SCIENCE FOR SOCIETY

– COLLABORATION PLANNER FOR INDUSTRY-UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT

Introduction to the 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 define and 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 understand how they can contribute to any contract negotiation related to collaborations. When any researcher contacts Corporate Relations and Technology Transfer regarding a collaboration project, the Contracts Team will assign a legal manager to manage the negotiation of the contract. The Collaboration Planner has been designed so that the researcher and company will understand the key legal questions in advance and will have time to plan.

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Instructions

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Technical Problem ("Unmet Need"):

In this section, 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:

Here, the AU research group should write down their assumptions on why their solution is superior to all other solutions currently used. Here, it is recommended to follow the NABC principles. NABC has been developed in order to acquire a more systematic approach to the understanding of value propositions, in other words, the value of original thinking. This method enables the idea-makers to present their ideas while at the same time it assesses their value using a range of central parameters. The NABC method was developed in the USA by the Stanford Research Institute (www.sri.com). It was originally conceived for the business world, but was later adapted to several other sectors.

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:

This section highlights how the collaboration will create "value" for the University staff. The AU research team should explain what they are seeking from the collaboration. 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?

Company Objective:

This section highlights how the collaboration will create "value" for the company. For example, has the company explained how they operate and their business model? Have they explained why the company collaborates with Universities?

People:

University: This section explains what University people would be involved in the collaboration. What Senior researchers, Postdocs, PhDs, Master students or undergraduates will be involved? How will each person contribute?

Company: This section explains what Company people would be involved in the collaboration. What company researchers and commercial staff will be involved? How will each person contribute?

PROJECT MANAGEMENT & LEGAL TEXT

Reproducibility of Research data:

In recent years, data reproducibility has been a key issue in university-industry collaborations. 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

This section should explain how the collaboration would address the issue of ensuring that the work packages will meet the expectations of both organisations. Is the data reproducible and how could the organisations work together to ensure this?

Historic interaction and collaboration agreements:

This section should describe any historic collaboration between the University and the commercial partner, including any previous legal agreements. The AU research group should consider if any other groups at AU have worked with the company before? If there is no previous relationship with this company, the section should present a summary on how the concept of the collaboration began.

Material Transfer:

This section should explain if any research materials will need to be acquired from the commercial partner and transported to AU or vice versa. Examples could be in-vivo models, assays, previous prototypes of inventions.

Key Events: Publication & PhD Exams:

Collaborations may produce potential inventions that could be protected within a patent application. Therefore, this section should explain when reseach data is made "public". The AU research group should highlight when they wish to publish and the PhD exam dates of any AU staff involved in the collaboration.

Research Plan:

The research plan section describes the research activities during the collaboration. It should highlight who would perform each experiment, where the work will be done and the timeframe for the work. This kind of information is best displayed within a "Ganntt" chart. An example is shown below.

Example of a research plan within a Gannt chart

Task		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
Launch meeting at AU										
Transport of Research Materials										
Experiment 1	PHD1		150.000	50.000						
Experiment 2	PHD1			50.000						
Review Meeting	ALL				MILE-STONE					
Experiment 3	PHD2					150.000	50.000	50.000	50.000	
Experiment 4	PHD2					150.000	50.000	50.000	50.000	
			150.000	100.000		300.000	100.000	100.000	100.000	850.000

The research plan should highlight the different phases of a project. For example, a project may be designed as follows:

Phase (1) Validation of commercial assumptions

Phase (2) Development of prototype

Phase (3) Testing of prototype

Key Components for a Research Plan

Milestones – set success criteria for a specified phase of the project
Review Meetings – key decision meetings that would review data and release further funding
Feasibility experiments – Initial experiments performed at the beginning of a project to assess technical risk of the project.

Budget:

Describe the budget for each phase of the collaboration.

Should the research be described as sponsored research?

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.