

# Fact Sheet: Collaborative Crop Research Program

## Communities of Practice

To achieve maximum impact from funded projects, the CCRP engages in a process of continuous learning and facilitates group learning for grantees.

Processes aimed at this include the following:

- Grantees within a region and/or working on similar problems meet annually to share knowledge and experiences and learn from each other.
- A regional team of consultants designs an analysis of the region and relevant issues. Grantmaking is focused on improving outcomes based on the issues identified in the regional analysis. This analysis is revised annually to respond to the changes in the field.

The program offers a literature service to provide publications about crop research available to researchers who lack access to up-to-date libraries.



In 2008, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation recognized McKnight's successful program with a grant of \$26.7 million over five years. This generous funding allows the CCRP to capitalize on the two foundations' combined resources, and build upon its 25-year field history strengthening a network of scientists, organizations, and communities working for food security.

The McKnight Foundation Collaborative Crop Research Program (CCRP) is a competitive grants program that seeks to increase food security for resource-poor people in developing countries. The CCRP strategically combines elements of research and development, seeking innovative solutions to real problems that will improve availability, access, and utilization of nutritious food by rural people with the fewest resources. The goal of the CCRP is to help build capacity to achieve food and nutritional security for resource-poor rural people in developing countries, in a way that is consistent with local cultures and the maintenance of ecosystem health.

Despite impressive agricultural advances in both developing and industrialized countries, much of the world faces chronic food shortages and malnutrition. As the global population approaches 8.2 billion by the year 2030, the demand for food in developing countries is expected to double. Yet very little money has been invested in studying food crops important in the developing world, and basic scientific knowledge has never been generated about some of these crops. Little is invested in determining how to translate available knowledge information into better nourished rural populations on a substantial scale.

### What is the scope of the program?

Since the program's inception in 1983, The McKnight Foundation has committed over \$100 million to the CCRP, including past and future commitments and non-grant assistance, such as support for convenings. Of the total, more than \$74 million has been approved in grants to support the program's goal.

The strategy is to support carefully selected agricultural research and development efforts led by developing country partners,

aimed at improving food production, agricultural sustainability, rural livelihoods, and nutritional status of rural populations that are vulnerable to food deficit.

Given the magnitude of the challenge of feeding the world, McKnight's investment is relatively small. Therefore, the CCRP endeavors to identify specific regions and topics in which relatively modest investments in crop research and development can make a difference. The program also seeks formal and informal collaboration with other organizations working to improve food security.

### What is its vision?

The CCRP is based on the vision of a world in which all people have access to the nutritious food they need on the terms they can afford, and where food is sustainably produced in ways that protect local resources and respect cultural values.

### In what sense is it collaborative?

The program fosters partnerships on numerous levels: among regional research, development, community, and farmer organizations; between researchers in developing countries and those in more advanced settings; and among researchers in multiple disciplines or with complementary strengths. Through "communities of practice" (CoPs) the program also promotes collaborative learning among grantees within a region and/or working on similar problems. The program seeks to synergize with related efforts and initiatives.

### How are grants awarded?

Proposals are accepted in response to regional requests for concept notes announced on the CCRP website at <http://mcknight.ccrp.cornell.edu/about/announcements.html>. The concept notes are reviewed, and full proposals are solicited for a subset of

## About the Foundation

Founded in 1953 and independently endowed by William and Maude McKnight, the Minnesota-based Foundation has assets of approximately \$1.9 billion and granted about \$96 million in 2010. McKnight concentrates resources in six program areas: the arts; children and youth; the environment; the region and communities; neuroscience research; and select efforts to promote rural livelihoods and food security outside the USA. McKnight subscribes to the Minnesota Council on Foundations' "Principles for Minnesota Grantmakers."



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## Request for Proposals

Information on current calls for concept notes can be found at [mcknight.ccrp.cornell.edu](http://mcknight.ccrp.cornell.edu).

the concept notes. Finally, the most promising full proposals are funded for two to four years, with the potential for renewal upon review.

### What projects are supported?

The program takes a holistic, ecosystem approach to agriculture, supporting research and partnerships that lead to increased crop productivity, improved livelihoods, and better nutrition. The CCRP supports a variety of approaches to these issues, such as crop physiology and breeding, seed systems, analysis and utilization of crop biodiversity, integrated pest management, and commercialization.

Initially, the program funded research partnerships made up of scientists in developing countries and scientists in the industrialized world. Now, the CCRP emphasizes the idea of a Community of Practice (CoP). That is, the program supports clusters of projects in a region and fosters partnerships among local, national, or regional research, development, and farmer organizations. Processes of interchange and innovation are stimulated through annual meetings, exchange visits, and technical support.

Information on projects currently funded is available on the CCRP website at <http://mcknight.ccrp.cornell.edu/projects/>. Projects are designed to lead from research to practical outcomes. The funded CoPs are:

**Achieving impact in the Andes.** This group of projects is designed to improve the livelihoods of people, households, and communities in the Andean region by targeting crops and cropping systems important to Andean food security. The program supports collaborative projects involving research and development organizations working together with communities in Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia.

**Millet and sorghum-based systems in West Africa.** This group of projects focuses on improving food security for people depending on millet and sorghum-based systems in West Africa. The program supports collaborative projects involving research and development organizations working together with communities in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger.

**Enhancing the utilization of legumes in Southern Africa.** This group of projects focuses on increasing the integration of edible legumes into the cropping systems of Tanzania, Mozambique, and Malawi.

**Improving crop productivity, marketing and utilization in the Eastern and Horn of Africa.** This group of projects will be designed to improve the livelihoods and nutrition of people in Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia, particularly those depending on under-researched crops of regional importance.



## Questions?

Please visit [www.mcknight.org](http://www.mcknight.org)  
or call us at 612-333-4220.