

PROJECT REPORT & PRESS RELEASE TEXT

CFI project – Initiating Funding Seminars

Press Release

This project identified a need for greater awareness among researchers of the objectives of research funding agencies beyond those to which we at SLU Landscape regularly apply (e.g. VR) or where the mechanism for application is not necessarily the standard academic grant process to which researchers are accustomed (e.g. mydingheter/small charitable agencies). A Workshop was arranged and representatives from these types of agencies invited to present. SLU Landscape was then also presented and discussions held as to likely areas of common interest. Several new opportunities for potential research were identified and mutual understanding of research priorities strengthened.

INTENTION/ GOAL

The Goal was to run workshops which would connect researchers with funding agencies to help both get a better idea of what kinds of research the other's wish to see. In particular this was to connect with larger funding agencies which currently do not receive many applications from SLU Landscape, and smaller agencies which do not have formal or obvious application mechanisms.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Workshop 1: 27th April 2017, SLU, Ultuna campus.

Attendees:

- Anders Rasmusson, Movium, SLU
- Anders Sjölund, Senior sakkunnig/ Nationell samordnare Landskap, Trafikverket
- Maria Thuveson, Director, Department of Research Financing, Swedish Research Council (VR)
- Neil Sang (Researcher, Geo-Data Science, LAPM, SLU),
- Bengt Persson (Samverkanslektor, LAPM, SLU),
- Maria Ignatieva (Professor of urban biodiversity and design and history of landscape architecture, SOL, SLU),
- Märit Jansson (Lektor, Landscape Planning, LAPM, SLU)

The discussion during the workshop was excellent with a wide range of new opportunities identified as well as a clear impression that all three external presenters had chosen to participate because this was an opportune moment for SLU Landscape to become more involved in their respective areas due to e.g. organisational change at Trafiksverket and a general shift of emphasis at VR toward interdisciplinary research. Full details are available in the workshop minutes and the presentations of the invited speakers respectively.

Workshop 2: Alnarp → *Alternative: "A Funding Workshop Program?" : Meeting between Grants Office, Heads of Department, Project Team and Dean.*

From the experience of workshop one it was decided to replace the planned second workshop with a meeting between the project team, SLU Landscape Head of Departments and the Grant Office to

look at options for longer term continuation of the principle of such workshops. It is suggested that the afternoon following the SLU Landscape Day (19th October 2017) might be a suitable time.

FUTURE ROADMAP/LESSONS LEARNED

1. Suggestions for improving the "Call for Ideas Initiative"

The CFI is a good idea in principle since it provides seed money for projects, particularly when this is to be cross campus.

Given the small amount of money in CFI the typical **transaction costs** to any new project (obtaining a project number, establishing staff cost per hour, recording hours etc.) are proportionately larger. This should be supported by **a clear protocol for the establishment, running and closing of each project to minimise reliance on a project manager from the academic team** (for example project codes should be assigned immediately and be cross departmental so all team members can claim directly.)

While the workshop was undoubtedly successful, projects such as this which are small but ambitious carry an inherent risk of under-delivery due to lack of resource. That may result in wrongly abandoning some good ideas and if external organisations are involved, under-delivery also risks reputational damage to SLU. The project team were acutely aware of that risk throughout and felt measures could be put in place to mitigate it for the future. Certain kinds of project require not only financial resource but also administrative resource and moral-authority from senior management to ensure interest from outside agencies and SLU staff, particularly where a longer term commitment would build momentum from the initial CFI project. It is therefore recommended **that the start-up protocol of CFI projects include an opening meeting between the team and all heads of department (e.g. as part of the SLU Landscape Day) where support needs are identified, and the closing protocol has a similar opportunity to ensure longevity.**

Thus we suggest:

- *Develop/offer clear protocol for the establishment, running and closing of each project*
- *Clear support by heads of the department, which affects internal and external appearance*
- *Critical mass/attendance of staff to receive a sufficient value and effect from the initiative*

2. Critical reflections for planning future similar funding initiatives

This kind of work would be best undertaken by the Grants Office which has the possibility to maintain a database of relevant funders and maintain a relationship with individuals there-in. Some of the funders did not see it as being in their interests to attend (having enough applications already) so it will need consistent contact over the long term to persuade them that such activities may help them optimize the impact of their available funds.

A regular (bi-annual) event, at faculty level, as a fixed date in the calendar which all can anticipate and plan for would also help. This said, higher profile should not mean then only attracting large and prestigious funding agencies. Smaller agencies often provide better success rates but are

underutilized due to lack of awareness, yet such smaller projects can act as pilots for larger applications.

The continuous development of a database of funding agencies which is accessible to all staff and also regular dialogue with funders. This is certainly beyond this CFI project (see comment above), however, the chance to establish connections via CFI seed initiatives, possibly less formal, can foster relevant encounters, discussions and networks for SLU-Landscape staff and external stakeholders. Nevertheless, sufficient attendance to such events is vital to achieve such an effect, which was challenging this time.

Moreover, the seed funding is (realistically) too small to cover staff time per se. Rather it should be understood as an estimate and contribution toward direct costs, with the department agreeing to fund the time as agreed within the first start up meeting. This will help ensure that risk of under delivery is minimized without raising the advertised budget and thus expanding the scale of the projects themselves.

Details on working process

Tasks

- Development of a cross-department understanding of the nature of the workshop and the kinds of funders to be invited.
- Collating relevant funders for SLU-Landscape
- Outreach
 - to staff (internal)
 - to funders (mainly external)
- Organizing and implementing the actual event/funding seminar
- Collating the material for future use.
- Discussion of lessons learned.

Expenses

- Staff Time :
 - Neil Sang – 9 Days;
 - Nina Vogel – 6 Days;
 - Bengt Persson 4;
 - Maria Ignatieva 3 days
- Workshop (27/04 2017, Ultuna campus)

(Note: There were no travel expenses since the workshop coincided with the SLU Landscape day and external presenters did not charge this. The department at Ultuna covered room and Fika costs.)