A Consultancy Report Commission by the Norman Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture at Texas A & M University on behalf of the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Small Scale Irrigation and submitted to the USAID Bureau for Resilience and Food Security

Levon T. Esters, Ph.D.
Professor
Purdue University
Department of Agricultural Sciences Education and Communication
Lilly Hall of Life Sciences - Rm. 3-226
915 W. State St.
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2053
E-mail: lesters@purdue.edu

Victoria A. Parker
Graduate Student
Purdue University
Department of Agricultural Sciences Education and Communication
Lilly Hall of Life Sciences - Rm. 4-401
915 W. State St.
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2053
E-mail: parke371@purdue.edu

November 9, 2020

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Executive Summary

Despite MSIs having the characteristics and faculty with the expertise to contribute to addressing global grand challenges tied to agriculture and food security; there still has not been much progress made at USAID in increasing collaboration between Feed the Future (FTF) Innovation Labs (ILs) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). The ILs are multi-year collaborative agricultural research programs led by 13 U.S. universities that partner with over 50 U.S. colleges and universities and developing country research and higher educational institutions in 30 countries. Currently, there are 21 ILs all of which work to research and develop effective technologies and innovations to address the most urgent global challenges in agriculture and food security. This report is the result of a short-term consultancy project focused on how to increase collaboration between ILs and MSIs As part of our consultancy agreement, we were asked to carry out four major tasks as part of the Scope of Work: 1) conduct an anonymous survey in advance of the work session to identify current knowledge, practices and concerns by the ILs, 2) develop an agenda for work session in collaboration with the USAID and IL Point of Contacts (POCs), 3) facilitate a 90 minute virtual session, and 4) provide a written report which summarizes the session discussion, conclusions, and recommended next steps. This report summarizes results from the work session we organized, but most importantly, provides recommendations that should lead to the USAID enacting steps such that collaboration with MSIs is implemented by ILs and institutionalized within the IL program. Data collection methods were primarily quantitative in nature, however, a qualitative component in the form of a few open-ended questions and phone interviews was also utilized. The findings from our report indicate that MSIs of all types have a number of strengths that would enhance IL projects and more should be done on the part of USAID to ensure that collaborations with these institutions are taken seriously and pursued equitably.

Introduction

On August 19, 2020 a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) representative reached out to us inquiring if we would be interested in a short-term consultancy project focused on how to increase collaboration with Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) by the USAID funded, U.S. university-led Feed the Future (FTF) Innovation Labs (ILs). In previous years, the Innovation Labs held an annual meeting in September in Washington, D.C. but due to the coronavirus pandemic, this year's meeting was held virtually. As part of the virtual meeting, USAID held a 90-minute working session on increasing MSI engagement. As part of our consultancy role, we were to develop an agenda and facilitate a 90-minute virtual working session with the ILs. The slides used during the virtual session are included in Appendix A.

Feed the Future Innovation Labs

The ILs are multi-year collaborative agricultural research programs led by 13 U.S. universities that partner with over 50 U.S. colleges and universities and developing country research and higher educational institutions in 30 countries. Currently, there are 21 ILs all of which work to research and develop effective technologies and innovations to address the most urgent global challenges in agriculture and food security.

As part of our consultancy agreement, we were asked to carry out four major tasks as part of the Scope of Work 1) conduct an anonymous survey in advance of the work session to identify current knowledge, practices and concerns by the ILs, 2) develop an agenda for the session in collaboration with the USAID and Innovation Lab Point of Contacts (POCs), 3) facilitate a 90 minute virtual session, and 4) provide a written report which summarizes the session discussion, conclusions, and recommended next steps. The remainder of this report will provide cover the following areas: 1) Historical Context of USAID and MSI Engagement, 2) Problem Statement, 3) Methodology (data collection, participants, etc.), 4) Findings, 5) Conclusions, 6) Recommendations, 7) Summary, and 8) Appendices.

Historical Context of USAID and MSI Engagement

USAID's interest in working with MSIs started as early as 2010. In particular, efforts to broaden and deepen the efforts to both broaden and deepen the involvement of MSIs in USAID agricultural programming were renewed and under the guidance of the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD) an MSI Working Group was formed (USAID, 2011). Members of the group included representatives from MSIs, USAID, and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU). The purpose of the working group was to grow a stronger partnership between USAID and the MSIs by identifying recommendations to increase the participation of MSIs in USAID initiatives (USAID). In September 2010, as a result of Working Group planning, BIFAD support, and APLU implementation, a workshop was organized in Washington, D.C. The workshop was attended by representatives of the nation's MSIs to develop a strategy and to identify recommendations for increasing their engagement in USAID programs (USAID). Sponsored by BIFAD, the meeting brought together participants from a number of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), staff members from USAID and the APLU.

The workshop allowed education leaders and government officials to share perspectives on the current status and direction of the Title XII Higher Education Collaboration and to highlight the contributions that MSIs can make to international agricultural development efforts.

In recognition of the past and potential contributions to international development by MSIs, the BIFAD voted during the workshop to recommend the creation of a USAID/MSI Task Force with an overall charge to improve and maintain the USAID and BIFAD's relationship with the MSI community, and more importantly, to expand the involvement of MSIs in the work of USAID, as a valuable resource (USAID, 2011). This recommendation was the most important to emerge from the MSI exercise because of its potential to enhance the relationship between the MSIs and USAID, to monitor outcomes of the relationship, and to hold the agency accountable for results (USAID).

Problem Statement

Minority Serving Institutions have participated in virtually all types of USAID international agricultural programming and continue to bring to international development work the same passion and vision that propels them in their work with indigenous and underrepresented communities in the U.S. (USAID, 2011). Currently, there are over 700 MSIs in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Even though a majority of MSIs are not designated as land grant universities (LGUs), many have faculty who engage in scientific areas that could assist in addressing global food, agriculture, and rural community challenges. Minority Serving Institutions also represent a rich segment of the wider range of all U.S. colleges and universities that have valued characteristics which make their campuses particularly suitable for engagement in international work (USAID). Some of these characteristics include:

- Extensive experience working with populations who reflect ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity.
- Cultural sensitivity to the conditions in developing countries that can be used to foster strong collaborations with individuals and institutions overseas.
- Well-established networks of international relationships with various types of individuals (faculty, staff, students).
- Considerable agricultural-related technical expertise among their faculty and students.
- A comparative advantage in applied research, particularly in the areas of natural resource management and Extension.
- Familiarity with the constraints experienced by low-income, dispersed, and rural communities in the U.S., and have the experience and capacity to work effectively with similar types of populations in developing countries.
- Enthusiasm about creating new partnerships across the different MSIs and between MSIs and other types of universities.
- They are abundantly familiar with the challenges and needs of small farmers and producers in a wide range of climatic and geographical conditions.

Despite MSIs having the characteristics described above and faculty with the expertise to contribute to addressing global grand challenges tied to agriculture and food security; there still has not been much progress made at USAID in increasing collaboration between ILs and MSIs. Thus, the purpose of this report was to summarize results from the work session we organized,

but most importantly, provides recommendations that should lead to the USAID enacting steps such that collaboration with MSIs is implemented by ILs and institutionalized within the IL program.

Methodology

Data collection methods were primarily quantitative in nature, however, a qualitative component in the form of a few open-ended questions and phone interviews was also utilized.

Data Collection Methods

Pre-Survey Instrument

A pre-survey was administered via Qualtrics to 18 USAID Innovation Lab directors, one USAID IL Program Manager, and one USAID Program Administrator. The pre-survey included eleven questions pertaining to demographics, knowledge of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), collaboration with MSIs, and interests for attending the work-session (See Appendix B). The demographic variables included gender and IL role. The knowledge section of the pre-survey instrument directed respondents to answer a question regarding their knowledge levels of four MSIs 1. Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs), 2. Alaskan Native- or Hawaiian-Serving Institutions (AIANSIs), 3. Historically Black Colleges, and Universities (HBCUs), and 4. Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). This question was a Likert-scale question with four different choices to choose from. The collaboration section consisted of three types of questions: 1. Likert-scale, 2. multi-selection, and 3. open-ended relating to the survey participant's collaboration experiences with MSIs.

Pre-Work Session Phone Interviews

A few weeks prior to the work session, phone interviews were conducted with a selected group (N=6) of the 21 IL Directors. The purpose of these interviews was to gain a better understanding of their level of engagement and collaboration with MSIs. With the assistance of USAID representatives, we were provided a list of 11 IL Directors and chose individuals such that there was diversity among IL award stages and type (i.e., Consortium or Leader with Associates; LWA). Each interview consisted of a variation of eleven questions (See Appendix C). Interviews ranged from 20 to 45 minutes in length.

Post-Survey Instruments

Innovation Lab Personnel Post-Survey

A post-survey was developed and included 11 questions pertaining to 1. the work-session's usefulness, 2. knowledge gained from attending the work-session, 3. work-session critiques, and, 4. collaboration with MSIs (See Appendix D). The survey was administered via Qualtrics. Of the 11 questions, two were Likert-scale and nine were open-ended.

USAID Personnel Post-Survey

A post-survey was developed and included 10 questions pertaining to 1. the work-session's usefulness, 2. knowledge of MSIs, 3. collaboration with MSIs, and 4. work-session critiques (See Appendix E). The survey was administered via Qualtrics. Of the 10 questions, one was Likert-scale and nine were open-ended.

Participants

Pre-Survey Participants

Pre-survey participants consisted of 18 USAID IL directors, a program manager, and a program administrator.

Phone Interview Participants

Phone interview participants consisted of six USAID IL directors.

Post-Survey Participants

Innovation Lab Personnel

The IL personnel post-survey was sent to 59 individuals who attended the work session, of which only 11 responded.

USAID Personnel

The USAID personnel post-survey was sent to 40 individuals who attended the work session, of which only 11 responded.

Findings

Pre-Survey Results

The following tables were selected because they best showcased participants' knowledge on and collaboration with MSIs. Additional pre-survey tables can be found in Appendix F. A total of 18 participants responded to the Work-Session Pre-Survey. Of

those who indicated their gender, four were female and four were male. Regarding the IL role, 11 were Directors, five were Deputy Directors, and two were classified as other. Participants were asked to indicate their level of knowledge of MSIs (Table 1). Participants indicated being 'very knowledgeable about' HBCUs (22.2%). A majority of participants indicated not being knowledgeable about AANAPSIs (61%) and AIANSIs (67%). Participants were asked to indicate their level of collaboration with MSIs (Table 2). Participants indicated they have collaborated with HBCUs (11.8%). However, most participants had no interaction at all with AANAPISIs (76.5%), AIANSIs (88.2%), and HSIs (52.9%). For participants whose IL has never collaborated with a MSI, they were asked why this was the case (Tables 3a & 3b). Participants indicated their ILs lack of collaboration with MSIs was the result of not knowing how to collaborate with MSIs (16.7%) and lack of RFA application competitiveness from MSIs (25.0%) (Table 3a).

Table 1. Please indicate your knowledge of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), n=18				
	Not Knowledgeable About	Somewhat Knowledgeable About	Knowledgeable About	Very Knowledgeable About
Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs)	Percentage of Respondents			
Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs)	61.1%	11.1%	22.2%	5.6%
Alaskan Native- or Hawaiian-Serving Institutions (AIANSIs)	66.7%	11.1%	22.2%	0.0%
Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)	5.6%	38.9%	33.3%	22.2%
Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs)	38.9%	16.7%	38.9%	5.6%

Table 2. Please indicate your level of collaboration with Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), n=17						
	No Interaction at All	Networking	Cooperation	Coordination	Coalition	Collaboration
Relationship Characteristics	(i.e., No communication)	(i.e., Aware of MSI and/or Little communication)	(i.e., Provide information to each other and/or Formal communication)	(i.e., Share information and resources and/or Frequent communication)	(i.e., Share ideas and resources and/or Frequent and prioritized communication)	(i.e., Frequent communication is characterized by mutual trust and/or Consensus is reached on all decisions)
Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs)	Percentage of Respondents					
AANAPISIs	76.5%	11.8%	5.9%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%
AIANSIs	88.2%	5.9%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
HBCUs	5.9%	47.1%	11.8%	5.9%	17.6%	11.8%
HSIs	52.9%	11.8%	5.9%	5.9%	17.6%	5.9%

Table 3a. If your Lab has never collaborated with a MSI, why? (check all that apply), n=12	
Responses	**Percentage of Respondents**
a. Don't know which colleges and universities are MSIs.	8.3%
b. MSIs don't have the needed research capacity.	8.3%
c. MSIs don't have the needed training capacity.	0.0%
d. MSIs don't have the needed administrative capacity.	0.0%
e. MSIs don't have the needed international development experience/capacity.	0.0%
f. Easier to collaborate with other Title XII institutions.	8.3%
g. Not a priority.	0.0%
h. Would like to collaborate but don't know how.	16.7%
i. MSIs receive our RFAs but their applications are not competitive.	25.0%
j. Other (please describe)	33.3%

Table 3b. Responses to j. Other (please describe), n=4
1. We do collaborate with MSIs.
2. MSIs do not often apply.
3. Have collaborated but not as much as we would like to.
4. I am fairly new to position, the lab may have worked with an MSI, I am just not aware of it.

Selected Quotes from the Phone Interviews

Below are selected quotes from the phone interviews conducted with a selected group (*N*=6) of the 21 IL Directors. Overall, the interviewees indicated opportunities and challenges related to collaboration with MSIs.

- "I know we've asked them [MSIs] to submit proposals, but I don't believe we received any proposals from them."
- "I think that the challenge is to just know who in [the] universities you should be sending it [the RFA] to.
- "And the more visible those [MSs] universities are and well known they are, the more likely they're the ones that are going to be asked to be partners."
- "I think some of the MSIs will be very good potential collaborative partners in this [international agriculture] whole area. Some of them [MSIs] are extremely good with capacity building, with extension, some with research."
- "In most cases, some of the proposals were not funded for things like, a lack of a certain component."
- "We just haven't had that opportunity within this management entity type of framework that we have. I think one of the things that may help in the discussion [work session] next week is to see if USAID is willing to allow strategic partnerships for management entity innovation labs so, it's not just that everything has to be by RFA."
- "I think it will be good to hear a clear message from USAID. That they will specifically want to encourage this. I think that it's been something there all along. You're encouraged to do it, but you're not mandated to do it. And I think the way the labs work is we work according to the specific mandates we have. If you think about USDA, you think about some of these other federal funding, they have some funds that are specifically for MSIs and maybe that's something USAID needs to do."

- "Some of them [MSIs] are very strong on research, some on teaching, some on extension and the work we do in these countries expands that whole area."
- "…if we could get Congress to appropriate some funds, specifically for MSIs, that will be a game changer. It could be that for some labs to be led by MSIs."
- "But if there were specific new mandate from Congress with some funding that would change everything like yesterday."
- "I wish there were a way that somehow the research interests of minority serving institutions, were somehow aggregated and distilled somewhere by someone."
- "And I know it's a lot of work to keep things up to date and so on, but in a sense if we want, and I believe we want, more engagement between different types of universities and different types of the different places across the country, then there needs to be a smoother path to that engagement, that interaction. And right now it's really not there."
- "…there's still a lot more work to be done to figure out how to make these bridges and make them viable so that people want to walk across, because right now, they're wandering up and down the cliff looking for a bridge and it's not there."

Post-Survey Results

Innovation Lab Personnel Post-Survey

The following tables were selected because they best showcased participants' perception of the work-session's usefulness, their desire to collaborate with MSIs, and the utility of their new-found knowledge, as a result of attending the work-session. Additional post-survey tables can be found in Appendix G. A total of 11 participants responded to the Work-Session post-survey. Participants were asked to indicate the level of usefulness of their work-session attendance (Table 4). A majority of participants found attending the work-session to be 'very useful' (45.4%) or 'extremely useful' (36.4%). Participants were asked to indicate their level of interest in establishing partnerships between their IL and a MSI (Table 5). A majority of participants expressed they were very (70%) or 'extremely interested' (30%) in creating such partnerships. Participants were asked to indicate "In what ways could collaborations between your Innovation Lab and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) enhance your Innovation Lab?" (Table 6). Participants provided a number of different responses with the most common being "expanding networks and expertise." Participants were asked to indicate "What is the primary benefit you hope to gain by increased collaboration with Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs)?" (Table 7). Participants commonly expressed the main benefit being the enhancement of IL research. Participants were asked to indicate "How will you use the knowledge you learned from the USAID-MSIs work-session at your Innovation Lab?" (Table 8). Participants indicated they will utilize their knowledge "to better engage MSIs" and "increase their [MSIs] participation." Participants were asked to indicate "Do you think additional session(s) on IL – MSI engagement would be beneficial? If so, what should be the focus? Should USAID be included?" (Table 9).

Participants expressed the utility in additional work-sessions which consist of the attendance of ILs and MSIs.

Table 4. How useful did you find the USAID-MSIs work-session? n=11				
Not Useful	Slightly Useful	Moderately Useful	Very Useful	Extremely Useful
1	2	3	4	5
Percentage of Respondents				
0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	45.45%	36.36%

Table 5. How interested are you in establishing partnerships between your Innovation Lab and a MSI? n=10				
Not Interested	Slightly Interested	Moderately Interested	Very Interested	Extremely Interested
1	2	3	4	5
Percentage of Respondents				
0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	70.00%	30.00%

Table 6. Responses to "In what ways could collaborations between your Innovation Lab and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) enhance your Innovation Lab?", n=10

1. Improved research and partner networks.
2. Expand out network and reach. Bring in new and different technologies and technical expertise.
3. Collaborating with an MSI would enhance the diversity and the expertise of our research and capacity building teams.
4. Bring in new ideas and expertise to the lab, including new contacts in our target countries/regions. I don't view these as collaborations between the IL and MSIs since the MSI will become a part of the IL and thus broaden the overall scope of who we are and what we are doing.
5. Better access to undergraduates interested in international internships.
6. Capacity building for the MSI and identify collaborations that have not been realized yet.
7. Filling research and outreach gaps. Build on ongoing networks.
8. Technical expertise that our University doesn't have e.g. poultry and small ruminants. Also, I can see a role in curriculum development for in-country universities as their reality may align better than our University system does.
9. Brining in new areas of expertise and experience, and perspectives, for a broader systems view of development and agriculture. Also working with graduate students, either as collaborators or in terms of developing a pipeline.
10. Provide complementary expertise;

Table 7. Responses to "What is the primary benefit you hope to gain by increased collaboration with Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs)?", n=7

1. Enhance the impact of the Innovation Lab research.
2. Engaging scientific expertise from MSIs to enhance the strength of our research teams, and providing opportunities for minority students at MSIs to learn by participating in our research for development activities.
3. Same as in #3 above. We've already seen that by broadening our research in the social sciences has provide new insights into all of the research. This has especially benefited the students.
4. Improve diversity, equity and inclusion, capacity building for MSIs, new collaborators to work with
5. Building intellectual capacity and opportunities both nationally and globally.
6. Do a better job together that meets target country needs.
7. Graduate students and access to specialty areas of expertise.

Table 8. Responses to "How will you use the knowledge you learned from the USAID-MSIs work-session at your Innovation Lab?", n=9

1. We utilize the learnings from the discussion to better engage MSI's.
2. We will reach out to the MSI to try and build new partnerships.
3. Our innovation lab will be more proactive in sending our RFA to MSIs and encouraging MSIs to apply.
4. We are already discussing how the start a dialog with some of the MSIs. We may be able to provide some funding for short-term projects in specific areas.
5. Further targeting of MSIs for proposals.
6. Help us build capacity among our national partners.
7. Yes - we will make a bigger effort in reaching out when publishing a RFA. I also liked the idea of having a MSI representative as part of our External Advisory Board similar to what the Legume Systems Innovation Lab has. That will take more time to do, but we will consider it.
8. Already developing strategy to engage with MSIs in our state; sharing the information with higher level 'decision makers' in our university to get support/buy in for planned outreach and engagement
9. Increase their participation.

Table 9. Responses to "Do you think additional session(s) on IL – MSI engagement would be beneficial? If so, what should be the focus? Should USAID be included?", n=8
1. Yes. It should focus on identifying MSI programs that can be engaged and integrated into the IL research portfolio.
2. Yes. Talk about research management and the challenges faced by the MSI. Being clear on the advantages and constraints MSI face within the international research space. Yes, USAID should be involved.
3. ILs are motivated to engage MSIs in their programs. Has USAID considered hosting workshops for MSIs on how to develop competitive applications for USAID funding (through IL RFAs or through USAID calls for proposals)? USDA has had success using this approach.
4. See comments in #8. We could consider some sort of interactive session(s) at one of our DC meetings, or even a separate event since these could be virtual.
5. No, the timing of this session was appropriate for a first step.
6. See above. Yes, USAID could host a first meet and greet with MSI and ILs. That would give all ILs the same opportunity.
7. More sessions would definitely beneficial! We only just began the discussion. Far more can be explored. We need both separate and joint sessions from/with USAID.
8. Yes. A national meeting of MSIs and innovation labs.

USAID Personnel

The following tables were selected because they best showcased participants' knowledge gained on working with MSIs, enjoyment from attending the work-session, and work-session feedback. Additional post-survey tables can be found in Appendix H. A total of 11 participants responded to the Work-Session post-survey. Participants were asked to indicate "What did you learn about working with MSIs that you did not know previously?" (Table 10). Participants reiterated their new-found knowledge on MSIs presence in higher education. Participants were asked to indicate "What were your favorite aspects of the USAID-MSIs work-session, and why? If you'd like, feel free to describe a moment or idea you found particularly illuminating." (Table 11). Participants expressed their enjoyment in conversing with their break-out groups about MSI collaboration possibilities. Participants were asked to "Please provide any additional feedback or suggestions for improvement below." (Table 12). Participants also provided feedback and suggestions on key areas such as focus and format of the work-session.

Table 10. Responses to "What did you learn about working with MSIs that you did not know previously?", n=10
1. The slide about the dramatic differences in endowments among the different schools was new to me. I also really appreciated the presentation of data from the survey of Innovation Labs about their relationships with MSIs.
2. How many of them [MSIs] there are.
3. Some of the adjustments that may need to be made to make it easier to work with MSIs.
4. Was interesting to hear to perspectives of the MSIs regarding barriers to increased engagement with USAID. I also didn't recognize how many different types of MSIs there are!
5. How many there are and methods to reach the right points of contact, some challenges MSIs face in engaging with USAID and competing for our awards.
6. That there were PBIs. I only knew about HBCUs.
7. There are a large number and range of MSIs, which points to a large opportunity for Feed the Future to engage them.
8. I had no idea there were 775 institutions. I also learned that there is a great lack of participation from MSIs in the research area that can likely be resolved with better communication, training, partnership structuring, and process simplification.
9. There were a significant number more MSIs than I was aware of.
10. The institutional architecture - I had no idea that there were so many and also how they were structured - always useful to review barriers to change - colleagues offered very concrete suggestions to engage MSIs going forward.

Table 11. Responses to "What were your favorite aspects of the USAID-MSIs work-session, and why? If you'd like, feel free to describe a moment or idea you found particularly illuminating.", n=9

1. I really got a lot out of the presentations by Levon Esters and Victoria Parker, as well as personal anecdotes by several participants about how MSIs had influenced their professional transformation. I also really enjoyed the brainstorming sessions with my USAID colleagues about strategies to reduce barriers.
2. The need for me to think more broadly about collaborating.
3. Hearing more about the work that has been done in the past and potential partners
4. The evidence base that informed the discussion, expert facilitation, and opportunity to brainstorm solutions
5. The survey results.
6. The brainstorming, small group sessions.
7. I liked the idea of creating a conference or at least two working groups: one for collaboration amongst MSIs and one for collaboration between USAID, MSIs and other stakeholders.
8. I liked the discussions and the ability to have the non-judgmental space to discuss challenges.
9. Listening to colleagues share thoughts and build on the ideas of others. It was a very thoughtful group. The facilitation was also good.

Table 12. Responses to "Please provide any additional feedback or suggestions for improvement below.", n=6

1. I agree with one of the survey respondents that the tone of some of the questions is very focused on the barriers and the gaps of MSIs. I believe we should be focusing on how to leverage the assets. In my experience with MSIs collaborating on USAID-funded programs, relationships with Missions and new projects were catalyzed by both the international faculty at MSIs and the networks that the MSIs had. There are also lot of unique capacities at the MSIs that are highly relevant to emerging areas of inquiry in developing country contexts, such as research and knowledge about working with resource-constrained youth. I have observed in my own interactions with MSIs that they don't have dedicated offices of contracts and grants that can support faculty in proposal/application development, and many of the faculty have a lot of domestic obligations that don't allow them to fully engage on the international front, but we should be thinking about creative ways to access the talent pool that they have. MSI involvement would help us do development better.
2. Great session, very informative.
3. More general group discussion as opposed to break out groups. Levon is so knowledgeable, I wanted to hear more from him about how to effectively work with MSIs.
4. I hope there is some sort of report out that synthesizes key takeaways and recommendations for next steps.
5. Well done. Things were managed efficiently, and we came to some quality next steps.
6. I think we committed to a Call To Action? We should identify a goal, 2-3 next steps, and assign people and resources to advance. I think everyone was very genuine about their commitment.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on the findings of the data collected:

1. Overall, work session participants had very little knowledge about the various types of MSIs.
2. Overall, work session participants indicated low levels of networking and collaboration with MSIs.
3. Work session participants expressed interest in collaborating with MSIs, however, they were unaware of how to approach engaging in collaborative relationships.
4. Overall, participants found the work session very useful and informative.
5. Works session participants indicated collaborating with MSIs would enhance the impact and expand the reach of their IL projects.
6. Works session participants indicated future Innovation Lab & USAID Annual Meetings should include work sessions focusing on increasing collaboration with MSIs.
7. Work session participants indicated USAID should explore strategies that would help ensure MSI collaboration.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are informed by our findings and conversations we had with USAID representatives who invited us to conduct this consultancy project. Two things are worth noting. First, the recommendations are not rank-ordered. Second, though the list of recommendations may seem extensive, our consultancy team believes that in order for MSI collaboration to be institutionalized into the culture of USAID, a majority of items on this list should be implemented in a timely manner and mechanisms put in place to ensure they are carried out successfully, and monitored. Finally, it should be highlighted that some of our recommendations mirror those that were included in the BIFAD (2011) *Board for International Food and Agricultural Development, Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) Working Group Report.* To our knowledge, none of the recommendations were implemented and our consultancy team still recognizes them as being as viable today as was the case nearly 10 years ago.

1. A permanent subcommittee that focuses on MSI collaboration should be created as part of the BIFAD.
2. The USAID/MSI Task Force that was recommended and approved by BIFAD in 2011 should established and fully supported.
3. USAID in partnership with BIFAD should commission a white paper or study that addresses the topic of MSI collaboration. This white paper could be authored by the authors of this report, works as a Senior Reach associate with the Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions (CMSI) which is the world's premier research and policy center focused on MSIs.
4. USAID and BIFAD should work together gain the support of congressional representatives to appropriate funds for MSI-led ILs and related initiatives.
5. The majority of funding given to MSIs are in the form of sub-awards. As such, USAID should develop policies or guidelines that will allow MSIs to lead ILs. One approach could be to create a funding program that supports a 'MSI-only' Consortium' IL program.
6. USAID should create an ongoing program/session as part of the Innovation Lab & USAID Annual Meeting that focuses on MSI collaboration.
7. USAID in partnership with BIFAD, APLU and U.S.D.A.-NIFA should organize a convening on MSI collaboration.
8. USAID should host workshops for MSIs that focus on how to develop competitive applications for USAID funding as well as a workshop for IL personnel that focus on evaluating proposals in a fair and equitable manner.
9. USAID should maintain an up-to-date listing of MSI institutions and their capabilities, their faculty resources as well as their academic, research, and extension or outreach programs. Such a list could help address what many of the IL Directors shared was the lack of information on MSIs.
10. Though collaboration exists between many ILs and MSIs, often the ILs look to MSI that are 'resource abundant' (i.e., institutions that are larger and more heavily resourced). To address this issue, USAID should institute policies and guidelines that encourage collaboration with MSIs that are less 'resource-abundant'. For example, there are many HBCUs who may not have access to the same amount of resources as their larger MSI

peers, yet HBCUs have the faculty expertise and international partners to carry out various activities that would make a valuable contribution to the ILs.

11. Even though a majority of MSIs are not designated as land grant universities (LGUs), many have faculty who engage in scientific areas (e.g., engineering, technology, management, entrepreneurship, community development, and health sciences) who could assist in addressing global food, agriculture, and rural community challenges. As such, USAID should develop policies or guidelines that call for ILs to seek out collaboration with MSIs who have faculty with the expertise that could contribute to IL projects.

Summary

Minority Serving Institutions have a strong track record and documented success in working in a host international engagement activities tied to global food, agriculture, and rural community issues. Minority Serving Institutions also have been successful in providing a multifaceted return on investment for students, communities, and the STEM workforce (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019). However, despite the benefits of working with MSIs and their ability to engage in collaborative projects; they are often overlooked, or even worse, reduced to having a minor role in the collaborations. The findings from our report indicate that MSIs of all types have a number of strengths that would enhance IL projects and more should be done on the part of USAID to ensure that collaborations with these institutions are taken seriously and pursued equitably.

References

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2019). *Minority serving institutions: America's underutilized resource for strengthening the STEM workforce.* Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/25257.

United States Agency for International Development. (2011). *Board for international food and agricultural development minority serving institutions (MSI) working group report.* https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1867/BIFAD_MSI_Final_Report_2011.pdf