Nana Oye Akuffo, Grants Administrator, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana
Challenges of Managing Grants In Developing Countries

• Nana Oye Akuffo (BA, MA) Grants Administrator University of Ghana nakuffo@noguchi.ug.edu.gh
Presentation Outline

• Introduction – Session’s Objectives
• Grants Management Challenges of LMICs Research Institutions
• Case Study of the Noguchi Mem. Institute for Med. Research (NMIMR), Ghana
• Lessons Learnt and Recommendations for Way Forward
Introduction: Session’s Objectives

• The common challenges that arise when institutions in developing countries are applying for Federal funds and mitigating strategies

• The common challenges managing grants and strategies to overcome them

• To share experiences and troubleshoot issues with the group
CHALLENGES
CHALLENGES: LACK OF APPRECIATION OF AN OFFICE FOR RESEARCH SUPPORT (ORS)

- Over-reliance on governments’ support for research
- How to establish an ORS which is basically due to lack of knowledge
- Fitting an ORS in an already rigid internal structures (organogram)
CHALLENGES: INADEQUATE SKILLED STAFF

• Multi-tasking of the few research administrators (RAs) for pre- and post-awards management
• Externally imposed/frequently changing regulations by funding agencies that the few RAs cannot keep up
• Managing grants from different donor agencies such as DANIDA, Wellcome Trust, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation etc. with different reporting mechanisms
• Lack of professional development of RAs and capacity building support
CHALLENGES: CONFLICTING EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL POLICIES

• Differences between NIH and recipient institution’s policies
• Conflicting management issues
• Lack of knowledge at research departments’ level
• Difficulty keeping track of grants award to scientists in the different institute’s departments
CHALLENGES: COMPLIANCE ISSUES

• Ethical approvals from different government agencies with different and sometimes conflicting requirements
• Few national IRBs with international accreditations (e.g. FWA)
• US legislations and compliance that may be at odds to LMICs’
CHALLENGES: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

- F&A rate fixed at 8%
- Equipment – depreciation rules
- Currency fluctuation
- Multiple funding sources with different rules
- Communication difficulties between recipient organization and funding agencies
CHALLENGES: NIH Grants Policy Statement (NIH-GPS)

• Bulky size of GPS discourages reading
• Frequent changes in the policy
• Unfamiliar terminologies
CHALLENGES: ELECTRONIC RESEARCH MANAGEMENT PLATFORMS

- Issues with password and username by PIs
- Difficulties with managing system - changing interface
- Registration on different web platforms
Failure of research scientists and awardees to read to fully understand the detailed requirements of NoAs.
CHALLENGES: AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

- Yellow Book Audit requirements – few knowledgeable auditing firms in LMICs and are expensive
CASE STUDY OF THE NOGUCHI MEMORIAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH, GHANA (NMIMR)

• NMIMR is a semi-autonomous institute of the University of Ghana set up in 1979.
• Mission: To contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of Ghanaians and all mankind through focused and relevant quality biomedical research, human resource development and support of national public health activities.
CASE STUDY OF THE NOGUCHI MEMORIAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH (NMIMR), GHANA

• Research areas- Malaria, NTDs (onchocerciasis, schistosomiasis, lymphatic filariasis), HIV/AIDs, Rotavirus, Influenzas, mycobacterial infections, etc.

• Facilities- Advanced Research lab, Alwaleed clinical center, Vestergaad vector labs, WACIPAC, 650-bed UG Medical center, P3 Lab, Leishmaniasis health support center etc
facilities
GENESIS OF THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH SUPPORT AT NMIMR

- Japan’s Grant Aid in NMIMR’s formative years
- Need to win bigger grants, post-Japan’s grant aids
- Directors
  - who needed no convincing to establish an ORS
  - passionate and the drive to establish it
  - invested internal resources

- Partnership with Yale University’s OSR to build and establish same office at NMIMR which still continues
- Currently the ORS manages approximately 175 research projects, 52 contracts and 34 MoUs
ORS WORKFLOW CHART

DIRECTOR
ORS Coordinating Office

Compliance
- Internal Rules & Regulation
  - STC
  - IRB
  - NIAUC
- External Rules & Regulation
  - Funding Agency & Policy (Research Misconduct, Time Sheet Management, Travel, etc.)

IT, Database & Documentation
- Access Management
- Personnel
- Website
- Communication
- Records Management

Financial
- Budgeting Control
- Invoicing
- Auditing internal Control
- Procurement
- Expenditures
- Closeout

Legal
- Material Transfer
- MOU’s
- Patent
- Contract Agreement

2017 MEET
OCT
SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

• Inflows have increased
• Efficient grants submission process
• NIH grant submission and award rates have increased
• Fellows adhere to the policy by Donor agencies
• Biannual training of research fellows
• Training of research support staff in the various department
• Increased external relations
• Expenditure according to budget lines
SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- Managed 15 primary NIH grants and 38 sub awards since 2010.
- Hosted three (3) NIH site visits
- Successfully submitted four Yellow Book audit report
- Recipient of an NIH/NIAID-G11 capacity building award
- Developed grants management policies.
- Inflow rate has increased annually.
WAY FORWARD

• High-level advocacy meetings to facilitate establishment of Offices of Research Support (ORS)
• Partnering with external institutions with established ORS for implementing and to learn best practices
• Participate in regional seminars, workshops and symposia, webinar training for capacity building
• Encourage regular visits of funding agencies’ websites
• Contact your Grants Management Specialist for any queries you may have.
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
2019 ANNUAL MEETING
OCTOBER 19 - 23

THANK YOU