need for capital items. Explain how much funding will be allocated to communications, project findings dissemination and monitoring and evaluation activities.

3.4 Additional resourcing requirements

List other resources that are required to deliver the project and how those resources will be accessed / managed by the project team. These might include equipment, operating conditions, permits etc.

4. References

There is no page limit for Section 4.

Provide a bibliography of the references cited in the Preliminary Project Proposal.