

# The Forum is Not a Project

## Annex C: Risks & Rewards for Hosting

### Risks & Benefits to Becoming a Host

To begin this one-pager, we must first point out that while there are inherent risks in hosting a Forum, we believe that **they are far outweighed by the benefits they provide to the hosting agency**. A non-exhaustive list of potential benefits: high visibility as a leader in the response, access to additional funding, access to critical information quickly, stronger knowledge of the humanitarian coordination ecosystem, etc. There are many.

That said, it's important to enter into a host-forum relationship with eyes open to potential challenges, so that these challenges are not a surprise and can be met with a swift response! In that vein, here are some illustrative risks that could come with hosting, and the mitigation tactics that could help avoid them.

CATEGORY	POTENTIAL CHALLENGE	CONTINGENCY IDEAS
Relationships with outside stakeholders	Host agency is given greater scrutiny from government authorities due to collective NGO action spearheaded by NGO forum.	Maintain active and clear communication with key government agencies.
	Host agency seen by sister agencies as having undue power in NGO collective action.	Have clear guidance denoting the limits of host agency power (e.g. a typical clause in articles of association would be that the host agency is welcome on the steering committee yet never the chair).
	Donor, not understanding the independent role of the forum, places undue pressure on host agency to report as if forum is a "project."	Forum, steering committee, and host agency leadership—and InterAction at the global level—can sensitize donors to the independence of Forum secretariats etc.
	Difficult visa/work permit requirements (i.e. staff quotas) force host agency to choose between forum and agency program staff.	Maintain active and clear communication with key government agencies.
Finance	Donor includes funds for forum support in a budget for another	Wherever possible, advocate with donors for a standalone funding model. It can indeed be

	host agency project, leading to a confusing financial reporting process (and fluctuating BVAs).	complicated when a forum’s work is integrated as an activity within the context of a broader multi-sector award carried by the host. Should this occur, however, communication is key— communicate with the donor about the reality of forum work and spending patterns— communicate internally about BVAs.
	Humanitarian funding declines/the forum and the host agency find a conflict-of-interest when approaching the same funding source.	The steering committee of the forum should review and approve forum grant applications, and if an agency (host or other) on the steering committee is approaching the same funding source, they should recuse themselves from the review/approval process.
	Financial impropriety is found within forum management during an audit.	Financial mismanagement is a risk within any project of any agency. The same controls and due diligence processes used to mitigate fraud/waste/abuse in regular projects should be applied to any forum’s activities.
	Funding challenges for the host agency unrelated to the forum can lead to instability in forum funding/staff salaries/etc.	The steering committee of the forum needs to ensure that, should circumstances change for the host agency, the forum is still able to run. Forum staff could be seconded from other agencies, etc.
HR and other operations	Host agency HQ does not understand role of forum and is inflexible with internal policies (e.g. HR policies, salary scales).	We at InterAction are drafting guidance to assist host agencies with understanding better forums and how they operate and the relationships with host agencies. You can always ask us for advice!
	Forum salary scales are placed at a higher level than host agency scales, leading to frustration amongst host agency staff.	Reiterate via open communication that while forum staff are paid through a host agency on paper, they have different jobs and report differently (i.e. up to the steering committee). They do not neatly fit into set host agency salary scales.
	Host agency and wider steering committee disagree on changes to forum that affect host agency support (e.g. hiring of additional staff)	Obviously, communication, communication, communication. But also remember! Your forum is not up on a hill all alone in its uniqueness. There are forums worldwide from which lessons can be drawn. If there is a debate about extra staff, consider looking at the organograms of forums globally in similar (and otherwise

		complex) crises to assist with the debate and ensure a globally influenced vision.
	<p>Secretariat staff do not understand host agency procedures, leading to excessive back-and-forth for host agency support team.</p> <p>Related, host agency staff do not provide sufficient support to forum staff, particularly given the risk that the operational support forum staff need might be different than what host agency procedures were designed for.</p>	When a host-forum relationship is first entered into, train all staff together—host staff and forum staff—on what their new relationship means, the parameters of the jobs of host agency staff, and the operational needs of forum staff.
Other	You'll run into other challenges. It's the nature of the game.	Feel free to reach out to me ( <a href="#">Rachel</a> ) at InterAction at any time! If you have a challenge, chances are so does another host/forum group. I'd be happy to talk through any issues!