Collaboration Planner

What is the purpose of this document?

a) To enable PhDs/Postdocs to communicate value to potential commercial partners
b) To help both sides set expectations and understand respective obligations.

Who is this document for?

The Planner is primarily aimed at PhDs and Postdocs at Aarhus University

How do I book the training?

To book a training session, please contact Eoin Galligan (email: ega@au.dk)

Guidance

The “Collaboration Planner” was designed by the Science for Society [link] team at AU Corporate Relations and Technology Transfer at Aarhus University. The purpose of this document is to enable PhDs and Postdocs to communicate successfully with companies and to highlight the value of collaborative work. It seeks to help researchers and companies set expectations and to understand their respective academic, commercial and legal obligations. In addition, the document promotes a process for best practice in communication and project management. Science for Society offers an associated workshop for all departments at AU.

The Collaboration Planner document expects the researcher to be applying entrepreneurial skills learnt during the Science for Society workshop. It should describe the “value” that is generated for the University and for the company. Moreover, it should highlight who will be involved, what each person will do and when. It will also describe the resources that each party will offer, the duration and location of the research activity and present the budget of the collaboration, including any in-kind payments.

Finally, this document enables the researcher to begin discussions with a legal manager at Corporate Relations and Technology Transfer. When a researcher contacts this office regarding a collaboration project, the Contracts Team will assign the legal manager. The legal manager responsible for the contract will have a number of questions for the researcher. With this in mind, the Collaboration Planner has been designed so that the researcher will understand these key questions in advance.

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SCIENCE FOR SOCIETY
– COLLABORATION PLANNER FOR INDUSTRY-UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT

Collaboration Plan for [Enter title of project]

Technical Problem (“Unmet Need”):
[The AU research team should provide a brief summary of the technical problem that they believe is a key problem that exists in society. They should seek to interview end users and a range of companies to test their assumptions.]

Proposed Solution:
[Enter brief summary of how the collaboration will address the technical problem.]
- Need: Is the collaboration addressing a key need in society? Who has this problem?
- Approach: State how the collaboration will approach the problem? How does this approach compare with different approaches on the market?
- Benefits: What is the benefit of using this technology in comparison to all other approaches?
- Competition: Who else is trying to solve this problem?

AU Objective:
[How will the collaboration create value for the University staff?]

Company Objective:
[How will the collaboration create value for the Company?]
[Has the company explained their ‘business model’ and the reasons the company collaborates with Universities?]

AU staff: [Enter AU staff in the collaboration]
Company staff: [Enter AU staff in the collaboration]

Reproducibility of Research data:
[How will the collaboration address the issue of ensuring reproducible research results?]

Historic interaction and collaboration agreements:
[Enter summary of any historic collaboration between the University and the commercial partner, including any previous legal agreements. If there are no historic agreements, present a summary on how the concept of the collaboration began.]

Material Transfer:
[Enter brief summary if any research materials will need to be acquired from the commercial partner and transported to AU or vice versa.]

Publication & PhD Exams:
[Enter brief summary on if AU staff will need to publish the data obtained within the collaboration. Enter any PhD exam dates of AU staff and discuss this with the company.]

Kommentar [EGA1]: The AU research group should write down their assumptions on why their solution is SUPERIOR to all other solutions currently used.

Kommentar [EGA2]: What do the University team want? Is it only funding? Or do the team need the company to provide additional research infrastructure or further understanding of the customer as an end user? What do PhDs/Postdocs want from this collaboration? What does the Head of the Research Group want?

Kommentar [EGA3]: What does the company want? Do they want “knowledge” or only IPR?

Kommentar [EGA4]: Recently, Merck has published an editorial highlighting the issue of Reproducibility of results. All users of this document are encouraged to read the article. You can find the article here.

Kommentar [EGA5]: Have the University and company worked together before? What other research groups worked with the company? What historic legal agreements remain effective?

Kommentar [EGA6]: PhD Exams are public – so should the collaboration data be included in the thesis?
Research Plan:
Describe the research activities that will be conducted during the collaboration. These activities should be presented in the Gantt chart below.

Budget:
Describe the budget for each phase of the collaboration. Should the research be described as sponsored research?

Example work packages within a collaboration:
Phase [1] Validation of commercial assumptions
Phase [2] Development of prototype
The budget should be milestone-based such that if initial validation experiments in phase 1 fail, then the collaboration would be directed towards alternative proposed solutions.

Project Management:
Budget – record a monthly budget with the cost of each deliverable specified across each month.
Milestones – set success criteria for a proposed technical solution to be discussed within Review Meetings.
Review Meetings – key decision meetings that would review data and release further funding
Potential feasibility experiments – Are there any experiments that should be performed first to test if the technology meets the success criteria? If the collaboration may fail, what experiments could highlight this risk?
Key Questions: Who is doing what? Why are they doing it? Does it reduce risk? What is the “Plan B” if the experiment fails?

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