

Lessons Learned From CFREF Rounds 1 & 2

1. Governance and Strategic Alignment

- **Balance lean and good governance:** Ensure oversight without stifling agility.
- **Vision vs. operations:** Maintain a clear scientific direction while managing day-to-day execution.
- **Strategic planning:** Begin with a robust theory of change, clear milestones, and a narrative that aligns short-, medium-, and long-term goals. Be proactive and allow to pivot if needed.
- **Stay focused:** Avoid mission drift by sticking to a well-communicated, shared narrative.

2. Interdisciplinary Collaboration

- **Intentional structure:** Deep interdisciplinary work requires more than goodwill—build processes and structures to support it.
- **Genuine collaboration:** Foster authentic engagement across disciplines, not just surface-level partnerships.
- **Set up winning conditions:** Find champions, create “collision” spaces, training and patience. Don’t forget that interdisciplinary is not for everyone.

3. Alignment with Institutional Processes

- **Leverage university systems:** Align with existing administrative and academic processes to ensure sustainability.
- **Clarify roles:** Use administrative guides to define responsibilities across all stakeholders.
- **Collaborate with university units:** Alignment/Integration with university services and processes enhances efficiency and cohesion.

4. Long-Term Vision and Adaptability

- **Legacy mindset:** Use the flexibility of funding (e.g., CFREF) to pivot strategically if needed to build lasting impact. Sustainability is not the same as legacy.
- **Keep the end goal in sight:** Maintain clarity on long-term objectives and resist distractions.
- **Management change:** Don’t underestimate the impact of leadership or management changes