

SGP-HW PROPOSAL WRITING WORKSHOP

Module 1: Maria Uhle's short presentation outline

Welcome to the inaugural IAI Small Grant Program hands-on workshop. I am Maria Uhle, former chair of the IAI Executive Council and a current US representative to the IAI. I currently serve as the Program Director for International Activities in the Directorate for Geosciences at the U.S. National Science Foundation where there is focus on developing mechanisms and programs to foster international collaboration in global change research through the IAI, the Belmont Forum and Future Earth.

I am particularly excited about the program that IAI has developed to foster and enhance transdisciplinary approaches to the solutions oriented research that the IAI is supporting. As you may be aware, the IAI is an inter-governmental organization that seeks to provide robust scientific evidence that can support member countries in making decisions regarding global change challenges. As with most of the challenges that humanity faces in the light of global change, the solutions to these issues require not only information on the state of the environment but also a robust knowledge of the human dimensions. After all, there may be a terrific solution to a problem but if it is not socially acceptable, it will never be adopted by the public and is likely not to be considered by policy makers. This illustrates not only the importance of natural and social sciences but also the critical role that stakeholders, decision-makers and policy makers play in developing implementable solutions to environmental challenges.

While in general, the global science enterprise is making progress towards developing and supporting interdisciplinary research, we are falling well short when it comes to transdisciplinary approaches. Let's face it, working with stakeholders or decision-makers is not something that any of us learned in graduate school. This is highly unfortunate as this skill is critical if we are to make significant progress towards ensuring that we are making the most informed decisions as possible. It is time to recognize the mutual benefit of researchers and stakeholders working together from the onset of a project. The expertise and perspectives from all parties are crucial to the co-design process that can help identify potential solutions to address some of the most challenging issues societies face.

As you engage in this workshop to help formulate your potential projects, please keep in mind that you are here as part of a team and that each member has unique skills and perspectives that can enhance your project. While many of you are adept at writing research proposals, there are techniques and approaches that can help you develop a truly transdisciplinary project and this workshop is designed to help you explore those approaches.

We realize that we will be stepping out of our comfort zones and that old habits are hard to change, but as you are working together try and walk around the problem or challenge and see it from all the perspectives that your team members have. Taking the time to listen to each of your team members is a great way to understand the issues and to see where your expertise

can help provide pieces of the puzzle. The process becomes easier as you get to know your team members and understand their potential contributions to the project.

I appreciate your willingness to embark on this new path with us and to learn new skills. As we undertake this on-the-job training, I challenge you to be bold and let your creativity run wild, but above all to recognize the strengths and skills of your team and what the potential each of you brings to tackling the problem. At times you may get frustrated, but speaking from experience, trust the process. Good luck with the workshop and dare mighty things!