

VI-EPSCoR Collaboration Agreement

RIDGE TO REEF - Processes and Interdependent Drivers of Small Island Resilience

Introduction

The Ridge to Reef - Processes and Interdependent Drivers of Small Island Resilience (R2R) project is a five-year \$20 million grant dedicated to addressing the impacts of changing environmental conditions on small islands' social ecological systems such as those in the USVI. This document establishes processes and methods to ensure an open and collaborative atmosphere over the life of the VI-EPSCoR R2R project. The agreement is a living document and will be modified as necessary to reflect changing circumstances over the life of the project.

Shared Respect and Collaboration

R2R Research Component Leads along with the Administrative and Management Teams will meet regularly to jointly evaluate the project, including its progress toward meeting project strategic goals. All R2R team members are committed to open communication with each other with regard to strengths and limitations in carrying out its part of the collaborative activities under this agreement. To that end, two monthly meetings have been established. A Staff meeting whereby the PI, Co-PIs, and the Administrative and Management Teams meet to discuss overall project milestones and administration and a Research/Project Leads Team meeting whereby the PI, Co-PIs, and Research Component Leads meet to update the team on research objectives and outcomes progress.

Our Code of Conduct

Be Committed to creating a positive and enjoyable experience for all participants

Be Respectful and considerate to colleagues at all times

Be Generous, kind, and respectful in both giving and accepting feedback

Be Accountable: If mistakes occur, own up to them without being defensive

Leadership Responsibilities

R2R leadership will work together to address weaknesses to improve outcomes. This includes addressing the lack of progress by components that may or may not impact other components' efforts. Research Component Leads whose teams are falling short on their deliverables or those component leads who are experiencing delays due to those shortfalls will inform the R2R leadership (PI, Co-PIs, and/or Assistant Director) for remediation. Timeliness is key here. Research Component Leads need to identify issues or disruptions early to avoid larger-scale impacts.

Communication and Conflict Resolution

Team members will utilize shared team platforms (e.g. Dropbox, Google Drive and SharePoint) and communications resources (e.g. VI-EPSCoR website, newsletters, and blogs) to facilitate collaborative team functioning. They will also participate in group meetings and forums for open sharing of ideas. The Management Team conducts two monthly meetings to facilitate timely and meaningful communication and to adapt quickly to emerging issues and opportunities. These meetings are open, and any R2R team member is welcome to participate in the meeting when issues arise. Research Component Leads conduct team meetings and share information with the Management Team. Project-wide annual meetings are held for the joint purposes of disseminating information, evaluating progress, establishing new collaborations, and planning future activities. Should a conflict arise, team members agree to discuss concerns in a timely, professional and respectful manner. Members of the Management Team are available to assist and mediate conflict resolution and encourage open and civil dialogue in all areas related to team interactions. If the Management Team is not the appropriate venue for conflict resolution, individuals are encouraged to seek out a trusted mentor, colleague, or other university resources like Human Resources to help navigate the conflict. Team members will identify and address potential conflicts of interest through the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP), ensuring compliance with NSF and institutional policies.

Authorship and Citation Guidance

Team members agree to adopt the following guiding principles:

- Research teams should discuss authorship issues in general “lab practices” terms when new students or postdocs join the team but no later than the start of data analysis and manuscript development.
- Research teams should communicate early and often about roles and responsibilities.
- Authorship disputes are best settled at the local level by the authors within the research team or by the Research Component Lead. If local efforts fail, the PI and Co-PIs can assist in resolving grievances.
- Working group members should be proactive about their interest in participating in manuscripts, and lead authors should be open to the involvement of others, especially students. Lead authors should also communicate in writing clearly their intentions about publications so past contributors are aware of publication generation.
- The primary author(s) should provide a concise, written description of the contributions of each author and how they have assigned the order in which they are listed so that readers can interpret their roles correctly. This record should be stored in VI-EPSCoR’s Dropbox or MS Azure file share within the Research Components documents.

-
- When research is done by teams whose members are highly specialized, an individual's contributions and responsibility may be limited to specific aspects of the work.
 - These policies should be reviewed periodically as authorship practices change.
 - Everyone who has made substantial and other substantial intellectual contributions to the work should be an author or at least be acknowledged.
 - Authorship is inclusive (including students). For an individual to qualify as co-author, they must make at least two relevant contributions among those listed below (people who contribute in one category should be noted in the acknowledgments):
 1. Conceived of the idea for the research
 2. Designed the manuscript
 3. Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work
 4. Acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work
 5. Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content
 6. Supervised organization of the project and manuscript
 7. Performed research, such as data collection, analysis or modeling (includes data shared by another team for analysis) and conducted research activities above and beyond normative work tasks
 8. Contributed new methods or models
 9. Drafted figures and tables
 10. Wrote parts of the manuscript
 11. Performed critical content reviews (not just spelling and grammar checking)
 12. Acted as a cultural liaison; obtained permissions; reviewed for appropriateness to all cultures involved in the study
 13. Directly shared knowledge or expertise; aided in or provided documentation or translation
 14. Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.
 15. Made other contributions not listed above such as the acquisition of additional funding and provision of technical services, patients, or materials.

Team Expectations

VI-EPSCoR values the development of a strong, communicative team and the establishment of an inclusive, integrated student cohort.

Team members are expected to:

- Participate in leadership and/or staff meetings.
- Provide timely information for annual reports to NSF, NSF site visits and reverse site visits, project evaluation, communication dissemination objectives, and other ongoing project needs.
- Acknowledge funding support. All papers, presentations, and other intellectual materials produced under the grant must state: "Acknowledgement to (or "Support from") VI-EPSCoR NSF award OIA# 1946412." or "This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant award OIA# 1946412." Except for articles or papers published in scientific, technical, or professional journals, the following disclaimer must also be included: "Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation." The VI-EPSCoR and NSF logos should also be included on all visual media (i.e. posters); logo downloads ([link](#)).
- Adhere to R2R programmatic Terms and Conditions ([link](#)).
- Adhere to the R2R Data Management Plan ([link](#)).
- Support community engagement, dissemination, and citizen science efforts led by both the Formal and Informal Learning components. Specifically, this collaboration will aid in creating and/or increasing sustainability and efficiency in the realms of; 1) Broadening participation in STEM, 2) Promoting both STEM, and environmental, literacy, 3) Adopting more culturally-responsive and inclusive strategies, 4) Establishing key partnerships with local groups and stakeholders, and 5) Fostering and developing a STEM-competent, locally-sourced workforce.

Data Management

R2R is dedicated to disseminating the research, data, and publications generated by its personnel. Data generated by the team are viewed as assets available to participants and to the public in a way that is open, discoverable, and usable. R2R project participants will follow the R2R Data Management Plan (DMP) that addresses project, institutional, and grant requirements.

A R2R DMP overview includes the following data management and sharing practices:

- Scope – The policy applies to all research conducted under the R2R project.
- Ownership – The PI and Co-PIs are the Data Stewards for project data and are accountable for data management activities. Each data set will identify a responsible data owner. All R2R data is owned by VI-EPSCoR and is governed by the DMP.

-
- Obligations – Researchers are responsible for making themselves familiar with and adhering to legislation, obligations, and funder policies governing their research.
 - Storing – Data (and associated metadata) must be stored securely and protected from loss on the approved R2R cloud storage platform. Data stewards must ensure that access is not limited to a single person.

Confidentiality of human research subjects - De-identification of data before adding to the shared platform in accordance with IRB project and best practices of working with human subjects.

- Describing – Researchers must provide sufficient metadata as described by the DMP which includes metadata creation standards to ensure that the data are discoverable, understandable, and re-usable.
- Distributing – To the fullest extent possible, all data, including code used to clean data, analysis, and make figures and its meta-data associated with a publication should be available for download at the time of publication. An application used to share publication and its data is to be determined.
- Archiving – All data generated by R2R participants will be archived in association with data project generation and made available upon request.
- Licensing – Research data that are made available should not be assigned licenses or terms of use that unnecessarily restrict their management, sharing, or use by others.

R2R has also employed the utilization of ERCore to collect and store its programmatic data for NSF annual reporting. ERCore is a database that is maintained and supported by a consortium that consists of other EPSCoR jurisdictions with the goal of making NSF reports and data collection accessible, streamlined, and standardized. This database has protocols that help to reduce reporting errors and makes the creation of the NSF reporting tables seamless. It also provides a means of collaboration and support that is available to the consortium.

Money and Budget

Fiscal compliance:

R2R has a core team focused on peer-reviewed and defined research and broader engagement activities. All team members must ensure that all expenditures align with the merit-reviewed proposal, NSF-accepted strategic plan, and award terms and conditions. This fiscal responsibility includes expenditures incurred as cost match (20% required), whether these are 'real dollar' expenditures or in-kind support. The cost-share or match must come from non-federal sources. Cost-sharing reports must be submitted on an annual basis to our NSF Program Officer. We must maintain records of all project costs that are recorded as cost-sharing. We must also submit an Annual Report to report all expenditures and obligated funds. NSF requires VI-EPSCoR to submit a spending plan with a timeline for non-obligated funds upon submission of the annual report. The spending plan must be approved by our Office of Sponsored Programs and submitted to our NSF Program Officer for approval of carry-over funding.

Fiscal collaboration:

As long as project outcomes and success per NSF oversight are sustained, annual subawards and individual research component budgets developed as part of the proposal can be relied on over the five-year award. (Note that the R2R project is a cooperative agreement, and any NSF-directed changes to the project scope of work may result in changes in individual investigator annual budgets.) This commitment to maintain individual research component budgets and focus on a small team requires a fiscally collaborative culture. Each awardee needs to be realistic with annual expenditures and open to sharing resources when not needed. Throughout the grant cycle, the VI-EPSCoR Administrative Team provides each research area with an update on spending on a monthly basis. We have to report project spending to NSF at a high level of detail, including how funds link to specific project work. Transparency and ongoing communication with the Management Team (Program Director, Assistant Director, and Budget Manager) and about how award funds are used and about projected spending is required for every funded participant on the project. R2R's Budget Manager conducts bi-weekly reconciliations and works very closely with our Grant Accountant to ensure expenditures are accurate and to request financial reports.

Policy for Unspent Funds:

Any unspent funds that can be carried forward will be pooled and reallocated according to project priorities. The research area leads and management team must meet and discuss project priorities before funds can be reallocated. The management team has responsibility for this prioritization and reallocation with final approval by the PI/PD. This practice ensures that resources remain aligned with strategic plan activities and that unspent funds can be used strategically to ensure full project success.

Additionally, each research area lead must provide the VI-EPSCoR's Management team with a spending plan for all unspent funds based on funding reallocations each grant year. Our NSF Program Officer must approve the spending plan and carryover funding. Once approved, all unspent funds will be carried forward to the next grant year.

Memorandum of Understanding Agreements

Memorandum of Understanding agreements and other collaboration agreements will be established with external entities as needed. The Office of Sponsored Programs in collaboration with the technical leads of UVI and the external entity will draft the agreements to outline the roles and responsibilities of the parties.

Intellectual Property Agreements

Intellectual Property Rights terms will be incorporated into any external collaborator agreements and will follow University policies and National Science Foundation terms. All intellectual property rights language must be reviewed by the Office of Sponsored Programs.

Resources

Appendix A - Org Chart

