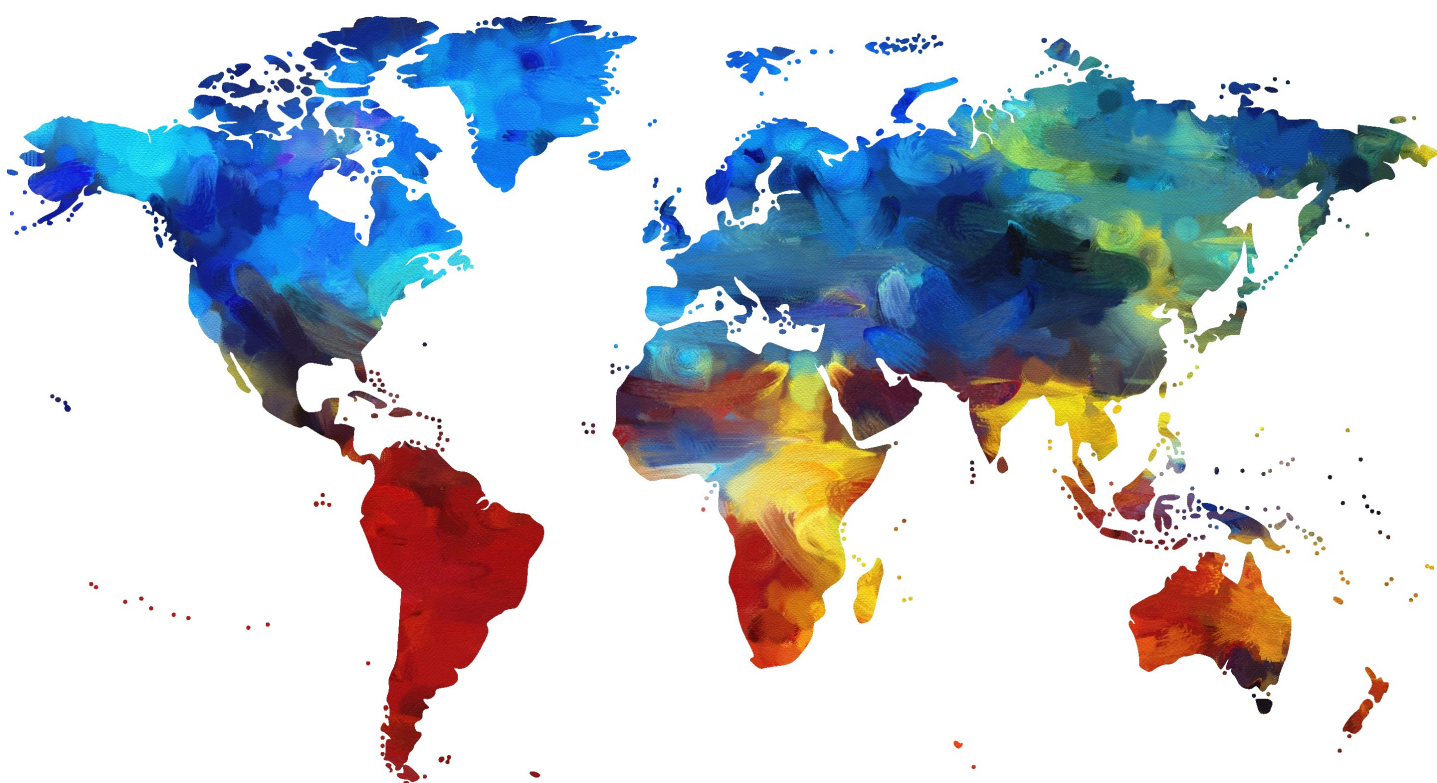


Planning an International Development Workshop

Online Resource



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

Planning an International Development Workshop

Introduction

This online resource is a step by step guide to help you to organise an effective international development collaboration workshop.

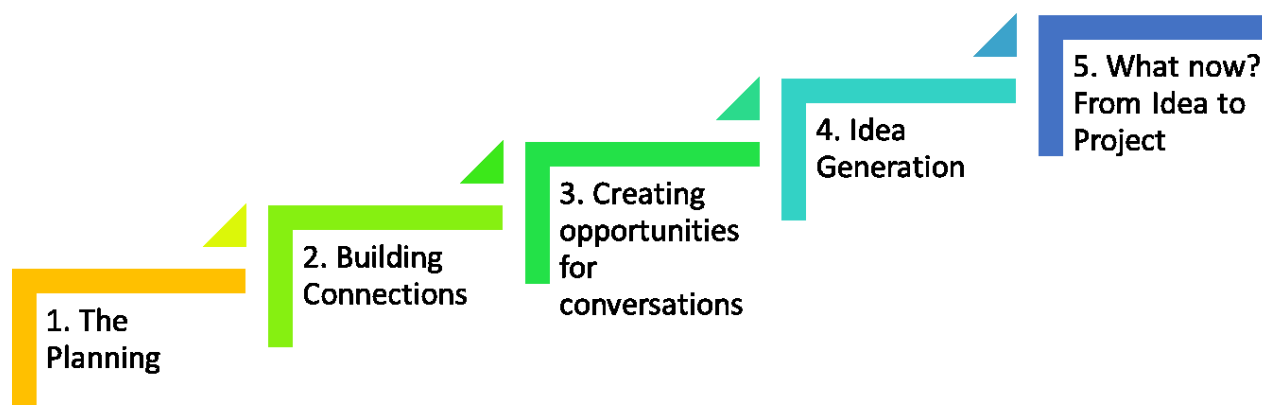
The content is based on good practice that emerged from GCRF workshops funded under the [UKIndia Researcher Links scheme](#), the National Natural Science Foundation of China, the [British Council](#) and [Royal Society of Chemistry](#) which took place in India and China in 2017 and 2019.

These workshops brought together researchers from the UK and India, or the UK and China, working in social and physical sciences to understand the challenges addressing interdisciplinary goals in rural villages and environments, introducing participants to a range of experts who shared expertise and insights into how they overcome challenges.

The aim of this resource is to share best practice from the above workshops, to make the process of organising an international workshop as transparent as possible, and to support other researchers and researcher developers to develop similar types of workshops.

This guide owes a significant gratitude to Professor Neil Robertson of The University of Edinburgh for his vision of delivering more collaborative and interactive programmes to stimulate more creative and interdisciplinary research

This guide covers 5 steps to running an International Development Workshop:



Authors: Dr Sara Shinton, Head of Researcher Development, Institute for Academic Development

Dr Fíona Quinlan-Pluck, Academic Developer, Institute for Academic Development

With thanks to Nicola Cuthbert, Institute for Academic Development

First Published 2019

Planning an International Development Workshop

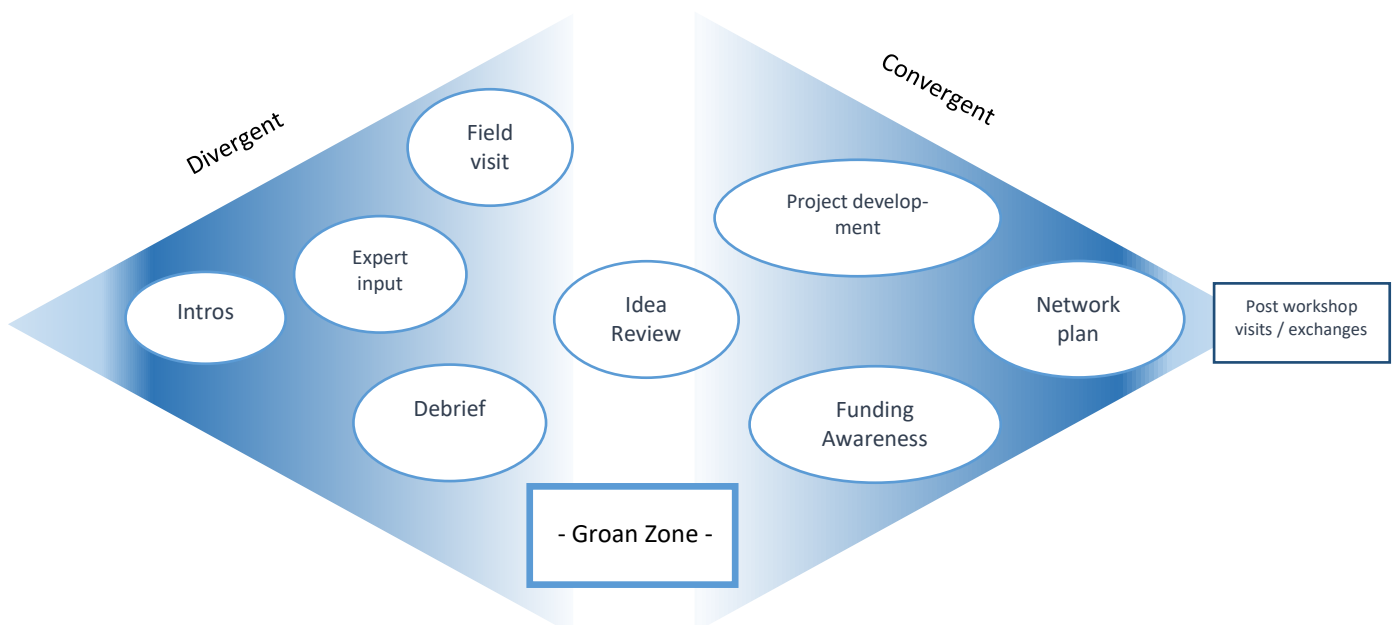
The Planning

A good place to start when planning the workshop and creating a programme, is to go back to the aims and concept of the initial proposal, and then look at ways in which they can be successfully achieved. By way of example, in the planning for the India workshop the aims were as follows:

- To introduce physical scientists to the real-world use of energy technologies in rural India. (A visit to selected villages in Maharashtra at the start of the workshop to inform the subsequent presentations, discussions and problem-solving activities of the workshop.)
- To introduce social scientists to the latest progress in emerging technologies to raise their awareness of immediate and future technological approaches to pressing problems.
- To facilitate communication and network building between physical and social scientists.
- To identify short-term projects for immediate impact to consolidate new partnerships that develop during the workshop.

In most cases an outline programme will be created when you are applying for funding, which is developed and adapted as speakers, activities and resources are confirmed as planning progresses.

In planning the workshop, consider a framework for the timescale; at first broaden the perspectives of the participants through the visits and early discussions (divergent thinking), then try and guide them to find a focus and begin to develop some project ideas (convergent thinking).



Planning an International Development Workshop

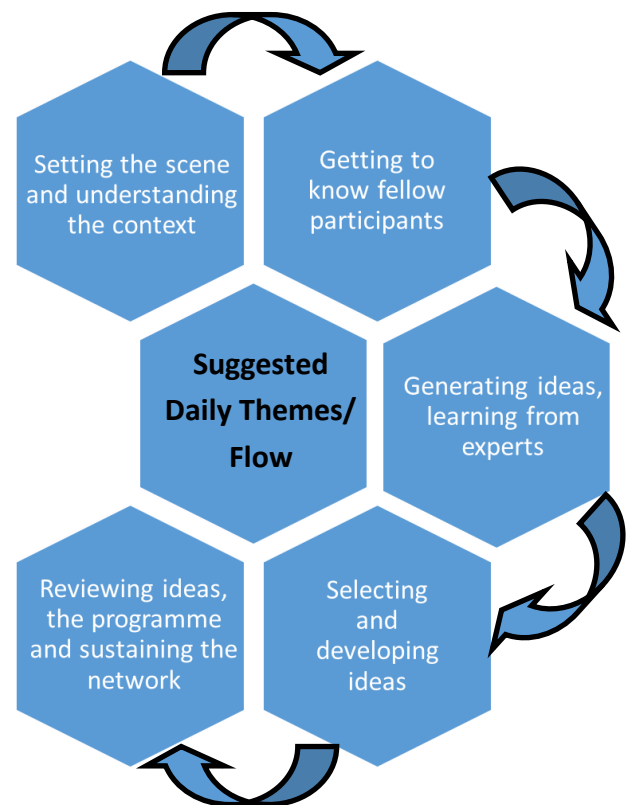
The Planning

An important and strongly developmental aspect of all these workshops was a day or half day visiting local relevant environments such as villages, treatments plants, power plants or green cities so that the researchers on the workshop can truly appreciate the context in which their ideas are needed and must have impact, and the challenges presented by the environment.

Another important characteristic of the programme is to ensure opportunities for participants to understand each other and start developing their ideas is regularly scheduled and protected. Although they will be at an early stage, include a day where you can review and develop the ideas so that further work on them is done with a clear understanding of how they will be evaluated. It is important to guard against the temptation to add speakers or visits at the cost of this time, as the key opportunity during these workshops is allowing the mix of people to meet and talk.

Also consider how you will minimise the danger of losing the momentum that will grow during the workshop once people return home to their institutions and their considerable other responsibilities.

Therefore, it may be appropriate to structure the workshop around a set of **daily themes** to ensure you have a clear flow to help with briefing speakers and attendees, e.g.:



Planning an International Development Workshop

Building Connections

Briefing the Participants

A key element in the success of these intense, collaborative type of workshops, when the participants don't know each other, or their research, is to factor in time at the start for participant talks/presentations.

Making progress on collaborative discussions requires energy and momentum. Lengthy and detailed descriptions of the minutiae of people's research will undermine the path to an interdisciplinary space. Therefore, a critical part of workshop preparation is briefing the participants. With multi-disciplinary groups the purpose of the participant introductions is to provide **an overview of skills, experience and interests that will accelerate the "getting to know you" stage and help us all start to see potential connections.**

These type of 'introductory presentations' run at [Crucible](#) events, where the participants are from different institutions and work in different fields, and work really effectively when the participants understand the following principles:

Convey the essence of what you do in a single phrase.

Don't make ANY assumptions about people's understanding of your field of research.

Make sure you explain your research so that those in other disciplines can see connections with their own work. Talk about what limitations could be overcome through collaboration and how your work might be of value in partnerships.

Stick to the time you've been given, however challenging that is.

Be as visual as you can. People generally remember pictures and schematics rather than text.

Don't put too much information on your slide/s. These type of presentations usually require just a single slide, as this is the level of detail they want to hear.

Be enthusiastic about your research! If you love what you do and think it is vital, that energy will be evident and people will invest their own energy and time in you.

The introductions that should be given at events like this, are very different from talks at conferences and seminars. To help your participants deliver the type of introduction you think the event needs, put together a slide template and send to them in advance. A sample is included in the appendix documents.

Aim to get all the slides in advance and collate into a workshop booklet, to be circulated electronically in advance. This allows people to read in advance and then can annotate as they listen to the introductions, making it easier for them to keep track of speakers of interest and potential conversations.

Planning an International Development Workshop

Building Connections

Briefing the Speakers

An important part of any workshop which seeks to inspire emerging research leaders to do great things are messages from those who have travelled similar paths. Established researchers play an important role in these workshops. They provide opportunities for the participants to learn from those who have already worked on successful interdisciplinary and international projects. Ensure you get the best out of the speakers by giving them a clear brief.

The first step is to make it clear that the event is not like other research conferences or meetings. Attendees will be spending a significant proportion of their time developing links, exploring ideas and developing projects, rather than listening to detailed insights into individual research projects.

Given that these projects will be both interdisciplinary, involve far distant collaborators and have an international development focus, and that these aspects present additional challenges, one role of the invited speakers is to ensure that the researchers learn as much as they can about how to manage these kinds of projects, as well as being inspired by what others have done; focusing on the “*how*” with “*what*” to give context.

When asking the speakers to be part of the workshop, it’s important to include at a minimum:

- The aims of the workshop *e.g. bring together a variety of researchers from different countries to stimulate new ideas and to build new connections.*
- What you hope the participants will get from their talk *e.g. an opportunity to learn from someone who has worked on a successful project. Ideas and insights that they can use in their own project ideas.*
- Clear brief for the talk *e.g.:* for a 30 minute talk
 - *10 mins | Basic description of prior project(s) they have worked on. This helps to establish credibility.*
 - *15 mins | Body of presentation, considering the points below*
 - *5 mins | Add perspectives from work done on the workshop*
- *Consider asking them to cover what they feel is the most important from the following points:*
 - *insights into practical considerations;*
 - *unexpected pitfalls;*
 - *learning from failures;*
 - *things you would like to have known before starting;*
 - *what kind of people are needed in a successful team and how do you build that team, how to get funding, other important points*
 - *Q&A and discussion time.*

Also, ask if they can stay for the entire day and provide mentoring during the initial idea generation stage. They can play an invaluable role when the idea generation and evaluation stages are underway.

Also consider asking them to complete the same summary slides as the participants, and add into the booklet so that everyone is aware they are attending and can prepare questions, if necessary.

Be aware of cultural sensitivities if time is running tight. Check in advance with the local host about interrupting a guest if they over run with their presentation. In some cases, you may need to be pragmatic about the time allowed for this section, and where you can make it up elsewhere if needed.

Planning an International Development Workshop

Creating Opportunities for Conversations

Successful projects of any kind but especially those that may be international and interdisciplinary, are founded on trusting relationships (Dowling Review, 2015). It is important to factor in time for the participants to get to know each other. Getting to know someone in broader terms than their research interests will help participants make decisions about working with them (and in some cases the type of person they are—are they energetic to your cautious, or have a similar approach to project management - can be as important a consideration as the skills they bring). Therefore a small investment of time and a dedicated space allows a different kind of conversation.

Ensure your workshop programme includes time where the attendees can discuss ideas and develop possibilities. As well as allowing the participants time to talk about their research interests, also try and create a relaxed and open atmosphere where more wide-reaching topics are covered. Here again, the value of a dedicated facilitator will be greatly felt; someone who can watch the time, be aware of any tensions or confusions, and can work to create a positive atmosphere will create the space for the participants to focus on their roles. By trying to both facilitate and participate, this may create extra tensions by having to break away from discussions to manage other groups.

The projects that are likely to develop from the connections made at this type of workshop will be complex and challenging. Success will depend on many factors, but those involved are only likely to commit to this challenge if they trust the people they'll be working with. Building trust takes time. It isn't just about complementary skills and experience, more about finding common ground whether in terms of interests, values or outlooks to life.

These things can't be expressed in a 2-minute introduction in the way people will describe their research at the start of the workshop. They need time and space to discover new people and then more time and space to decide if they are a good match and balance before they invest more time and space in building links. This adds another value to the field trips, where they can discuss the matters at hand whilst also getting to know each other outside the workshop space. There is value in cultural aspects and experiences too. By giving visiting participants positive experiences and



Planning an International Development Workshop

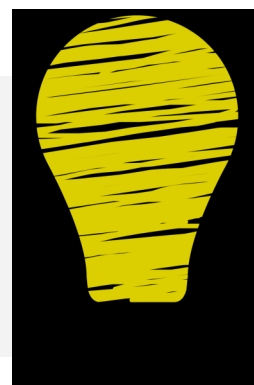
Idea Generation

How you structure your programme may depend on availability of personnel and opportunities but try to include context building, emphasis on International Development and funding awareness. This may take the shape of aiming to have a local trip within the first day, followed by a day debriefing the visit and ensuring everyone has an awareness of this type of funding. Next you need guide your participants to focus their creativity and begin to develop some project ideas.

When developing project ideas, it can be useful to get participants to do an initial 'brain dump' in **mixed** groups so that people can share initial ideas and be as creative and open as possible. Switching from divergent thinking to convergent thinking can be hard and people may feel uncomfortable moving into the idea generation stage.

Encourage them to start thinking about what their initial ideas were and put this onto post-it notes (do not underestimate the number of post-it notes you will need, plan ahead and bring plenty with you if they are not easily available where you will be working) so you can find clusters and common themes/overlaps. This can sometimes be hard when in this context ideas fall comfortably into their individual research area and solutions/problems are perhaps not being addressed. In this case it's useful to remember that the research has to start with a need and therefore it's useful for this idea generation process to consider the following questions:

- What is the need?
- Who are you helping?
- What is your impact?
- How will you do this?
- How will you communicate and engage people in your project?



The workshops this guide is based on had a workshop facilitator present, who has been involved in the trips and debrief, but isn't involved in the idea generation, who can stand back and consider if the ideas are developing under the original aims of the project and who can intervene if necessary. It's easy to get caught up and overwhelmed in the complexity of these type of international workshops and by the scale of the challenge. Faced with so many unknowns, people retreat a little from the 'groan zone' into the comfort of their expertise and disciplines. It's key that you have a facilitator who can push the participants out of their comfort zones so that better ideas emerge. To fill this role, potentially look to any Researcher Development staff you may have at your own institution.

Some advice is to 'shine a light' onto the idea generation and development process regularly in the early stages. Ask your guests to sit in with the groups whilst the ideas form, to challenge and guide then, to ask provocative questions of your participants. The ideas will develop further and new ones will emerge, hopefully 'needs-led'.

Planning an International Development Workshop

From idea to project

Once the ideas have been developed, the next stage is identifying resources which facilitate turning ideas into projects. A significant factor here is the availability of funding so we include a short session on the funding and opportunity map in the UK and host country.

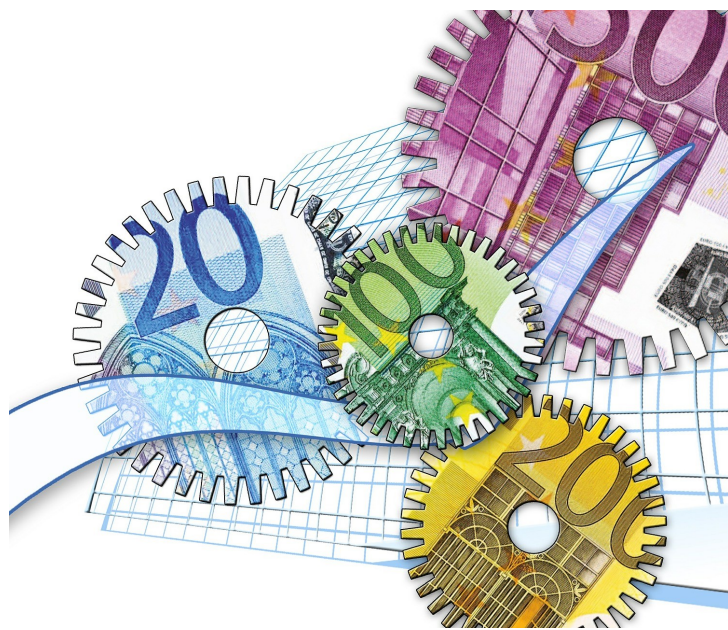
We have found it useful to also allow time for groups to consider their resources and needs. Get the participants to cluster their knowledge of funding schemes which focus on international development research opportunities, under the following 5 headings:

- Visit and exchanges
- Proof of concept/initial studies/seed funding
- Workshops and networks
- Project funding
- Programme funding

The group should produce information from both the UK and the country you are visiting.

There is a significant and flexible funding landscape, but it is complex - for many schemes you will need partners - so a good starting place for you/your participants is to attend workshops (such as this) and to ask these questions of your fellow attendees. In the planning and funding, it is also imperative to remember CSR – corporate social responsibility - when considering any project's impact on aspects of society.

Consider next steps for initial project development to be a mix of student exchanges, visits and proof of concept funding. The facilitator should capture this and circulate it to participants after the workshop as a resource. This leads into actions to sustain the network once the workshop is over. This can include follow-up emails sharing any resources generated during the events, and encouraging group communication. Check with your local Research Data Service (RDS) or equivalent about accessing shared files, or talk to relevant staff between your institutions in advance about participant access to datastores so project plans, contacts and funding sources may be shared and discussed further.



Planning an International Development Workshop

Flexibility

Although this guide is designed to help you plan an international development workshop, effective facilitation requires flexibility. It's not unusual for speakers to be added or lost at short notice, for field trips to overrun or need to be rescheduled, or for unexpected issues to emerge and require attention.

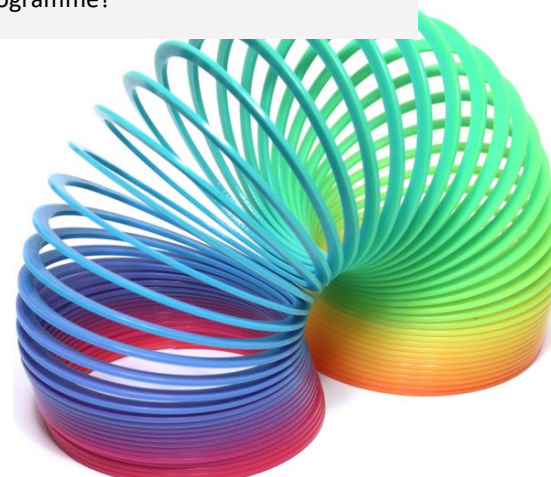
The facilitator's role is to maintain the workshop's momentum and to adapt the program to ensure the objectives are met. It is helpful to have two views on the program – one with attention to the detail of the timings and activities, but another 'helicopter' view of the key milestones. These might be:

- Better awareness of and understanding of each others' specialisms
- Networks and connections forming
- Project and collaboration ideas emerge

Knowing in advance that you may need to "manage" both audience and speakers will help keep to time and allow as many people as possible to participate. Think about timing talks and warning signs indicating remaining time if appropriate, or build in extra padding time between speakers if you think they might go over their allotted time. Be strict in the number and complexity of questions the audience can ask during Q+A's, advising the audience that they can take more involved questions to the speaker during breaks

There are some questions that will aid flexibility and smooth running during the event if asked in advance. A sample include:

- Is there a need for interpreters? If so, who will do this?
- How will participants transfer between accommodation, field trip and workshop locations? Who will manage this and ensure no one is left behind
- Where will participants eat during the days?
- Will there be a printed programme, what will go into it and who will produce it?
- Are there back-up speakers/established researchers who can be called on to fill any last minute cancellations from the programme?
- Are there "friendly faces" in the audience who can be called on the ask questions in Q+A sessions to get discussions going?
- Are there alternative activities, or alternative explanations of activities, the facilitator can draw on if the planned activity is not meeting its aims, or if a cancellation has created space in the programme?



Planning an International Development Workshop

Appendices - Sample 3 Day Workshop Plan Outline

Day 1	
09:00-09:30	Registration
09:30-10:00	Opening & Welcome
10:00- <u>11:00</u>	10:00-10:20 Keynote Speeches 1-3 Talks of 20mins each, no questions
11:00 – 11:15	Coffee Break
11:15-12:15	11:15-11:35 Keynote Speech 4-6 Talks of 20mins each, no questions
12:25 – 13:30	Group Photo & Lunch break Participants return questions to facilitator
12:15 – 12:25	Workshop facilitator to guide participants to reflect on what they have heard and formulate some key questions for the speakers. Questions noted on Post-its
13:30 – 15:00	Panel discussion with the speakers above forming a panel to respond to the questions from the workshop participants
15:00 - 15:30	Coffee Break
15:30-17:30	Self-introduction of participants 2 min each, 2-slide PPT template will be provided, slides pre-collated and speakers present in a set order
	Group Dinner

Planning an International Development Workshop

Appendices - Sample 3 Day Workshop Plan Outline Continued

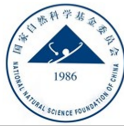
Day 2	
09:00-12:00	Off-site visit to related sites of interest
12:00-13:30	Lunch
13:30-14:30	Framing the challenges – brainstorming and sharing of past experience to identify challenges in achieving a successful low-carbon city Small interdisciplinary & inter-institutional groups. Focus on challenges only, not solutions. Track discussion on poster paper
14:30-14:45	Coffee Break Challenges posters will be displayed during the break. Facilitators to pick out key themes. Participants to pick which theme they would like to discuss further
14:45-17:00	Group discussion – break into multidisciplinary teams to tackle the themes identified Focusing on solutions. Small interdisciplinary & inter-institutional groups. Facilitator to present themes and participants pick their group. Discussions to be tracked on poster paper, participants to note their names on the posters
Day 3	
09:00-10:30	Group discussion (Project Building) 10 minutes at the start to form interdisciplinary groups based on interests raised previous day. Participants begin to build project ideas around these
10:30-10:45	Coffee Break
10:45-11:30	Continue Group discussion (Project Building)
11:30-13:30	Lunch
13:30-15:30	Wrap-up Meeting (Final reporting back by each group) Groups fill in project planning forms and task list for next steps, then each group presents their project with time for Q+A. Closing remarks from organisers

Planning an International Development Workshop

Appendices - Sample Slide Template

[UK Institution Logo]	[Host Institution Logo]
Include Photo Here	Name:
	Research Interest(s): <i>insert headlines here – elaborate on slide 2</i>
	Affiliation:
Future Interest(s):	

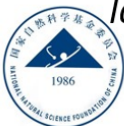
Other Useful Information: *networks, stakeholder links, previous experience etc*



[UK Institution Logo]	[Host Institution Logo]
-----------------------	-------------------------

Research Summary

- *Give an overview of your research interests here, written for the mixed audience – remember to make it accessible and meaningful for all the researchers present, not just those from your disciplinary area*
- *Define all specialist terms. Avoid assumptions of understanding regarding jargon associated with your discipline*
- *Try to be as visual as possible*
- *Speakers will be held to a strict **2 minutes maximum** so this is intended just as a brief introduction to you and your interests. There will be opportunities to expand in later discussions.*



Planning an International Development Workshop

Appendices - Sample Project Development Form

Title of Project	
People Involved	
What or challenge is your project addressing?	
How was this influenced by the workshop process (field trip, guest speakers, etc.)?	
What methodology/ies will you use?	
Give a timeline for your project	
What resources will you need for this project? (may include funding, access to technology or equipment, partners)	
This form is to help focus your thinking, highlight project needs that the wider network may be able to provide, and help you plan your first project actions.	

Planning an International Development Workshop

Appendices - Sample Workshop Evaluation

1. How did you find out about the workshop?
2. What motivated you to attend the workshop and what did you hope to get from it?
3. Did you achieve your objectives by participating in the workshop?
4. What was the most useful aspect of the workshop?
5. What was the least useful?
6. What would you change about the workshop? Please make any suggestions that will help us plan future events.
7. What ideas have you started to develop on the workshop? (Your project headlines/connections made only, not details)
8. How will you achieve your project goals?
9. How will you sustain the network you have built on the workshop?
10. What future events would complement the workshop activities and help your projects achieve greater impact?

Planning an International Development Workshop

Appendices - Reviews and Guides

Dowling Review

The Dowling Review of Business-University Research Collaborations, 2015.

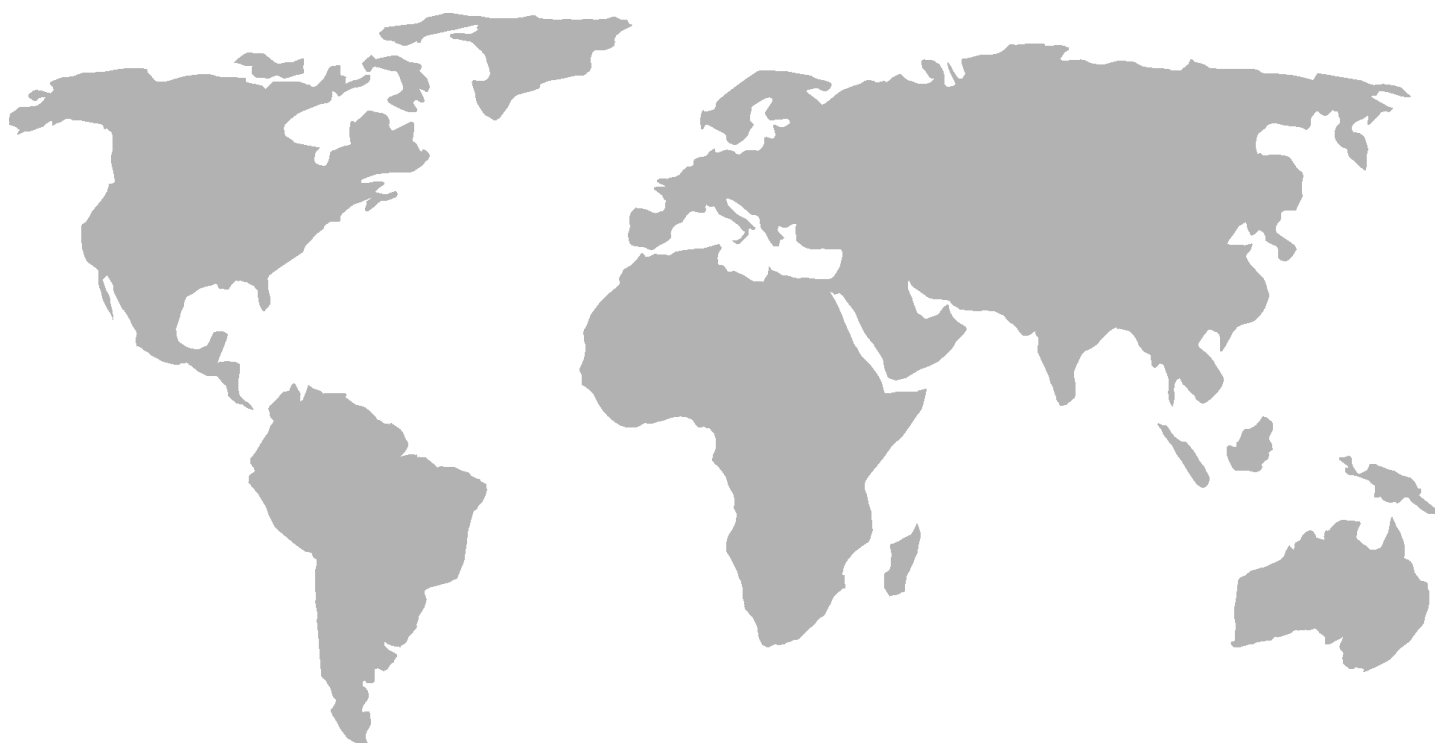
<https://www.raeng.org.uk/publications/reports/the-dowling-review-of-business-university-research>

LERU Research Collaboration Guide

<https://global.ed.ac.uk/features/leru-guide-to-research-collaboration>

[LERU Guide to Research Collaborations](#)

Planning an International Development Workshop



This work is licensed under a CC BY-NC-ND licence

To view a copy of this license, visit: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>