INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS—YOU GOT THIS

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Your adventure starts here

Science itself may be universal, but the conduct of research is not.

Differences can surface in—

- Laws and ethics.
- Languages.
- Logistics.
- Currencies.
- Cultures.
Common issues with international subawards

Applicability of non-U.S. laws to activities in non-U.S. countries.

Engaging local vendors of goods and services (supplies, capital equipment, transportation, conference facilities, personnel security, etc.).

Time differences and holidays.

International travel considerations—
- Destination visa/immigration laws.
- Advances vs. reimbursements.
- Fly America Act requirements for federal sponsored funds.
- U of M Travel Registry, insurance.
Common issues with international subawards

Buying local or importing/exporting.

Export/import considerations (controls, phytosanitary requirements, customs declarations and duties, etc.).

Payment of *per diem* and other compensation to non-U of M collaborators and participants.

- Cash-based economy?
- Local currency vs. $U.S.
- Logistics of cash management—finding the optimal equilibrium between prompt and accountable payment.
- Local capacity to manage grant funds and conditions.
Budgeting for subawards with international components

Special cost considerations—

• Visas (sometimes recoverable in federal projects, sometimes not).
• Shipping charges to send documents (including checks!), samples, equipment, etc.
  • Import/export permit fees, import duties.
• Emergency travel.
• Security services.
• International insurance (CISI).
• International *per diem* rates for meals and lodging under federal sponsored projects.
  • [https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp](https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp)
Budgeting for subawards with international components

- Translation and interpretation fees.
- Currency conversions.
- Wire transfer and cash procurement fees (Western Union)
- Fees charged by Professional Employer Organizations (PEOs) for in-country personnel.
The tough get going

Complexity and risk fall along a spectrum.

“Can you show me how much this international project hurts?”

0 NO HURT
2 HURTS LITTLE BIT
4 HURTS LITTLE MORE
6 HURTS EVEN MORE
8 HURTS WHOLE LOT
10 HURTS WORST

No pain Mild Moderate Severe Worst pain imaginable
Simple subawards to reliable, established collaborators

 Likely novel issues—

• Differences in intellectual property and publishing expectations.
• Organizational capacity to manage grants.
  • Reporting and auditing.
  • Cash management.
Complex subawards to new, less experienced collaborators

Likely novel issues—

• Managing and accounting for cash flow, especially to small subrecipients.
• Renting vehicles or property.
• Taking title in equipment or property.
• Security.
  • Personnel (armed escorts?)
  • Facilities and equipment (cameras, alarms?)
  • Money (hotel safes, locked briefcases?).
Complex subawards to new, less experienced collaborators

Likely novel issues—

• Emergency planning.
  • Political risk, illness and injury, crime, natural disasters, etc.
Complex subawards to new, less experienced collaborators

Likely novel issues—

• Additional requirements for students abroad.
  • Special insurance, registration, waiver, sponsor requirements.

• Engaging local personnel or expats from the U.S. or a third country.
  • Pay and benefit considerations.
  • Direct payroll deposits to non-U.S. banks generally impractical.

• Use of local PEOs the default approach.
  • Relevant in-country expertise and infrastructure.
  • Minimize U of M liabilities.
Strategies for success

Optimize frontloading by the PI and proposal team.

• Departmental personnel usually build the subrecipient relationship and establish expectations.
  • Communicate, communicate, communicate.
  • Clarify roles and responsibilities—not just the science, but also the administrative, HR, and financial tasks.
  • Be mindful of flow-down requirements in the RFP.
• Unless brought in early, SPA typically involved just before proposal submitted.
  • Conduct international review of proposals at time of submission, and again at award, but some issues are best resolved much earlier.
  • A lot of terms and conditions are negotiated at time of award by necessity—can result in surprises.
Strategies for success

Best practice is to maximize responsibilities of in-country collaborators, because increased direct U of M presence leads to greater legal exposure for U of M.

- Tax.
- Registration/licensing.
- Employment.
- Environmental, health, and safety permitting.
- General legal liabilities (injuries/torts, regulatory issues).
You are not alone

University resources include—

- Global Operations Advisory Team (http://global.umn.edu/operations/#/0)
  - Multidisciplinary team consisting of experts from different departments.
  - Able to leverage both international and external resources for answers.
- GPS Alliance (https://global.umn.edu/)
  - Help with international operations, travel, safety.
- Sponsored Projects Administration, Research Compliance Office
- Office of General Counsel (http://ogc.umn.edu/)
- Certain departments and colleges have excellent international experience. Ask around!