Statement of Principles:
Capacity Building and Connectivity Among Granting Agencies Worldwide

Preamble

The Global Research Council (GRC) has a long-term objective of strengthening connectivity and capacity across agencies, countries, regions and continents for the benefit of current and future participants, as well as the global research community.

The term 'capacity' refers to the organizational and technical abilities, relationships and values that enable research agencies to define their goals and manage their resources in a fair, transparent, and cost-effective manner and, in an increasingly global context, adapt their functions to respond to new developments in science and shape future directions.

The term 'connectivity' denotes both a collaborative approach to strengthening capacity and a potential outcome resulting in a network of agencies better able to promote and support global science. The GRC network brings together national agencies with similar mandates operating largely in separate national jurisdictions where, in many countries, there are no comparable organizations to learn from. In this context, the GRC network provides a framework for agencies to learn from each other to support their strategic directions and accountability.

The global research funding environment and the conduct of research are changing rapidly. In countries where investments have been historically low, there is growing recognition of the value of public research, leading many governments to increase their research budgets and strengthen the public administration of research. In countries with longer trajectories of supporting research, change is equally apparent with reforms to established funding agencies, changing mandates and new programmatic directions. In addition, the changing nature of research (e.g., rise in international, multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder collaboration) and evolving expectations for how research should be governed[1], create both challenges and opportunities for funding agencies.

GRC participants recognize the contributions agencies have made in advancing the "GRC's Statement of Approaches: Building Research and Education" (2015). They also recognize new opportunities to collectively support the research enterprise through more systematic, coordinated and connected actions for strengthening the connectivity and capacity of funding agencies.

Accordingly, participants in the 6th Annual Meeting of the Global Research Council recognize the following Principles.

[1] The GRC Statements of Principles on merit review, research integrity and promoting the equality and status of women, are examples of recent efforts to improve research governance.

Principles

Shared objectives and voluntary collaboration

Voluntary actions proposed by research agencies to strengthen their capacity emerge from their identification of shared interests and a willingness to devote time and resources to mutual learning. This principle of pursuing shared objectives and voluntary collaboration remains the cornerstone from which new actions are to be developed.

Long-term and sustainable individual and organizational learning

Capacity strengthening activities and efforts to increase connectivity should benefit individuals and organizational structures over the long term. For proposed actions, GRC participants should establish plans and mechanisms that are self-sustaining, adaptive and results-based.

Transparency and open access to new knowledge and tools

Actions undertaken by GRC participants should strive to make their respective agencies more accountable and transparent to the public. To the extent possible, the accumulated knowledge, tools and lessons learned should be made available to all current and future GRC participants.

Towards inclusive research and research agencies worldwide

Agencies should ensure that actions are responsive to the current and future needs of the research community, as well as key societal actors who inform debates, shape the conduct of research and utilize findings. Actions should seize on the opportunity to deepen existing networks and broaden opportunities to engage societal actors outside the research and research management communities. Similarly, multilateral capacity strengthening efforts should include and support, whenever possible, agencies with historically low levels of resources and infrastructure.

Actions

The list below represents a selection of potential actions identified during the GRC regional meetings. They were prioritized for discussion at the Ottawa Annual Meeting on the basis of being identified in three or more of the five regional meetings as promising topics for strengthening capacity and connectivity.

The brief summary of each topic and potential actions is outlined below with the intent of inviting GRC participants to collectively explore opportunities to strengthen their capacities, to respond to new developments in science and to shape future directions.

Open Data Policies and Practices

Open Data presents an opportunity to accelerate scientific discovery and uphold research integrity. GRC participants are adopting open data policies and practices but there are common challenges to promoting findable, accessible, inter-operable and re-useable data. Participants agreed that agencies have a unique opportunity to compare and learn from their emerging practices, and collaborate on training and outreach activities.

Design and Evaluation of Collaborative Research Initiatives

Responding to government, academic and societal interests, coupled with the potential for research to spur innovation in industry, inform public policy, and address societal challenges, many GRC participants

fund collaborations between academic and non-academic actors. Participants expressed a desire to better understand how the design of such programs influence their outcomes, and best practice in evaluation to facilitate learning and comparability.

International Partnerships and Joint Programming

GRC participants manage an increasing number of international programs to facilitate mobility and research collaboration, though there are geographical differences in terms of experience, depth and reach of such programs. GRC participants identified the potential to improve international research collaboration by examining and adopting practices that reduce administrative complexity, remove barriers to participation, and support collaboration.

Strategic Planning and Foresight

GRC participants use strategic planning and foresight methodologies to identify emerging issues and guide their research investments. As developments in science and technology are increasingly shaped by global forces, and as global challenges merit coordinated action, the case for joint analysis and planning increases. GRC participants recognized opportunities to strengthen national capacities and support global research through sharing expertise and experience in leading top-down and bottom-up strategic planning and foresight activities.

Practices and Tools for Research Management and Program Delivery

Robust policies and information systems enable GRC participants to support the research community and to utilize research management data for accountability and foresight purposes. GRC participants encouraged further exchange and adoption of best practice, and identification of future areas where technology platforms can support research collaboration (e.g., platforms supporting open science) and research management (e.g., sharing of data on research activity, a shared portal for international peer review).

Following the Ottawa Annual Meeting, GRC participants will be invited to further develop proposed actions. Further to the principle of 'transparency and open access to new knowledge and tools', GRC participants contributing to working groups or to joint projects are encouraged to share information on actions taken and progress achieved through appropriate GRC channels.