African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)

Call for Institutional Expressions of Interest: Capacity Development for Economic Policy in Fragile Contexts

Objective: Institutional Partnership between AERC and National Public Economic Policy Institutions/Think Tanks in selected African countries

Established in 1988, African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) has grown to be a premier capacity building institution in the advancement of research and collaborative training that inform economic policies in Africa. It focuses on building the capacity of individuals and institutions, as well as generating policy relevant economics research and training for informed policy making in the continent. It is a vast network of universities, research institutions, policy makers, researchers, educators, and international resource persons collaborating on capacity building and generation of policy-oriented research and training. Over the years, through its research and collaborative post-graduate training programmes, AERC has produced many alumni who occupy senior policy positions in governmental institutions.

To respond to the continuing capacity building needs of individuals and institutions in Africa, and to enhance its activities to a wider reach in the continent and beyond, AERC, with the support of IDRC and NORAD under the projects on Promoting Leadership for Economic Policy in Fragile Countries in Africa and Redefining Capacity Building, Policy Response and Outreach that aim at building capacity in countries faced with fragility of growth and post conflict situations.

The Call

As part of its current strategy, 2020-2025, AERC aims to strengthen the link between research and policy at national level by establishing institutional partnerships with local research and policy institutes and regional institutions in Africa. AERC is seeking Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for partnerships with five national economic policy institutions to strengthen economic policy research and outreach in fragile contexts. The institutions will be selected from among the following countries: Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Swaziland/Eswatini, and Togo. The institutional partnership agreement will be signed before the end of June 2020.

The primary objective of the partnerships is to create a platform for enhanced capacity building in economic policy research and targeted institutional support for the selected institutions. The goal is to enhance the link between research and policy in the respective countries. This will be done through joint activities between AERC and the institutions, strengthening linkages between institutions and policy making communities at the national and regional levels, and sharing information among
institutions across the continent, in addition to enhancing the capacity of a partner institution. Funds to support the partnerships have been provided by IDRC and NORAD.

**Scope of the Partnership**

*Research partnerships:* AERC will support the conduct of country relevant research to enhance both quality and national policy impact through various channels. First, working with national policy think tanks, helps AERC research to respond to the needs of the host country, as the research agenda is locally determined. Second, AERC will ensure its expertise is brought to bear on the research, thus enhancing the quality and national policy relevance of the research outcomes. Third, AERC will strive to build and enhance the capacity of researchers in the partner institutes/public policy think tanks to carry out policy relevant research.

Capacity building of researchers from the identified think tanks can be accomplished in several ways; namely, (i) researchers from partner think tanks will be invited to participate in the biannual research workshop. This will provide opportunities for the researchers to learn best practices in research through observance of the biannual peer review and mentorship approach. (ii) Related to the point above, once the researchers are brought to the biannual, where necessary AERC will identify mentors to work closely with these researchers, in line with their research areas. (iii) AERC will enhance the skills of the researchers from these think tanks through their participation in AERC organized technical training workshops, and exposure of the researcher through networking with researchers from other countries. Fourth, AERC will consider inviting these researchers to AERC Collaborative Research workshops to enhance their capacity to undertake, as well as to manage research projects.

Thus, by partnering with the institutions, AERC will be able to reach out to more researchers (that would not have been identified in the absence of such a partnership) and encourage them to participate in AERC research activities. This will ensure the development of a cadre of locally based professional economists.

*Joint Workshops:* Subject to availability of funds, AERC will consider proposals from partner organizations to jointly organize and co-sponsor national policy and research dissemination workshops in the country. Proceedings of such workshops and policy memoranda emanating from such joint activities will be a joint product of AERC and the partner organization with appropriate disclaimers necessary to avoid the risks of advocacy roles. The Partner organization will be responsible for the delivery of the publications emanating from such workshops to relevant government policy makers and other stakeholders in the country including the leadership of other policy research organizations and academic institutions in the country, and provide copies to AERC along with a list of recipients of the publications.

*Grant for Institutional Capacity Enhancement and Staff Research Visits:* Where necessary, AERC will consider requests for a capacity enhancement grant for upgrading ICT facilities per duration of the institutional partnership arrangement, including provision for short duration visits of researchers and academic staff of the partner organization to other institutions for the purposes of skill enhancement in mutually agreed areas of need.
Support for Development and Update of AERC African Senior Policy Makers Data Base: Partner organization will be requested to provide support for development and updating of AERC African Senior Policy Makers/ Stakeholders Data Base by forwarding, on an annual basis, the names and contact details of senior government officials, heads of academic institutions, leadership of private sector associations, key national civil society organizations and senior officers of major donor organization in the country.

Meeting of Executives of Partner Institutions: Depending on availability of funds, AERC will facilitate interaction between institutions in order to deal with the problems of institutional isolation and promote information sharing by facilitating the participation of the chief executives of the partner institutions at the top leadership meetings, usually in conjunction with other AERC meetings.

Interested economics research and policy institutions are hereby invited to respond to the call for expression of interest. The expression of interest should be accompanied by the profiles of the institutions and research staff, including their resumes.

To be eligible, an institution must satisfy the following criteria:

1. Must be a public economic policy institution or a think tank.
2. Must be from any of the following countries: Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo, Cote d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Djibouti, Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea, Niger, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Guinea Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, and Swaziland/Eswatini, Sudan and Togo.
3. Must have been in operation for at least five years.
4. The institution is not a member of (or participant in) the IDRC Think Tank Initiative programme.
5. Eligible institutions should also submit a short motivation note describing why they would like to partner with AERC, and how the partnership would enhance their capacity and visibility in terms of research and policy making in their country.

Eligible institutions are encouraged to apply. The deadline for receiving the expression of interest is May 18, 2020. The expression of interest should be sent by email to research@aercafrica.org copied to sheila.lyaga@aercafrica.org and cresearch@aercafrica.org