

# Bringing Research to Impact for Global Health at Tsinghua (BRIGHT)

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MANUAL OF OPERATIONS



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## Manual of Operations

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## **1. Overview**

The Bringing Research to Impact for Global Health at Tsinghua (BRIGHT) program is initiated and funded by Research Fund, Vanke School of Public Health, Tsinghua University (VSPH). The BRIGHT program uses partnerships between Tsinghua University and early career investigators working in the public health sectors in developing countries to develop a research network. This network generates knowledge to address global health priorities in developing countries, strengthens the research and scientific capacity of a new generation of leaders in global health research, builds a technical assistance base for providing China's international collaborations in the health sector with strategic choices and evidence-based programming decisions, and ultimately advances the use of evidence to create development impact.

### **1.1 BRIGHT Program Objectives**

The BRIGHT program mission is to advance the use of the scientific knowledge and evidence-informed interventions of global health to create development impact in developing countries.

#### **Strategic Priorities:**

Goal 1: Build BRIGHT Network initially based on the collaborative partnerships between Tsinghua University and International Master of Public Health (IMPH) alumni.

Goal 2: Initiate a mentored global health research grant for early career investigators among IMPH alumni – BRIGHT Grant – to nurture the professional development of public health researchers from developing countries.

Goal 3: Maintain and expand capacity of the BRIGHT Network to conduct quality research.

Goal 4: Support Tsinghua mentors and BRIGHT Network members collaborating on large research grant application to further explore solutions to critical public health challenges.

Goal 5: Expand collaboration and communication with international global health research community.

Goal 6: Increase the output of high-quality research that benefits China's international collaborations in the health sector.

### **1.2 BRIGHT Network Organization**

The BRIGHT Network operates under the direction of VSPH. Project oversight and operations are provided by the staff of Dean's office of VSPH.

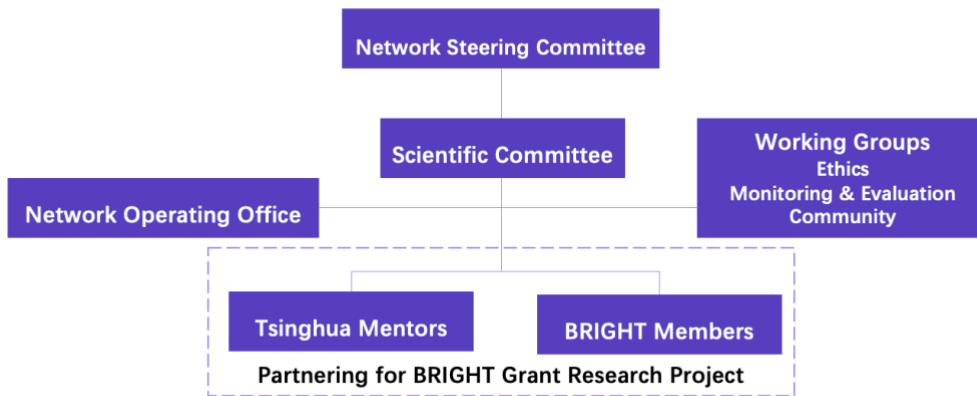


Figure 1 BRIGHT Network Organizational Structure

### 1.2.1 Network Steering Committee

The Network Steering Committee sets the research priorities of the BRIGHT Network and directs its scientific activities. The Network Steering Committee:

- Sets the overall BRIGHT Network research agenda, and periodically reviews the strategic direction.
- Approves policies and procedures of the BRIGHT Network, including the governing structure.
- Establishes key standing BRIGHT Network committees/working groups and approves the structure and composition of committees/working groups.
- Pursues new partnerships and funding opportunities.
- Approves new BRIGHT members.

The Network Steering Committee will delegate the management of certain functions to the Scientific Committee, Operations Office, Ethics Working Group, Monitoring & Evaluation Working Group, and Community Working Group as described below. All committees/working groups/offices are ultimately accountable to the Network Steering Committee.

### 1.2.2 Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee contributes to the development of and guide the scientific agenda of the BRIGHT Network. The Scientific Committee is responsible for:

- Assessing global health research priorities for the BRIGHT Grant, and approving funding opportunity announcements.
- Reviewing the concepts submitted to the BRIGHT Grant, and selecting finalists.
- Assigning a relevant VSPH researcher to work as a mentor for each BRIGHT Grant awardee.
- Assigning relevant staff members of the Network Operations Office and Working Groups to support the implementation of the BRIGHT Grant research projects.
- Reviewing manuscripts and abstracts of the BRIGHT Grant research projects.
- Providing technical assistance to the capacity building activities of the BRIGHT Network.

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- Representing the BRIGHT Network at relevant scientific meetings and conferences, and assisting in dissemination of information regarding the BRIGHT Network research agenda.

### **1.2.3 Network Operations Office**

The Network Operations Office is responsible for logistical and administrative support of all the BRIGHT Network activities. Staff from the Network Operations Office work closely with the Network Steering Committee, Scientific Committee, working groups, Tsinghua mentors and all the BRIGHT members.

The Network Operations Office specific operational responsibilities include:

- Developing and implementing the annual workplan of the BRIGHT Network, and submitting regular progress reports to the Network Steering Committee.
- Organizing and convening the BRIGHT network-wide meetings.
- Reviewing, revising, and retaining the BRIGHT Network Manual of Operations (MOP).
- Recruiting new network members, and maintaining directories for the network-wide communication.
- Developing and maintaining a BRIGHT project website.
- Overseeing the BRIGHT Grant and its receipts.
- Supporting the Scientific Committee on dissemination of project achievements by ensuring that current information and documents are provided in real time.
- Ensuring compliance with all VSPH policies and procedures for all the BRIGHT network-wide activities.

### **1.2.4 Ethics Working Group**

The goals of the Ethics Working Group are to contribute to global health research by raising awareness of and engaging the BRIGHT Network members in dialogue about ethical issues in global health research and to facilitate decision-making around ethical issues during the research process.

The Ethics Working Group's scope of work includes:

- Ensuring ethical input into and review of the BRIGHT Grant proposals by serving as ad hoc resources to the Scientific Committee.
- Supporting all the BRIGHT Grant research projects to successfully obtain review and approval from the responsible IRB.
- Supporting monitoring of the BRIGHT Grant research projects, focusing on that each study site will develop, document and implement meaningful informed consent processes.
- Collaborating with the BRIGHT Network members on addressing the challenging ethical issues, and advising on capacity-building of local ethics review where appropriate.

### **1.2.5 Monitoring & Evaluation Working Group**

The Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Working Group is established as an operational component for overseeing the research studies within the BRIGHT Network. The M&E

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Working Group is responsible for:

- Providing technical expertise to the Scientific Committee when reviewing the BRIGHT Grant proposals with a focus on the M&E part.
- Supporting monitoring of the BRIGHT research projects with an emphasis on protocol and intervention adherence and other key performance indicators, and assisting in improving study sites' overall functioning.
- Establishing the evaluation framework for the BRIGHT Network, reviewing and adjusting performance measures as needed, and reporting evaluation findings to the Scientific Committee for review and action.

### **1.3 BRIGHT Network Members**

Any members of the Tsinghua IMPH alumni community are eligible for joining the BRIGHT Network. At a later stage, the membership application will be open to non-IMPH alumni and institutions as well. The applicant shall complete the BRIGHT Network membership application online at [www.bright.org](http://www.bright.org) and obtain an approval from the Network Steering Committee.

The BRIGHT Network seeks to provide members with opportunities and connections to collaborate across countries to solve public health problems, and advance their careers in the global health research field. The BRIGHT members will:

- Be eligible for applying funding from the BRIGHT Grant to conduct a research project.
- Collaborate with the Tsinghua mentors to develop a research project for large research grants.
- Participate in the BRIGHT network-wide trainings and meetings.
- Have access to the BRIGHT Network resources.
- Comply with the BRIGHT Network policy and procedures.

### **1.4 Internal Communications**

The BRIGHT Network spans different countries and continents, making communication challenging because of languages and time zone differences. It is therefore essential to have a robust and effective internal communication system to ensure the successful management of the BRIGHT project. The BRIGHT members are encouraged to maintain open lines of communication through regular conference calls, in-person meetings, emails, and the BRIGHT project website. The website includes project-specific information and postings about network-wide activities. The Network Operating Office is primarily responsible for creation and dissemination of the BRIGHT Network materials.

#### **1.4.1 BRIGHT Annual Meeting**

The BRIGHT network organizes an annual meeting to bring together IMPH alumni and Tsinghua mentors to discuss study designs and research goals, review data from ongoing BRIGHT research projects, examine cross-cutting issues, and provide an overview of the BRIGHT Network scientific agenda. In addition, the meeting provides opportunities for training to enhance the capacity of IMPH alumni to perform research in accordance with international standards, in particular, to improve quality in data

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management, biostatistics, ethics, field operations, monitoring and evaluation, and community engagement.

#### **1.4.2 Conference Calls**

Conference calls are used extensively to facilitate the BRIGHT Network's research activities. The Operating Office provides a broad range of administrative support for conference calls; preparation and/or distribution of call agendas and pre-meeting materials; sending email meeting reminder notices; and distribution of meeting minutes. In addition, webinar support is provided to allow for interactive slide presentations and other media rich methods for sharing of information and data.

#### **1.4.3 BRIGHT Website**

The BRIGHT website is a standard resource for both BRIGHT members and the general public. Information about the BRIGHT project is available on the BRIGHT website at <https://www.bright.org/>. This website gives access to the BRIGHT membership application, BRIGHT Grant application, network global reach, news, events, and resources.

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## 2. The BRIGHT Grant

### 2.1 Grant Description

The BRIGHT Grant is competitive awards program funded by Research Fund, VSPH that invites the BRIGHT network members to apply for funds to support research and capacity-building activities on topics of importance to solutions to critical global health challenges and conducted in partnership with Tsinghua mentors. The BRIGHT Grant helps to nurture the professional development of early career investigators from developing countries, and ultimately provides the grant recipients with the knowledge, skills, and connections to further their careers as leaders in global health research.

The BRIGHT Grant funding opportunity looks to support locally-led research projects that 1) aid in our understanding of how public health issues affect people's lives in developing countries, and 2) test approaches to help individuals, families, communities, and stakeholders respond to and mitigate the effects of those challenges.

Potential topics that might be studied include but are not limited to the following:

- Health issues
  - ✧ Chronic disease
  - ✧ HIV, tuberculosis, malaria
  - ✧ Maternal and child health
  - ✧ Family planning and reproductive health
  - ✧ Nutrition
  - ✧ Global Health Security (Emerging Infectious Disease, One Health)
  
- Cross-cutting issues
  - ✧ mHealth
  - ✧ Public health system

The BRIGHT Grant invites applications from every BRIGHT Network member who wishes to work with a mentor scientist from VSPH and is eligible for working as a Principal Investigator (PI) or co-PI on the proposed study upon approval from his/her affiliated institution. Every year the BRIGHT Grant funds five research projects, and each project is funded for an 18-month term. The solicitation for new projects is undertaken annually, with due dates in May or June of each year. The Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) is released on the BRIGHT website.

The BRIGHT Grant funds are issued only to institutions or organizations, not to individuals. Individuals who have no institutional affiliation or whose institutions are unwilling or unable to accept and manage a grant for them are not eligible to apply. PIs may submit only one proposal in any one application cycle of the BRIGHT Grant.

The BRIGHT Grant recipients will

- Be provided funding to cover a portion of their time (typically 10-30%) and expenses, including travel and research materials/supplies.
- Participate in a series of activities designed for further career development



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together with assigned Tsinghua mentors, including monthly conference calls to discuss ongoing research projects, new funding sources for career development, and opportunities for wider collaboration as well as additional training activities.

- Be expected to attend the BRIGHT annual meetings and one other professional meeting.
- Complete a manuscript at the end of the project.

Applications will be evaluated by a team assembled by the BRIGHT Network Scientific Committee according to the review criteria below.

1. **Scientific merit and study design:** The reviewers will evaluate (1) whether the background information clearly identifies a gap in evidence that informs the rationale and the study objectives; (2) whether the overall study design, outcome measures, study population, intervention, and analyses are clear, well-reasoned, and appropriate to accomplish the objectives of the project. Adequate citations and references to pertinent literature are essential.
2. **Investigators:** Are the PI, co-PI(s) and other key personnel qualified to achieve the research goals of the project by having the relevant education, experience, training, and/or accomplishments?
3. **Innovation:** Does the project propose novel application, utilization, and/or generation of scientific methodologies or practices; challenge existing paradigms or programmatic practice; or address an innovative hypothesis? Does the research include the development of a new solution or intervention, or does it apply technology in a new way?
4. **Dissemination plan:** Does the plan discuss how the research findings will be disseminated to key stakeholders and utilized to improve scientific capacity, public health policies and programs?
5. **Timeline:** Is the project timeline reasonable? Is there a clear strategy for achieving program goal within the project period?
6. **Budget:** Is the project budget requested reasonable and adequate to support the proposed scope of work? Are all budget justifications appropriate?
7. **For proposed projects involving human subjects:** are there clear plans for safeguarding the welfare of participants, and minimizing potential risks?

## 2.2 The BRIGHT Mentorship

Mentoring in the BRIGHT research projects embraces a collaborative approach to science which ultimately benefits the BRIGHT members, Tsinghua mentors, the BRIGHT Network, and the scientific community. To maximize the opportunities provided by the BRIGHT research projects, it is important that all parties respect the shared nature of the responsibility.

The Tsinghua mentors will provide appropriate experiences, guidance, advice, support, and learning opportunities to help broaden the BRIGHT Grant recipients' experience and knowledge as researchers. The mentor will participate in the following activities to accomplish the goals mentioned above:

- Provide the time and attention appropriate for his/her mentee to achieve the above

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goals, within reasonable limits.

- Attend regularly scheduled meetings with the mentee and the BRIGHT Scientific Committee, working groups and network operating office, if needed.
- Work with the mentee to identify highest priority areas in which the mentee's individual knowledge and skills can be improved and make substantial progress in doing so over the course of the BRIGHT research project, and complete accomplishment evaluation by end of the project.
- Assist the mentee in refining his/her project proposal.
- Assist the mentee in the enable completion of the project within the approved period, to present the findings of his/her project at the BRIGHT annual meeting.
- Support manuscript development.
- Work collaboratively with the mentee to pursue other funding opportunities under the direction of the BRIGHT Scientific Committee.

The BRIGHT Grant recipients will be responsible for the implementation of the research project in collaboration with the mentor, and participate in the following activities to accomplish the goals mentioned above:

- Attend regularly scheduled meetings with the assigned mentor, and the BRIGHT network operating office, if needed.
- Submit quarterly progress report and finance report to the BRIGHT network operating office.
- Develop at least one first author manuscript to be submitted for peer-review.
- Present findings of their projects at a BRIGHT Network annual meeting.
- Attend at least one scientific conference to present project findings.
- Ensure effective communication with the BRIGHT Network operating office and their affiliated institutions in order to meet expected project deadlines.

### **2.3 Publication Guidelines**

Timely communication with the scientific community is an essential function of the BRIGHT network and generally is accomplished by presentations at scientific meetings and the publication of manuscripts in peer-reviewed journals. The BRIGHT Network publication guidelines are designed to be flexible and to facilitate rapid and accurate dissemination of the BRIGHT Grant study results.

The following guidelines should be used if the BRIGHT Grant recipient's study's primary paper was published within two years after completion of the research project.

- PI develops a publication plan and timeline before ending up data collecting, including start date of manuscript preparation, expected date of submission of primary publications and presentations for the Scientific Committee review, and target peer-review journals and major conferences.
- Every effort should be made for primary manuscripts to be submitted to the Scientific Committee for review within eight months following the completion of data collection.
- The Scientific Committee is responsible for reviewing and approving manuscripts and abstracts related to the BRIGHT research studies in general within a maximum of 5 working days for review of manuscripts and 3 working days for

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abstracts. An *ad hoc* reviewer from any working group may be appointed if additional expertise is required.

- The lead author submits the manuscript, abstract, poster or presentation to the Network Operating Office who coordinates the review processes through finalization.
- The possible review outcomes are: 1) Approve for publication; 2) Approve with recommended modifications; 3) Recommend a second review after modifications are made.
- Prior to submission of manuscripts or abstracts for publication to conferences, a final copy is provided by the lead author to the Network Operating Office for tracking purposes.
- If a manuscript or abstract is not accepted, and reviewer feedback indicates a need to reformulate the essential components before it can be resubmitted or submitted to another journal or conference, it must be reviewed again by the Scientific Committee.
- The BRIGHT Grant recipient's Tsinghua mentor should be included as co-author, and any member of the Scientific Committee and working groups who contribute to the successful implementation of the study should be approached to determine whether or not they would like to be included as co-authors.