

Tiny Beam Fund
Burning Questions Fellowship
 for Academic Researchers Interested in Helping to Address
 Negative Impacts of Global Industrial Food Animal Production

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Spring/Summer 2019 Fellowships
Application Opens: March 15, 2019. Closes: May 31, 2019

I. FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM OVERVIEW

WHAT IS THE “BURNING QUESTIONS INITIATIVE” THAT HOUSES THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM?

- The fellowship program sits within Tiny Beam Fund’s initiative called *Burning Questions Initiative (BQI): Coming to grips with pressing practical questions on tackling negative impacts of global industrial food animal production.*
- BQI first came into existence in 2016/7 as a small pilot initiative. It was fiscally sponsored by an organization of environmental funders. In January 2019 the non-profit private foundation Tiny Beam Fund was set up, and BQI became its flagship initiative.
- BQI was launched to address a particular need – the need for a deeper understanding of the problem of industrial food animal production especially in low- and middle-income countries.
 - There is an assortment of persons who are grappling with highly complex issues related to various negative impacts of global industrial food animal production which is a model that is gaining momentum in low- and middle-income countries.
 - BQI uses the term “*front-line persons*” as shorthand to refer to these persons. Broadly speaking, they include: Staff and volunteers in organizations working collaboratively with different stakeholders to address the problem (e.g. work with multiple partners to raise animal welfare standards), activists mounting public campaigns to oppose certain practice or principle in this system of production, leaders in communities experiencing unfavorable impacts first-hand who are contending with their predicaments (e.g. environmental pollution). The term also includes major philanthropic grant-makers to all these groups of persons.

- A nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the problem is essential to these front-line persons' search for and implementation of meaningful, long-lasting solutions. They also have pressing, practical questions that they would like to see answered.
- But acquiring a deep, clear, firm understanding of the problem of global industrial food animal production and useful answers is very challenging because of a multitude of reasons (e.g. the scarcity of reliable data that are available to front-line persons).
- BQI seeks the assistance of the academic research sector to address these persons' need for deeper understanding.
 - Academic researchers – with their unique set of skills, knowledge, perspectives, and resources – are well-positioned to study and shed light on front-line persons' "burning questions".
 - Academic researchers are also showing increasing interest in studying negative aspects of global industrial animal production for their own research purposes.
- BQI builds bridges to connect front-line persons with academic researchers.
 - The reality is that the NGO [non governmental organizations] sector and academe each has its own orbit and "language". Crossing borders to ask or answer questions is not a simple easy step.
 - Academics have their jargons and special way of presenting their research to their peers which is often unintelligible to non-academics.
 - It is difficult for front-line persons to hunt down relevant academic journal articles (including studies that are not directly concerned with industrial food animal production but which contain facts and figures of practical value to them).
 - A grant-maker which has affinities with the academic research sector as well as front-line persons is ideally suited to play the role of matchmaker and bridge-builder.
 - BQI was therefore launched with the dual aim to:
 1. Encourage academic researchers to pursue topics that not only shed light on front-line persons' "burning questions" but also fit well with their own research interests.
 2. Help front-line persons identify and prioritize their burning questions. And make academic research relevant to these burning questions available to them in readily comprehensible and usable form.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM? WHY SET UP THIS PROGRAM?

For academic researchers:

- This program aims to support academic researchers who are interested in **both** of the following:
 - Help front-line persons tackling negative impacts of global industrial food animal production (especially in low- and middle-income countries) deepen their understanding of the many complex issues involved.
 - Examine these impacts and issues for the researchers' own scholarly purposes.
- There are academic researchers interested in the negative impacts of global industrial food animal production – from PhD candidates to senior scholars – who would like their research to be of practical use and value to the real world. They want to pick issues that are important to actual persons, to increase the chance that their research is used by those most likely to benefit from it. But they face challenges:
 - It is not always obvious what these real world needs are. And it is not easy to find out.
 - Disseminating and making accessible their research findings to those who need them may pose another conundrum. (The traditional approach is that researchers decide what to

- study and let their peers know about the findings; it is up to others to take care of how these findings are spread and applied outside academe.)
 - Furthermore, academic researchers are often not incentivized or rewarded for work intended primarily to serve societal needs.
- The fellowship awards provide academic researchers with opportunities to prepare short plain language documents that shed light on front-line persons' "burning questions". The program also communicates these documents to front-line persons on behalf of the researchers.
- Fellows can also use the award period to undertake work that advances their own research but related (or unrelated) to the deliverables required by the program.

For front-line persons:

- This program is also aimed at benefiting front-line persons in the following way:
 - It offers them academic research findings, perspectives, and suggestions relevant to questions they themselves have asked. These succinct documents in plain language ("Guidance Memos") are made available to them within months of their completion.
- Front-line persons benefit from reading "Guidance Memos" because:
 - It takes a number of years for research projects focused specifically on the burning questions to be put in place and the results to be reported. But front-line persons urgently need to acquire as much understanding of the issues they are actively grappling with as possible. They need "something" from academic researchers that they can readily use in the meantime. And the Guidance Memos can serve as stopgaps.
 - It is not reasonable to ask front-line persons to devote an inordinate amount of time to locate and digest dense academic journal articles even if these papers contain information and insights that are useful to them.

WHERE DOES THE CURRENT LIST OF "BURNING QUESTIONS" COME FROM?"

- [Here's the current list of "burning questions"](#).
- The Burning Questions Initiative (BQI) approached veteran individuals who are knowledgeable about various negative impacts of industrial food animal production.
- They were invited to submit one to three pressing practical questions they considered to be of most significance and salience to their work, questions that perplex them and that they don't think have been answered satisfactorily.
- 24 persons responded to the invitation.
- Roles of contributors: 10 practitioners; 3 researchers /practitioners; 5 academic researchers; 2 non-academic researchers; 4 funders.
- Areas of expertise /interest (one person can have multiple areas): 13 environmental /food and agriculture; 15 animal welfare; 1 public health; 3 farm workers, operators, owners; 2 agribusiness; 4 local communities.
- A total of 65 questions were collected. Almost all questions include a "context statement" to explain why the question is asked, why pursuing it is important, etc.
- After collecting the "burning questions", all question-contributors were invited to prioritize the questions using an exercise modified from a well-established process used for prioritizing healthcare treatment uncertainties.
- BQI then shortened the questions for clarity and grouped them into broad categories.
- For the fellowship program, BQI has chosen the eight questions ranked as top priorities plus 40 other questions that focus especially on low- and middle-income countries.
- Important note:
 - The "burning questions" are not (and are not meant to be) academic research questions.

- The current list of “burning questions” is an inaugural list. New and improved lists will be made available every two years when a new cycle of questions collection and prioritization takes place, with new question-contributors from areas inadequately represented in the past.

II. FELLOWSHIP AWARDS KEY INFORMATION

- The fellowship awards are meant primarily for individuals affiliated with academic institutions. Independent scholars and researchers from large prominent research organizations can also apply.
- All applicants must hold PhD/doctoral degrees or be enrolled in these degree programs.
- Early career as well as senior academics are equally welcomed to apply.
- There are no restrictions as to applicants’ residence / citizenship / location.
- The award period is four months.
- A total of three awards are available, one in each category:
 - Category 1: One US\$15,000 award for a single individual enrolled in a PhD/doctoral university program.
 - Category 2: One US\$20,000 award for a single individual with a PhD/doctoral degree.
 - Category 3: One US\$25,000 award for a team of two to four researchers that has at least one person with a PhD/doctoral degree.
- This system of categories means that applications from persons without PhD are not compared with applications from persons with PhD or from teams.
- Payment schedule: Half at the start, and half at the end of the award period when Tiny Beam Fund is satisfied that all the requirements mentioned in the letter of agreement have been fulfilled.
- Amounts of the fellowship awards are issued in US dollars.
- A fellow’s tasks and obligations:
 1. Main deliverable at the end of the award period is one Guidance Memo written in plain language using 4,000 – 6,000 words.
 - Guidance Memos are written specifically to assist front-line persons* who are the target audience and end users. They are written from the perspectives of academics.
 - Topics addressed in Guidance Memos must be directly relevant to the “burning questions”.
 - Guidance Memos’ primary objective: To provide sound information and clear explanations that deepen front-line persons’ understanding of the issues addressed; to highlight key considerations that they may not be aware of; to offer practical advice that helps their decision-making and work.

For a detailed description of what is a Guidance Memo, see Section VI.
 2. An annotated bibliography of 3 – 15 items relevant to the content in the Guidance Memo.
 3. A short personal narrative (1,000 – 2,000 words) on the experience working on the Guidance Memo (e.g. challenges, insights gained).
- All applicants must provide concrete evidence of how the main thrust and substance of their Guidance Memo has been and/or will be considered by their academic peers. (For example, an applicant can explain how she will incorporate data and information presented in the Guidance Memo into the dissertation she is writing.)
- Tiny Beam Fund retains copyright of the Guidance Memos written by fellows. But fellows are strongly encouraged to use materials in their Guidance Memos in academic and non-academic publications and settings. (They do not have to seek permission from Tiny Beam Fund as long as they provide proper credit and acknowledgment of support given by Tiny Beam Fund.)

- Fellows must be available for a mid-point check-in via phone, Skype, etc.
- Fellows can engage in work that advances their own research during the award period if they wish. Such work can be related or unrelated to the deliverables required of fellows. And it need not be mentioned in applications.
- This is a new program. These fellowships are offered for the first time in March 2019. If there is sufficient interest, the plan is to have two rounds (i.e. six total fellowships) each year.

*: The term “front-line persons” is used as shorthand to refer to an assortment of persons who are trying to grapple with various complex negative impacts of global industrial food animal production, especially in low- and middle-income countries. Broadly speaking, they include: Staff and volunteers in organizations working collaboratively with different stakeholders to address aspects of the problem (e.g. conducting projects with multiple partners to raise animal welfare standards), activists mounting public campaigns to raise awareness of or oppose certain practice or principle in this system of production, leaders in communities experiencing unfavorable impacts first-hand who are contending with their predicaments (e.g. environmental pollution). The term also includes major philanthropic grant-makers to all these groups of persons.

III. APPLICATION PROCESS

TO ALL POTENTIAL APPLICANTS:

PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING VERY IMPORTANT POINTS

Applicants should make sure they are comfortable with preparing Guidance Memos before applying.

We are happy to answer potential applicants’ questions about Guidance Memos. Please feel free to ask!

These fellowships are best for academic researchers who:

- Want to address real-world problems and be of help to front-line persons
- Already have a good understanding of the topics they want to work on during the award period
- Like the experience of preparing documents that require academic research skills as well as excellent acumen regarding practical decision-making
- Are good at explaining and communicating concisely and decisively with non-academics
- Are interested in work that is somewhat unconventional for academics and off their beaten tracks
- Are committed to build on the work they do during the award period for years to come because that work will be a good fit for their own long-term research plans and/or professional goals

WHAT DOES AN APPLICATION CONSIST OF?

An application consists of three separate parts:

Part 1. Applicant’s general information

- 1.1 Name and contact information of applicant.
- 1.2 Name and full address of applicant’s institution.
- 1.3 Short CV of applicant.

Part 2. Topics to be addressed in Guidance Memo

- 2.1 What are the topics to be addressed in your Guidance Memo?
- 2.2 Which “burning question(s)” is/are relevant to your chosen topics?
- 2.3 Why do you think the explanations and advice in your Guidance Memo will deepen front-line persons’ understanding of the topics addressed and help them with their endeavors?

- 2.4 How will you go about your work on the Guidance Memo?
2.5 What concrete evidence can you provide to show that the main thrust and substance of your Guidance Memo has been and/or will be considered by your academic peers?

Part 3. Personal statement

- 3.1 Why do you want to help front-line persons? Why is the work connected with the fellowship important to you personally?
3.2 How will the work done during this fellowship fit into your academic research interests and professional goals in the coming 1 – 3 years? How do you plan to keep developing this work for your own research purposes?
3.3 Is there anything else that is very important to your application that you want us to know?
3.4 Complete this sentence in 50 words or less: “In a nutshell, I am/we are applying for this fellowship mainly because . . .”

Part 1: Applicant’s general information

1.1 Name and contact information of applicant

- Include at least one e-mail address.
- For a team, provide name and contact information for every person on the team.

1.2 Name and full address of applicant’s institution

- Write “independent scholar” if not currently affiliated with an institution.
- For a team, provide name and full address of each person’s institution.

1.3 Short CV of applicant

- Indicate clearly in the CV whether you currently hold a PhD/doctoral degree, or are enrolled in a PhD/doctoral program (this includes candidates expecting their degrees to be awarded in the coming months).
- For a team, provide a short CV for every person on the team.
- Use no more than 500 words for each CV.

Part 2: Topic(s) to be addressed in Guidance Memo

Note: Please read *VI. Explanation of “Guidance Memo”* before preparing this part of your application.

2.1 What are the topics to be addressed in your Guidance Memo?

To answer this question:

- Describe each topic separately.
- If a topic has multiple parts, list each part separately.
- Be as clear, succinct, and specific as possible.
- Use no more than 150 words.

Tips:

- Example of a topic that is well defined and described:
“The restructuring of the Chinese dairy industry in the past decade that has forced out small dairy farmers in favor of large vertically coordinated producers.”
- The topics can be very broad or very narrow. Many or few topics can be addressed in a Guidance Memo. A single topic is perfectly acceptable.
- The number and range of topics in and of itself **does not** affect the success of an application.

2.2 Which “burning question(s)” is/are relevant to your chosen topics?

To answer this question:

- Refer to [the current list of burning questions](#).
- Indicate clearly the unique ID number of each “burning question” to which the topics are relevant. ID numbers always begin with a # mark (e.g. #PT)
- Even if a topic is relevant to only a small part of one “burning question”, state the ID number of that question.
- If your topics are relevant to one part of a “burning question” and one part of another “burning question”, state the ID numbers of all questions concerned.

Tips:

- “Burning questions” that are high priorities score higher in the review process.
- The fact that the topics addressed in a Guidance Memo are only relevant to a small part of one “burning question” in and of itself **does not** affect the success of an application. In other words, **do not worry** that your topics deal with only part of a “burning question”.

2.3 Why do you think the explanations and advice in your Guidance Memo will deepen front-line persons’ understanding of the topics addressed and help them with their endeavors?

To answer this question:

- Organize your reasons and answer in bullets and short paragraphs in a way that indicates how you plan to organize your Guidance Memo.
- Use no more than 750 words.

Tips:

- Example of a well-written reason:
 - “One of the three topics my Guidance Memo will address is the characteristics of large-scale aquaculture in Asia-Pacific countries.
 - I will focus on explaining those features that make tackling the rapid development of this sector particularly challenging for front-line persons (e.g. the Asia-Pacific aquaculture production sector’s incredibly and uniquely wide stakeholder network).
 - I will also point to areas where front-line persons can provide their practical support that may not be obvious to them. For example: Front-line persons can initiate projects in partnerships with governments to train personnel needed for proper implementation of policies and regulations aimed at mitigating negative impacts of large-scale aquaculture. This is of practical significance because the main reason for delays in these policies and regulations taking effect is the governments’ lack of financial resources and skilled personnel to implement them.”
- Note: Your answer to this question is critically important to reviewers. It may determine your application’s success or failure.

2.4 How will you go about the work on the Guidance Memo?

To answer this question:

- Explain the steps, process, methods, etc. that will be involved in planning and writing the Guidance Memo.
- Use no more than 500 words.

Tips:

- Give a clear and specific description. For example, if you plan to do a literature search, elaborate a little on it. Do not just say “literature search”.
- We want to see that you have put some thought into considering the kind of work you will do and your direction of travel.

2.5 What concrete evidence can you provide to show that the main thrust and substance of your Guidance Memo has been and/or will be considered by your academic peers?

To answer this question:

- Present the evidence in a list, briefly explaining each item. The list can contain a single item.
- Use no more than 250 words.

Tips:

- This evidence is requested for the sake of “quality control”, to make sure that even though Guidance Memos are written for non-academics, their gists have been and/or will be seen by the eyes of the authors’ academic peers.
- Examples of the kinds of evidence and explanations that are satisfactory:
 - The Guidance Memo will be based on the applicant’s peer-reviewed papers.
 - The applicant will incorporate important data and information presented in the Guidance Memo into the dissertation the person is writing.
 - Recommendations in the Guidance Memo will be developed for an academic conference paper in the coming year.
- An example of an item on this list of evidence:
 - “All the topics addressed in my Guidance Memo will be discussed at length in a manuscript I am preparing which I intend to submit to peer-reviewed journals. The working title of this manuscript is”

Part 3: Personal statement

3.1 Why do you want to help front-line persons? Why is the work connected with the fellowship important to you personally? [250 words or less]

3.2 How will the work done during this fellowship fit into your academic research interests and professional goals in the coming 1 – 3 years? How do you plan to keep developing this work for your own research purposes? [250 words or less]

3.3 Is there anything else that is very important to your application that you want us to know? [250 words or less]

3.4 Complete this sentence in 50 words or less:
 “In a nutshell, I am/we are applying for this fellowship mainly because”

WHERE AND WHEN TO SEND APPLICATIONS?

- All inquiries and applications should be sent by email to: Min@tinybeamfund.org
- Application opens: March 15, 2019 [0800 U.S. Eastern Daylight Time]
- Application closes: May 31, 2019 [1800 U.S. Eastern Daylight Time]

WHEN WILL APPLICANTS KNOW WHETHER THEY GET THE FELLOWSHIP?

- All applications will be acknowledged within 72 hours of their receipt by the fellowship program.
- Applicants may hear from the fellowship program requesting further information.
- All applicants will know no later than June 14, 2019 whether they are offered the fellowship.

IV. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS. PAYMENT SCHEDULE

- All applications received are divided into three pools according to the categories of the awards.
- Reviewers rank applications in each pool according to four criteria:

1. How relevant are the applicant's chosen topics to the "burning questions"? Are they relevant to high-priority "burning questions"?
 2. How useful will the Guidance Memo be to front-line persons? [This is the key consideration.]
 3. How well does this fellowship fit into the applicant's own research plan and interests?
 4. What is the overall quality of the application (e.g. is it thoughtfully prepared; does it indicate the applicant's commitment and ability to write an excellent Guidance Memo)?
- Selection is based solely on the above criteria as well as comparisons with applications in the same pool. It is **not** based on an applicant's field, discipline, career stage, location, etc.
 - The fellowship program **may** contact applicants to request further information.
 - Directors of Tiny Beam Fund will make the final selection. They will be guided by advisors with considerable experience in philanthropic grant-making and familiarity with academia as well as advocacy and social sector work.
 - Payment schedule: Half of the fellowship award will be paid at the start, and half at the end of the award period when Tiny Beam Fund is satisfied that all the requirements mentioned in the letter of agreement have been fulfilled.

V. OBLIGATIONS AND DELIVERABLES EXPECTED FROM THOSE WHO RECEIVE FELLOWSHIP AWARDS

- Each recipient of a fellowship award must sign a letter of agreement with Tiny Beam Fund.
- Fellows must be available for a mid-point check-in in the form of a conversation over the phone, Skype, etc. that lasts no more than an hour.
- Each recipient of a fellowship award should deliver the following **three documents** at the end of the grant award period stated in the letter of agreement:
 1. **A Guidance Memo** which meets the scope and requirements described in Section VI.
 - The Guidance Memo should satisfy the seven features and characteristics described in Section VI, part B.
 - It should be a stand-alone document in PDF format. Its layout need not reach professional design standard, but should not be too informal. It must be easy to read and navigate, and free of fancy, distracting designs.
 - Tiny Beam Fund will hold copyright to the Guidance Memos, but it will not make the full texts available to the general public (e.g. only the abstracts are posted on a website accessible to all visitors.) Fellows are strongly encouraged to use materials in their Guidance Memos in academic and non-academic publications and settings.
 2. **An annotated bibliography** of high quality publications that are relevant to the content in the Guidance Memo.
 - Different kinds of publications can be included (e.g. peer-reviewed journal articles, books, government reports, pieces by investigative journalists).
 - Information and commentaries in the publications listed must be sound and reasonable.
 - A publication listed in the bibliography need not focus in its entirety on the topics addressed in the Guidance Memo. If one chapter of a book with five chapters contains relevant, valuable data and perspectives, then the book should be included.
 - In addition to standard bibliographic information, each item should contain an annotation (no more than 150 words) which highlights key parts of the publication that are of most relevance, their strengths and limitations, unique features, etc.
 - There should be a minimum of three and a maximum of fifteen items in the bibliography.

- The fellow can use any citation style commonly used by academics.
 - The bibliography should be a stand-alone document in PDF format.
 - Tiny Beam Fund will hold copyright to the bibliographies, but it will not make them available to the general public (e.g. not post them on a website accessible to all visitors.)
3. **A short personal narrative** on the fellow’s experience working on the Guidance Memo.
- The narrative should have a minimum of 1,000 and a maximum of 2,000 words.
 - It should cover the following topics:
 - Lessons learned (e.g. What are the insights you have gained and takeaways you would like to share?)
 - Challenges (e.g. Did you face challenges? Why or why not?)
 - Surprises (e.g. Did anything surprise you, big or small, pleasant or otherwise?)
 - Expectations (e.g. Does the work overall and/or are there particular things that far exceed or fall short of your own expectations?)
 - Any other reflections are welcome.
 - The personal narrative should be a stand-alone document in PDF format. It can be presented as an essay or in any other non-academic writing style.
 - The narrative is for Tiny Beam Fund’s internal use only. It will not be read by anyone not directly associated with it.

VI. EXPLANATION OF “GUIDANCE MEMO”

A. General characteristics of documents commonly referred to as guidance memos, staff guides, or practice briefs

1. The main purpose of these documents is to provide explanations and clarifications. They are not laundry lists of facts and figures. They are not lists of key points for debate teams.
 - Government departments and agencies often issue documents called decision-makers guides, staff guides, practice briefs. For example: The education department of U.S. state issues a guidance memo on the state’s financial aid for adult learners to assist university administrators in that state.
 - The function of these documents is to explain official rules and regulations that may appear complicated, confusing, or ambiguous to persons who need to base their decisions or actions on them. Authors of these documents spell out practical implications and offer guidance on interpretations and applications.
2. Each memo focuses on a very specific topic and addresses a particular audience. These documents are not directed at the public at large.
 - For example:
 - (i) A guidance memo from the American Bar Association to law schools on using admission tests.
 - (ii) A new head of the housing department requests a veteran staff member to prepare an action memo on reorganizing the department’s internal structure within the next six months.
3. Concise and succinct presentation. These documents are not essays.
 - Bullets and short paragraphs are invariably used. Lengthy, discursive narratives are eschewed.
4. The following documents are good examples of the kind of “Guidance Memos” we have in mind. These examples are chosen for their tone and approach to explaining the topics concerned (not for their lengths or design styles):
 - ["Preparing for Literacy"](#)
 - [“Promoting Bilingual Children’s Communication Development”](#)

- [“Ensuring Climate-Smart Agriculture ‘Leaves No One Behind’”](#)

B. Scope and requirements of the fellowship program’s Guidance Memo

Fellows have flexibility in determining how they want to structure and present their Guidance Memos. All Guidance Memos are written from the perspectives of academic researchers. And they should meet the following requirements /criteria:

1. Relevant to front-line persons’ “burning questions”

- *A Guidance Memo must be directly relevant to at least part of a particular “burning question”.*
- For example, the Guidance Memo of a fellow named Pat B. focuses on the topic of supply chains of pork and poultry products in China, including supply chains for products from medium- and large-scale facilities. This topic is relevant to the following “burning question”:
 What percentages are animals raised for food in China and in India "factory farmed"?
 Which are the companies involved with "factory farming" in the two countries? What do the supply chains for "factory farmed" products look like?

2. 4,000 – 6,000 words in plain language/English

- *A Guidance Memo should have a minimum of 4,000 words and a maximum of 6,000 words, including an abstract of no more than 250 words, but not including charts, graphs, endnotes, etc.*
- For more information on what is “plain language”, consult websites from reputable organizations and governments that support and promote its use.

3. Clarity

- *Clarity and succinctness in every aspect is essential, from how the content of a Guidance Memo is organized to the content itself.*
- Clarity can come from teasing out strands as well as pulling scattered strands together. Synthesis of disorderly information and “joining up dots” to form a clear coherent picture is especially welcome in Guidance Memos.
- Another highly desirable feature in Guidance Memos is explaining precisely the points of disagreement when something is controversial or confusing. Such clarification is much better than merely stating “not enough research is done” or “more research is needed” which is not helpful to front-line persons.

4. Solid information and sound judgment

- *Fellows should try their best to use the most reliable sources and research findings in their Guidance Memos.*
- But information, data, evidence, ideas, and viewpoints presented or used in a Guidance Memo **need not** be definitive, undisputed, or comprehensive. The determining factor for their acceptability is whether it is fair, reasonable, and defensible to use them. Fellows’ own sound judgment is therefore very important.
- See Section C below for further explanation.

5. Explanations that deepen understanding, but are easy for non-academics to grasp

- *The goal of Guidance Memos is to help front-line persons gain a deeper, more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the topics being addressed. Therefore unpacking complex, obscure, opaque issues should play an important role in a Guidance Memo. But it should be done in a way that is easy for non-academics to comprehend.*
- In the course of providing a thorough explanation it may be unavoidable to make reference to concepts, methodologies, contexts, or research works that may not be familiar to non-academics. But that should be kept to a minimum.
- Citations to scholarly and other kinds of publications are important and should be given, but they should not clutter up and interfere with the flow of explanations.

6. Practical advice that is useful to front-line persons

- *Guidance Memos should include practical advice that helps front-line persons with their endeavors (especially with planning, strategizing, decision-making, etc.), with how to come to grips with complex issues.*
- Front-line persons have their own experience, opinions, and approaches. Guidance Memos are intended to complement and supplement these with practical advice that is based on the perspectives and knowledge of academic researchers.
- Advice can be concerned with how to view, approach, analyze, interpret, contextualize something and/or what concrete actions to take.
- All advice should pertain to practical (not theoretical or philosophical) matters.
- Some categories of advice worth considering when fellows prepare their Guidance Memos:
 - Advice which reminds front-line persons that certain seemingly good solutions are probably “not that simple” when they are implemented in real life and there may well be risks, trade-offs, and unintended consequences.
 - Suggestions to frame or communicate an issue in a new light (e.g. suggest how front-line persons can emphasize the history of certain practices which resonate with local communities, or how to take into account the level of training /education of farmers).
 - Advice on how front-line persons can employ certain strong evidence to persuade and influence stakeholders such as corporations or legislators.

7. *Do not dwell on “the usual suspects”*

- *Guidance Memos should pay special attention to information, insights, concerns, and research findings that front-line persons may **not** be aware of.*
- Front-line persons are not clueless about the topics addressed in Guidance Memos. They are not the general public who may need to have the most basic things explained to them. (For example, front-line persons are very familiar with the FAO’s 2006 report “Livestock’s Long Shadow”.)
- But front-line persons often cannot access peer-reviewed literature behind paywalls.
- One of the most valuable features in a Guidance Memos is its ability to highlight things that are not “the usual suspects”, things that are not obvious even to those with some understanding of a topic, things that may be ignored, misconstrued, or counter-intuitive.
 - For example, Pat B’s Guidance Memo on supply chains of pork and poultry products in China can highlight the following points which are not commonly known or discussed, but which provide additional target areas for front-line persons:
 - the pig production sector’s activities relating to contracting with small-scale farmers
 - the continuing popularity of “wet markets” in rural areas
 - a number of farm-gate transactions still happening between small traders and small pork producers which do not involve the modern supply chain

C. Should one be concerned if one cannot find loads of robust data when preparing a Guidance Memo?

- Answer: Not overwhelmingly.
- Academics are accustomed to attaching supreme value and significance to robust data and evidence. This fellowship program also urges the use of the most reliable information.
- Nevertheless, the program also recognizes that a number of issues raised in “burning questions” have not been thoroughly studied.
- In situations when fellows cannot find solid research results, when there are uncertainties and unknowns, fellows should try their best to make judicious estimates, diagnosis, and prognosis. They should seek reasonable, defensible answers rather than skirt around important issues.
- Here’s an analogy:
Imagine you are a physician living and working in a remote village in 1850.
A serious illness that no one in the village or country has ever seen before emerged in the village and started spreading rapidly, causing severe suffering.

Some remedies seem to help a small number of patients. But they are clearly far from adequate. And winter is fast approaching making everything even more difficult. Everyone besieges you to come up with suggestions to relieve sufferings and stem the tide... It would take you and your medical colleagues many months to fully understand and come to grips with this emerging illness, to answer the many unanswered questions. So you just have to give it your best shot and write down the information and advice you consider to be the most useful for the villagers.

