

Influence & Added Value of the Collaborative Crop Research Program in the Andes

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Foreword

The McKnight Foundation's Collaborative Crop Research Program (CCRP) funds collaborative crop research between smallholder farmers, leading local researchers, and development practitioners to explore solutions for sustainable local food systems. Currently the CCRP funds 120 grantee organizations in 70 research projects in 12 countries.

In 2012, McKnight commissioned an evaluation to learn about grantees' perceptions of its grantmaking and capacity strengthening model in the Andes. Over the past 10 years, the Andes Community of Practice (CoP) has adapted in important ways to accommodate shifting contexts and needs. The purpose of the study was to reflect on that evolution and provide constructive feedback to the CCRP and to the Andes CoP in particular. In addition, our aim is to share what we have learned with our other program partners, as well as with others interested in this approach to grantmaking.

In creating this report, Kaia Ambrose used a rigorous and practical evaluation approach which allowed for one day with each grantee to reflect on and analyze their experience in individual and group interviews. The study proved to be enlightening to the broad CCRP, as well as the Andes CoP's regional team, regarding the approach to grantmaking and related support in the region. The assessment provides both a deep and broad look at the complex grantmaking and grantee support system within the CCRP, the CoP, and its grantee institutions. It highlighted the evolution of these partnerships and identified the contributions *from* and benefits *to* each member in the CoP. The CCRP will use this study to improve and strengthen our grantmaking and grantee support over the next five years.

The CCRP plans to gather similar data from its three African-based CoPs, which in combination with this study can contribute to program-wide improvements and a broader knowledge base on the use of communities of practice in philanthropy.

**Jane Maland Cady, International Program Director
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Results & Conclusions

Influence & Added Value of the Collaborative Crop Research Program in the Andes

The Collaborative Crop Research Program (CCRP) seeks to improve productivity, livelihoods, equity, and nutrition by building stronger research and development systems as well as resilient people, institutions, and communities. Since 2003, its unique approach has been under development in the Andes through the Andes Community of Practice (CoP).

The purpose of evaluation was to consolidate evidence and learning about the changes to which the CCRP and McKnight have contributed through the grantees they support. From this evaluation, invested parties can understand the added value of the CCRP and the CoP approach for grantees, how it promotes individual as well as institutional change, and the key factors for and barriers to its success.

The three guiding questions are:

1. What is the added value of the CCRP and CoP approach for grantees in terms of institutional effects, partnerships, and ability to effectively and efficiently generate evidence-based, sustainable development outcomes?
2. How does the CCRP and CoP approach promote and support sustainable institutional change?
3. What are the key factors for success, the barriers grantees experience, and the opportunity costs of the CCRP and CoP approach?

Using key interviews, group reflection, and participant observation, consultant Kaia Ambrose collected data from different typologies of grantees. Identifying these typologies was important to determine how different individuals from different organizations, or groups within one organization, experienced CCRP benefits in different ways. The interview questions focused on:

- Significant individual, institutional, and beneficiary changes/movements in the project, including the acquisition of new skills/knowledge/tools/relationships and application of same;
- Collaboration and meaningful interactions with other grantees and non-grantee organizations;
- Added value of the CCRP and its point of difference relative to other programming.

The typologies are:

- a. Development workers in NGOs, including field personnel and community leaders attached to particular projects
- b. Students
- c. Researchers at national agriculture research centers, including universities, INIAP, and PROINPA
- d. Researchers in international agriculture research centers, including Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research (CGIAR), Institut de recherche pour le développement (IRD), and universities not based in the Andes

Interviews took place in Ecuador in December 2012, and in Peru and Bolivia in May 2013, with select follow-up interviews and participant observation occurring July 2013 during the CoP9 meeting in Puenbo, Ecuador. In total, eighty-five individuals representing eighteen organizations were interviewed. The regional representative invited all project leaders of active (as of December 2012) CCRP projects in the

Andes. Project leaders, in negotiation with said regional representative and Ambrose, agreed who should be included in the interviews and focus groups. The number of attendees per project varied from three to ten. Ambrose also interviewed individuals who had a significant relationship with the CoP in the past, namely representatives of three former projects and one studentship. The eighty-five interviewees represent a near approximation of the entire Andes CoP universe; it was not intended to be a sub-sample. Since the CoP by its nature does not have definite boundaries, it is impossible to say who comprises it, but the CoP listserve has sixty-five individuals.

Findings & Analysis

Question 1: What is the added value of the CCRP and CoP approach for grantees in terms of institutional effects, partnerships, and ability to effectively and efficiently generate evidence-based, sustainable development outcomes?

All grantees felt, to varying degrees but largely positively, that both the CCRP and, to a lesser degree, the CoP approach improved their individual professional work as well as that of their institutions' in terms of delivering sustainable development outcomes.

Because of their involvement with the CCRP and CoP, grantees with more classic research backgrounds were introduced to and assumed a more farmer- and systems-oriented approach. This made their work more participatory and communicated their research to a wider audience and in ways that made sense for farmers. Of forty-five researchers from both national and international research institutes, thirty-eight mentioned being exposed to new perspectives on how their research can be used for development. Seven even used the word "revelation." Conversely, three outliers said they still practice research and development activities as parallel systems.

Grantees already practicing a strong farmer/participatory bent were compelled to produce better evidence and to focus on their writing, which made their work more robust. This was generalized across the three countries. Grantees attributed their embrace of this holistic research focus and new skill sets to the way in which McKnight and, specifically, the Regional Team (RT) took the time to conduct training/capacity building events, provided continual communications and feedback, and demanded rigor in terms of research design, protocols, methodologies, and publications.

Clearly, CCRP non-grant support represents the program's added value. To a lesser degree, the CoP's added value varies across the three countries. While the annual CoP meeting is appreciated, there doesn't appear to be much take-home/follow-up. Past meetings saw a lot more enthusiasm, trust, and relationship building, according to a few interviewees who had attended more than one CoP meeting. Having recurring participation by the same individuals seems to help with relationship building, thereby increasing the chance of follow-up.

The focus on research was new for us as development organizations, even though we are researchers. We are used to having to meet goals and targets, and this isn't the case with research; there is space for learning and reflection. But the obligation comes when we have to write and publish.

—Grantees in all three countries

Unexpected were the leadership skills many grantee stakeholders felt they had acquired through their involvement with McKnight-funded initiatives and interaction with other grantees. What emerged was a critical mass of young researchers possessing new, improved capacity for robust research with a social focus and participatory element. Of the nineteen students interviewed, fourteen mentioned, without prompting, the leadership skills they had gained. This was also the case for eight out of twenty-one NGO development workers, seven out of thirteen field personnel, and four out of six community leaders.

NGOs:

- ✓ Expressed that receiving high-quality technical support by the RT made their programming more systematic and rigorous in data collection and analysis.
- ✓ Credited the RT for bringing more focus, clarity, and rigor to the research aspects of their development programming. In some cases, this meant a steep and challenging learning curve.
- ✓ Cited the learning as being two-way: NGOs bring their field-level, participatory, farmer-led focus to the table for other grantees as well as for the RT/Research Methods Support (RMS).
- ✓ Some felt there was strong “pressure to publish” and questioned the intended use of these publications (for professional journals instead of for farmers or other decisionmakers).
- ✓ Appreciated that the CoP was building more opportunities for collaboration among different organizations, MF grantees and non-MF alike.
- ✓ Cited CoP events as being useful for breaking down the divide between the social scientists and agronomists.
- ✓ Noted that follow-up from the CoP events was lacking.
- ✓ Had mixed reactions to Theory of Change (ToC). Some see it as a donor requirement; others as something that’s useful on a daily basis to guide programming activities.

STUDENT RESEARCHERS:

- ✓ Voiced that capacity building opportunities as well as one-on-one support (consultations, feedback, field visits) around research design, qualitative and quantitative tools, and farmer-led methodologies contributed positively to students’ research, writing, and dissemination.
- ✓ Benefited from being involved with McKnight, citing their new ability to articulate research methodologies to their professors as well as to farmers.
- ✓ Profited from mentorship from the RT/RMS as well as within their respective universities/research institutes.
- ✓ Experienced a paradigm shift from what they have or have not been taught at university, both on the technical research side (methodologies, databases) as well as the social, participatory, applied research side. They reported seeing the effects in the quality of their research in terms of gathering, storing, and analyzing robust evidence, and being able to use this evidence with farmers, either alone or in combination with the knowledge farmers already possess.
- ✓ See capacity building of young researchers as a sustainability strategy: They go on to form part of the institute where they did their research or to another similar, national entity where their new mindset can wield influence.

“My curriculum vitae is going to be a lot stronger than other students’ in my program because of the thesis work I’ve been able to do.”

—Student, UMSA (similar comment from students at CIP, Ecuador)

RESEARCHERS AT *NATIONAL* RESEARCH INSTITUTES & UNIVERSITIES:

- ✓ Cited as positives the promotion of high-quality research and receipt of training and coaching around research protocol, qualitative and quantitative methods, data management (databases), and data analysis. This meant that research was both more focused and strategic and incorporated the farmer as the key actor of change and main user of the research. Said one respondent, “With the support of the Regional Team as well as international researchers we were able to focus on and talk about local

knowledge but in a way that was rigorous, not romanticized, because it incorporates scientific knowledge. At the same time, we're slowly building up the trust of farmers."

- ✓ Appreciated and noted as innovative the time and space for writing and publishing. It was helpful to have a dedicated space where the only objective was to write. This supported researchers in their quest to produce pieces ready for publication in national and international journals. Some viewed this focus as a positive push; four others saw it as pressured and unconditional.
- ✓ Claimed that continuous conversation and feedback helped build relationships grounded in trust and understanding.

RESEARCHERS AT *INTERNATIONAL* RESEARCH INSTITUTES & UNIVERSITIES:

- ✓ Identified as the real eye-opener the farmer/social link to the research: seeing the usefulness of their research on the ground with farmers and how to involve them and their perspectives. According to one respondent, "[McKnight] is working on changing a mindset of doing research with the goal of publishing, instead of balancing the publication output with usefulness at the field level, to start caring about the farmers."
- ✓ Some questioned the sustainability of such a hands-on, specific approach with no explicit mechanism for building broader institutional capacity to support this type of research in the future.
- ✓ Highly appreciated CoP meetings as a space for sharing and collaboration. Shared one party, "... the interactions and spaces and open-ended questions [are] a very healthy and different way of engaging."
- ✓ Recommended that collaboration go beyond the annual meetings, creating synergies so that those with more capacity can link with other grantees. To quote one interviewee, "... this could include synergies with PhD students as a good investment for projects to take advantage of skills and perspective, but that student also gets their eyes opened to the field."
- ✓ Expressed gratitude for the mentorship, openness, and trust with the RT and RMS, specifically the feedback and dialogue supplied.
- ✓ Felt that evidence-based policy influence is a lacking element in the CCRP.

"McKnight Foundation is a strong place to bridge academics and field."

—International researcher)

Question 2: How does the CCRP and CoP approach promote and support sustainable institutional change?

Institutional change and sustainability vary among grantees. The institutional context can create a barrier for broader and potentially sustainable change; internal politics as well as challenging personalities can halt project progress. That said, in some institutions, the CCRP's support has influenced that context, the organization being small enough that it brought on board many of the aspects the CCRP promotes.

Grantees agreed that many factors can inspire sustainability of the approach. A summary of these inputs is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Domain of Inputs

Providing immediate, one-off support	Capacity building workshops	Ongoing technical support
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Non-grant support for exchange visits, events, scholarships for study ▪ Bringing in experts to do complementary research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On research protocol ▪ On research methodologies ▪ On database management ▪ On writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ RT feedback ▪ RMS support and feedback ▪ Supporting grantees to provide feedback to other grantees
Changing contextual/policy environment	Broader communications	Networking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seed selection law ▪ Training other non-grantee (i.e. students) on research methodology, farmer involvement, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Publications from research projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual CoP meeting ▪ Supporting projects to get together on specific activities ▪ Bringing in CONDESAN

- ✓ **Investing in Capacity:** This comes directly from the RT and RMS support: capacity building, feedback on proposals, individual meetings and field visits, and opportunities for attaching an international researcher to a project. It also comes from collaborations and connections among grantees. Of the eighty-five interviewees, seventy-four explicitly mentioned that they felt they were doing better development because either their research was more relevant, useful, and applied (in the case of the more academic crowd), or that their development efforts were guided and supported by robust data from research.
- ✓ **Collaboration:** To varying degrees, relationships among projects (intra- and inter-country) have developed and deepened with and without the intervention of the CCRP RT/RMS and with varying outcomes. Mentioned as the main types of collaboration were non-grant funding for events such as seed selection activities; exchanges around a particular issue; trainings (i.e. qualitative and quantitative research method workshop) led by the RMS and also by grantees; and emergent trainings with no intervention of the RT or RMS. Other collaborative ventures included the annual CoP meeting as a space for gathering new knowledge, building trust, and now, seemingly, planning collaborative next steps for the next annual CoP meeting. Additionally, activities on common themes are organized by the working group throughout the year.
- ✓ **Community of Practice & the Annual Meeting:** Only fourteen of the eighty-five interviewees characterized a CoP as communicating, meeting, and strategizing as a group of projects, be it projects within one country or across two or three countries. Another twenty-three defined the CoP as the annual “CoP#” meeting, or a community of practice during that particular meeting. Fifteen interviewees considered the annual meeting “interesting,” “nice for getting to know people,” and useful for building trust. Stated one, “The CoP meetings have progressed and improved; they are more horizontal, not so hierarchical. I haven’t seen this before. It’s what sets McKnight apart from other donors.” Others (among them an international researcher but sentiments echoed by several principal investigators) voiced the opinion that “Great ideas come about in these annual meetings, but then nothing is ever done about it.” Also heard: “We set up these working groups, but there is little or no communication between the annual meetings.”
Nonetheless, when looking at the network map produced for CoP9, multiple connections are obvious, the depth and rollout effect of which are as yet unknown, revealed in the interviews, and/or named by the RT. (The RT has both a bird’s eye view as well as an in-depth understanding of the types of collaboration, however big or small, occurring among the grantees.) The RT maintains that the CoP annual meetings are an important space to establish ongoing relationships, trust, and potential points of collaboration among grantees. An intangible “feeling” forms during these meetings that’s hard to observe or monitor but is part of building a community of practice.
- ✓ **Policy Influence:** According to fifty-three respondents, policy influence is one way to help contribute toward sustainability, whether it be within grantee institutions, especially larger ones, or to create an enabling environment in the broader context. Examples of policy influence are few, but the focus on writing, publication, and dissemination sets the stage for potential influence, especially when thinking

about the use of publications. Grantees would like to explore this more.

Question 3: What are the key factors for success, the barriers grantees experience, and the opportunity costs of the CCRP and CoP approach?

Table 2 (Annex A) summarizes the grantees' experience with the CCRP and CoP based on the key benefits they experience. Grantees repeatedly said that success lies in RT and RMS involvement. Flagged as No. 1 are the "humanness," dedication, and real interest that the RT and RMS as well as "friends" (i.e. international researchers and experts contributing to projects) put into projects through communications, feedback, structure, and guidance. To quote one grantee, "[Both the RT and RMS] have a supportive attitude; they make an effort to seek out where they can best provide support and how to best accompany the process through constructive criticism and recommendations."

Fourteen individuals mentioned the level of effort they feel they put into their McKnight-funded initiatives compared to other projects. All of them said something to the following effect: "This is very little money for the amount of effort and dedication we place on this project. With other donors we have more money, and either the same amount of effort or even less." Ten of the fourteen didn't take issue with this and even thought it was good practice: "It shows how much we can actually achieve with limited resources," said one. These same ten similarly mentioned that the training/capacity building and one-on-one relationships with the RT and RMS, as well as the CoP (both the annual events and getting together among projects), motivated them to put in extra effort. The remaining four respondents thought that the RT had heavy demands for very little money, and that the RT should "lower their expectations somewhat in terms of the effort we can dedicate to the project."

The balance between research and development was another success factor, contributing to capacity building, bringing different profiles together, and even influencing how organizations think about research and/or development. The combination of rigorous biological and social research that's meaningful and useful to farmers and their communities was a real eye-opener for many. The learning around research and development was reciprocal; many NGOs experts in community development stated that they felt they had something to offer McKnight and the Regional Team, and that the respective parties listened, thereby contributing to a positive relationship.

Conclusions: Implications for CCRP Programming

The CCRP initiative in the Andes has made its mark in terms of providing a unique and effective approach to developing small-scale farmers. From linking robust research to development initiatives, to providing tailored and continuous support to its grantees, the CCRP and the key individuals who are the face of the CCRP in the Andes (the RT and RMS) showcase evidence-driven development by organizations and individuals learning and working together, and by supporting leadership qualities among many different types of grantees.

The Approach: McKnight and the CCRP is seen across the board as a unique donor because of its "package" of input/support and the quality of that support (trusting relationships, real concern and thus follow-up and feedback for the projects, opportunities for knowledge exchange) as well as for its niche (rigor in research, social and biological research, farmer perspective). The CCRP's leadership and communication skills in particular have helped grantees further their research and reach of their results because they interact with a broad range of stakeholders. Likewise with organized evidence, although the respondents, particularly the NGOs, felt comfortable with a research focus to varying degrees. The CCRP's tailored investment in this capacity is unique for donors: **Training is followed up with individual**

and team support, which, in the international development context, is something with which most large international development organizations struggle. There is an attempt (sometimes successful, sometimes not) to address challenges together. It is evident that the CCRP follows an adaptive, diverse approach instead of sticking to a one-size-fits-all of support strategies. After much conversation, many field visits, and ongoing needs assessment, general strategies of capacity building and technical and networking support are tailored for each individual grantee

While this important capacity building happens at both the individual and team levels, it doesn't, in all cases, trickle up to the institutional level, not for fault of the CCRP approach but because of particular contexts and actors at play. The building of capacity, including a shift in institutional focus (at universities, for example), supports long-lasting changes in the grantee institutions and beyond. In some cases, the CCRP's work has strengthened, reaffirmed and/or slightly adjusted the institutions' visions and missions and the way they work. A donor intervention doesn't normally do this ("Here's the money, prove that you made a difference, give us a report."). Novel is the donor who takes the time to understand the context and work with the needs of the particular institution to really take on quality research, principles of farmer-led agroecological research, etc., and who works carefully on a relationship of camaraderie where mutual/horizontal learning will influence. However, while this relationship and support was at times successful with the project teams themselves, other strategies may be needed to influence decision-makers in the upper echelons of the institution in order for change to occur at an institutional level so that the initiatives can be sustained.

Research for Development: In terms of research, all typologies of grantees have benefited from a more robust and rigorous research process and focus, even those under the "researcher" banner. For IARCs, the CCRP contributed to establishing "the farmer/social link to the research" and to seeing the usefulness of their research on the ground with farmers, particularly how to involve them and their perspectives. IARCs appreciated that McKnight is working to change the research focus from being exclusively on publishing to orienting toward action; in other words, the usefulness of research for farmers. NARCs similarly appreciated this more holistic approach to research (for development), and want to deepen research with participatory approaches while at the same time improving their writing skills and writing for publication for a multitude of audiences.

Students benefited from the CCRP in three areas: 1) technical support and quality control to thesis research (guidance in research focus, methodology, data management, and data analysis); 2) focus on social, participatory, farmer-oriented, and applied research; and 3) skills enhancement on writing and dissemination. The CCRP provided training plus one-on-one consultations, which were highly valued and resulted in stronger research skills and higher and more meaningful research. For many students this support involved a complete brain switch from what they have been taught (or not) at university in terms of their ability to interact with farmers while acquiring robust data.

Some NGOs expressed frustration that McKnight was pushing them to be more research-focused. They seemed unable to see what research contributes to farmers' capacity building and empowerment or to NGOs influence on policy. However, they conceded that, even though the research component had been challenging, it ultimately proved useful in terms of informing and complementing their development work. In the words of one, "The pressure helps us to stay on track but remain innovative at the same time." Identified another, "Being more systematic and rigorous in data collection and analysis, I know things shouldn't be just anecdotal now."

For some NGOs, the space (and pressure) for writing is valued in that it allows them to systematize their experiences and lessons for other audiences (farmers, peers). Yet there seems to be lack of clarity among NGOs as to the purpose of writing articles. Some perceive that there is little emphasis on and thought toward the use of these articles. It's apparently perceived as writing for writing's sake with no or little connection to how it loops back to influence good development outcomes.

Collaboration & Community of Practice. As the findings note, the definitions of a community of practice

are diverse. Some defined it as the annual meeting and only that. Three individuals defined it as all of the collaborative and networking moments that happen between grantees and among grantees and the RT/RMS, regardless of whether there's CCRP funding or not. A precise definition of what a CoP is would be helpful in terms of giving guidance and allowing for the emergence of clear roles and responsibilities. Are there some broad parameters around what a CoP aims to do? Is a CoP networking? Is it every communication and collaboration that exists? Or is a CoP made up of like-minded individuals whose different perspectives, expertise, and knowledge contribute to interdependent, complementary, and concerted efforts to improve programming that ultimately improves development and jointly engages in policy influence? The discussions at CoP9 seemed to creep toward these goals without making them or a common goal/vision explicit.

Putting parameters around what a CoP is could also help push the area of **policy influence**, something most grantees agreed they would like to work on/see more of, especially in terms of their research results and publication. Policy influence could be a neat, overarching goal of a CoP, separated out by specific activities around specific interest themes for certain groups.

Monitoring & Evaluation. While the topic of M&E wasn't explicit in the interview questions, it emerged in responses and was a significant theme in informal discussions at the CoP9. Monitoring here is defined as a continuous process of data collection and analysis on the development results. It can include change pathways of key actors a project aims to influence/contribute to, plus evaluation as a periodic assessment of whether, overall, the team/institution did what they said they were going to do and the difference that made on downstream development objectives (i.e. changes in state/environment). Grappling with the issue of research for development, many organizations, particularly the NGOs, named the need for "more concrete monitoring tools to measure outcomes ... to understand how people's behavior is changing" and "more systematic monitoring methods of development results/the development piece, so that we can understand the tangible [the research] and the intangible [the effects of intervening in a community]." The latter allows change to be assessed not at the end of an intervention but along the way, providing useful input for management.

Theory of Change. It appears that the Theory of Change exercise needs to be revisited to refresh understanding on its use and to connect it with M&E. It can be used to advance systems thinking/context analysis both to understand and mitigate barriers (i.e. institutions that clearly are not going to institutionalize CCRP philosophy and approach), and also to visualize potential CoP opportunities. Grantees need to take a closer look at the (dis)enabling environment, determine risks and assumptions, and plan mitigation strategies for these risks as part of the Theory of Change design. The enabling environment goes beyond the institution. The broader sociopolitical context needs to be analyzed for new partners, opportunities, and needs for policy influence as well as for funding.

The CCRP should continue to do what it does well: capacity building support, communication, attention to detail, and strong research and development, and having these four qualities intersect.

Areas of improvement include:

- Clarifying the purpose and audience/users of publications, and including policy makers as one audience (to strengthen the policy influence goals of the CCRP/CoP);
- Making more explicit what a CoP is and how grantees can work together on different aspects of research and development;
- Incorporating more of a focus on developmental evaluation (ongoing monitoring plus reflection/sense-making) to track, analyze, and understand changes in development actors so they are able to answer the conclusion's "Is our research making a difference?";
- Including systematic "self-reflection" monitoring/tracking to better understand how participating in a CoP meeting/exchange visit/capacity building workshop/joint publication is contributing to better development.

Annex A: Benefits Derived from Being a CCRP Grantee

Benefits	P = Positive, N = Negative, U = Neutral, N/A = Not Applicable					
	Development personnel in NGOs N = 21	Students N = 19	Researchers in NARS N = 14	Researchers in IARCs N = 12	Field personnel N = 13	Community leaders N = 6
Building research capacity (training plus one-on-one consultations, research methods, new perspectives on research and development, participatory research)	P = 18 N = 3	P = 19	P = 14	U = 6 P = 6 (specifically the participatory/ social element)	P = 8 U = 3 N/A = 2	P = 2 N/A = 4 [Check font. Remove boldface and italic.]
Implementing relevant research (ability to adapt to changing circumstance)	U = 18 N = 3	P = 10 U = 9	P = 11 U = 3	P = 10 U = 2	P = 10 U / N/A = 3	N/A = 6
Capacity to interact with farmers (focus on local knowledge and needs)	U = 18 N = 3	P = 16 U = 3	P = 8 U = 3 N = 3	P = 7 U = 3 N = 2	P = 10 U / N/A = 3	P = 6
Self-confidence and leadership qualities (ability to communicate research more clearly with various and different stakeholders)	P = 10 N/A = 11	P = 15 U = 4	P = 5 N/A = 9	P = 6 N/A = 6	P = 10 N/A = 3	P = 5 N/A = 1
Writing and publishing	P = 17 U = 4	P = 14 N = 4	P = 10 U = 4	P = 7 U = 5	P = 2 N/A = 11	N/A = 6
Access to genetic material	P = 3 N/A = 18	P = 4 N/A = 15	P = 5 N/A = 9	P = 3 N/A = 9	P = 2 N/A = 11	N/A = 6

Access to detailed feedback, literature, review (from RT & RMS)	P = 16 N = 4 U = 1	P = 19	P = 14	P = 10 U = 2	P = 4 N/A = 9	P = 1 N/A = 5
Access to methodologies, know-how, tricks of the trade (from other projects)	P = 16 U = 5	P = 6 N/A = 13	P = 6 N/A = 8	P = 5 N/A = 7	P = 2 N/A = 11	N/A = 6
Access to detailed feedback, literature, review (from others)	P = 5 N/A = 16	P = 8 N/A = 11	P = 3 N/A = 11	P = 2 N/A = 10	N/A = 12	N/A = 12
ToC/M&E plans	P = 4 N = 10 U = 5 N/A = 2	P = 1 N/A = 18	P = 3 N = 4 U = 4 N/A = 3	N = 4 U = 3 N/A = 5	N/A = 6	N/A = 6
Scaling, including policy influence	P = 8 N = 6 N/A = 7	P = 5 N = 2 N/A = 12	P = 6 N = 6 N/A = 2	P = 6 N = 4 N/A = 2	N/A = 13	P = 3 N/A = 3

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kaia Ambrose holds an MA in Community-Based Natural Resource Management. She has been building capacities in participatory, use-oriented planning, monitoring and evaluation approaches and methodologies for over 15 years, initially based in South America, and then around the globe. Kaia simultaneously leads the development of an M&E core at CARE Canada, with a focus on DFATD programming; she is part of the founding Board of Governors for the thriving Outcome Mapping Learning Community, and she supports a multitude of agencies in their monitoring and evaluation efforts, including the design and implementation of monitoring systems, and evaluations. Kaia lives in Ottawa, Canada and is fluent in English and Spanish.

ABOUT THE McKNIGHT FOUNDATION

The McKnight Foundation, a Minnesota-based family foundation, seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations. Through grantmaking, collaboration, and encouragement of strategic policy reform, we use our resources to attend, unite, and empower those we serve. Program interests include regional economic and community development, Minnesota's arts and artists, early literacy, youth development, Midwest climate and energy, Mississippi River water quality, neuroscience, international crop research, and community-building in Southeast Asia. Our primary geographic focus is the state of Minnesota, with significant support also directed to strategies throughout the U.S. and in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America.

Founded in 1953 and endowed by William and Maude McKnight, the Minnesota-based Foundation had assets of approximately \$2 billion and granted about \$86 million in 2013. In 2013, McKnight invested \$6 million, or about 7% of total grantmaking, in efforts to explore solutions for sustainable, local food systems through the Collaborative Crop Research Program.