African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)

Call for Institutional Expressions of Interest: Building Policy Research Institutions to Support Human Capital in Africa (HCA)

Objective: Institutional Partnership between AERC and National Public Economic Policy Institutions/Think Tanks in seven 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.

Developing human capital for inclusive growth and shared prosperity in Africa requires a massive and coordinated effort to strengthen the quantity, efficiency, and impact of investments in people. With support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), AERC is implementing a project on “Building Policy Research Institutions to Support Human Capital in Africa (HCA)”. The project on human capital is designed to improve generation and management of knowledge on Africa’s human capital and address key constraints on human capital accumulation, such as weak public financial management (PFM) and service delivery systems. The project will undertake a set of reinforcing activities in seven (7) sub-Saharan African countries (Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Madagascar) that will help build greater policy support for human capital at the country level, influence human capital policies, and strengthen African policy research institutions.

AERC will bring several components together in each of the seven countries through the following approach.

✓ Priority human capital themes for research will be identified in the first six months of the project through consultation with policymakers, senior researchers and experts on human capital, and international development institutions.

✓ Policy-relevant research will be commissioned through calls for proposals in the seven countries and carried out by researchers, academic institutions, and think tanks.

✓ The research will be supplemented by capacity building activities for the researchers and institutions, such as technical workshops on frontier topics in human capital and short-term visiting fellowships at leading research centers on human capital.
✓ **Policy outreach and dissemination** of the resulting research, adapted for consumption by non-technical audiences, to policymakers, the media, and civil society organizations will take place through policy workshops, media outreach, and other more informal channels.

The ultimate objective of the AERC-BMGF project is to provide policy reforms that would enable Africa’s young people to grow up with optimal health and equipped with the right skills to compete in the digitizing global economy.

**The Call**

As part of its 2020-2025 strategy, 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. AERC wishes to enter into partnerships with one national economic policy institutions selected from among the following countries: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Senegal, and Uganda. The institutional partnership agreement will be signed by mid-June 2020.

The primary objective of the partnerships is to create a platform for enhanced capacity building in economic policy research on human capital and targeted 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 BMGF.

**Scope of the Partnership**

*Human capital 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 shall be accomplished in several ways; namely, (i) researchers from partner think tanks will be invited to participate in the HCA project and other thematic research activities. This will provide opportunities for the researchers to learn best practices in research. (ii) Related to the point above, 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.

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 working on various aspects of human capital development.
**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 Database:** Partner organization will be requested to provide support for development and updating of AERC African Senior Policy Makers/ Stakeholders Database 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 in the seven sub-Saharan African countries 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 with national outreach.
2. Must be from any of the following countries: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Senegal, and Uganda.
3. Must have been in operation for at least five years.
4. Eligible institutions should also submit a short motivational 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 cresearch@aercafrica.org and copied to sheila.lyaga@aercafrica.org and wilson.wasike@aercafrica.org

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