



COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

Outline of Prudent Measures Taken in the Year

COL/BD/27-7

I. Background

At the June 2009 Board Meeting, COL was requested to prepare and distribute a paper outlining evidence of prudence undertaken in the year.

II. COL's Aims for Prudent Management

COL is being managed with a constant view to making economies in a time of economic constraint and aims to:

- Focus on a clear mission with initiatives of demonstrable value to its shareholders;
- Think long-term so that decisions are taken with a clear understanding of stakeholder priorities;
- Be financially prudent by maintaining/building appropriate reserves and by securing funding to attain its targets with an emphasis on value-for-money.

III. Prudent Activities Undertaken

Within COL's operations some of the activities being undertaken to achieve these aims include:

1. Programme & Stakeholder Engagement
 - a. More results oriented with fewer initiatives and activities
 - i. Improved monitoring and reporting of results and expenditures through updated log-frames.
 - ii. Identified and agreed upon use of key performance indicators.
 - iii. Monitoring and evaluation fully integrated and longitudinal studies underway.
 - iv. Staff travel tracked and capped as a percentage of overall programme costs.
 - v. Promotion of good team work with regular updates through team meetings.
 - vi. Honorary Chairs and Advisors appointed to profile COL's work in the region at nominal costs.
 - vii. Regular reviews to discuss strategies to obtain more value-for-money.
 - b. Focal Point Network maintained in keeping Countries and COL apprised of activities on the ground while assisting in member government funding.
 - i. Support provided to COL visitors in the field through this network along with a presence in each Commonwealth country at no cost.

2. Governance
 - a. Keep the Board apprised of all developments
 - i. Filling of vacant seats pursued.
 - ii. Meet at regular intervals making use of Committees.
 - iii. Meet face-to-face used as needed; otherwise teleconference mode utilised.

3. Organisation-wide
 - a. Instigate Process Improvements
 - i. Consultants Fee Structure for Programme Related Initiatives revised in relation to duration of contract, scope of work and experience and skills required.
 - ii. Three-year plan forecasting implemented.
 - iii. Continuous efforts at cost savings and productivity improvement.
 - b. Leadership
 - i. Staff retreat conducted in April 2010 for Vision 2021 to inform future direction.
 - ii. Consistently apply policies and procedures in executing COL affairs while demonstrating prudent decision making.
 - iii. Response to External Evaluation informing planning.
 - iv. Risk management ongoing.

4. Financial
 - a. Redouble efforts to secure financial support and timely payment of contributions from member governments
 - i. Cash reserves maintained.
 - ii. Governments invoiced early in the year and ongoing follow-up through various stakeholder engagement activities.
 - iii. Maximise investment income where possible.
 - b. Pursue additional contributions in order to extend the impact of COL's work.
 - i. Forecast for 2009-2010 attained; 2010-11 looking positive.
 - ii. Work in progress regarding VUSSC funding beyond June 2010.
 - iii. Engage with new partners and potential funders.
 - c. Fiscal accountability and effective use of resources are paramount – a minimum of 80% of COL's funding will be directed to the programme and not more than 20% to organisational management and governance.
 - i. Ongoing measurement and reporting to approved budget.
 - ii. Funds used prudently by paying special attention to procurement and leveraging resources through joint sponsorship and co-hosting of events.
 - iii. Consistently adhere to policies and procedures for good internal control.
 - iv. Minimise exposures to foreign exchange risks.

5. Human Resources

- a. COL will continue to operate with a small core staff with staff employed for fixed and non-fixed terms depending on the nature of their jobs and services required.
 - i. Core staff reduced by 2 positions in June 2009; maintain current complement.
 - ii. Fixed terms continue to be used in appointments.
 - iii. Teleconferencing used to conduct interviews for international positions.
- b. Providing learning opportunities is vital to allow staff to develop their competencies. As competencies increase, the quality of work should increase.
 - i. Training budgets maintained at 2% of human resource costs in 2009-2010.
 - ii. Group training provided by staff to staff - this mode is encouraged.
- c. The Performance Management (PM) System has been enhanced to place a greater emphasis on results. The ability to do more with less will be more critical if resources are impacted.
 - i. PM work plans updated to give higher weightage to results.
 - ii. Core competencies revised placing greater emphasis on prudence, innovation and creativity and professional judgment for staff.
- d. COL provides staff with compensation comparable to that earned in similar positions in agreed benchmarks to maintain a dedicated, motivated staff complement.
 - i. Compensation review recently completed enabling COL to reward staff fairly and maintain a motivated work force.

6. Knowledge Management and Information Technology

- a. COL uses free collaborative services offered by other organisations and subscribes to cost-effective external “cloud” services in order to reduce the number of systems it must run in-house.
 - i. Virtualisation of servers to optimize the use of available IT infrastructure.
 - ii. More integration of knowledge management systems through collaboration portals so that individuals can harness information and participate in team activities from wherever they are.
 - iii. Ongoing improvements in online communication, document sharing and databases to improve access to information.