VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT
Chief Communications and Policy Outreach Officer – African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)

SRI Executive Search has been contracted by African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) to assist with the search for an exceptional candidate to fill the position of Chief Communications and Policy Outreach Officer. Founded in 1988, the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) is a premier capacity building institution dedicated to the advancement of research and training to inform economic policy in Sub-Saharan Africa. Ranked as one of the top 30 International Development Think Tanks in 2013, the AERC is an organisation which has become the epitome of excellence in economic policy-oriented research and collaborative training. Believing that sustained economic development can only be achieved through well-informed policy-relevant research and the effective management of the economy, the AERC work to provide Sub-Saharan Africa with the resources they need, to drive economic change at both a local and global level, across the continent.

With a programme which seeks to build on the ground capability through economic policy research, postgraduate training and policy outreach across a network of researchers, universities and policy makers within Africa and beyond, the AERC work to strengthen local capacity by providing African economies with the analysis they need to make a lasting difference within the country. As a diverse, distinct and integrated knowledge network, the AERC has provided Sub-Saharan Africa with a data system which is informative, enlightening and integral to the design and implementation of sound economic policies within the region.

You can find further details on their website https://aercafrica.org/

Chief Communications and Policy Outreach Officer

The Chief Communications and Policy Outreach Officer will take a lead role in overseeing the implementation of the communications and policy promotion strategy and is responsible for managing and directing internal and external communications, as well as policy outreach.

The role will provide leadership and management for the Communications and Policy Outreach Division, which comprises the Communications and Policy Outreach Unit and the ICT Unit. The holder is a key member of the senior management team. S/he will assist the Executive Director with overall management of the Consortium’s communication and policy promotion strategy and will work with Heads of Departments and other stakeholders to successfully execute the strategy. The position shall oversee a team with competences in publishing, web development and design, events management, outreach, media relations, including social media, and ICT.

The Chief Communications and Policy Outreach Officer will be responsible for raising the visibility and brand of AERC, by ensuring that AERC’s products and services reach out across Africa and beyond, in French as well as in English. The holder is expected to help position AERC as a premier organization for the advancement of research and training to inform economic policies in Africa. S/he will also be responsible for connecting the network members with the array of information available on economics and AERC research and training. The holder will ensure that the information needs of the AERC research and training programmes in both languages are well served. The position will also play a critical role in Resource Mobilization and will also support in the monitoring of AERC’s internally developed funding reports.

Duties and Responsibilities

The Chief Communications and Policy Outreach Officer will have the following key responsibilities:

1. Planning and Management
   • Implementing the communications strategy approved by the Board in close liaison with the Communications Agency
• Overall responsibility of the management of the Communications Department and oversees day to day activities including the supervision of departmental staff;
• Ensures that the Communications Department serves the Consortium according to established policies and procedures using internal and external performance criteria and within a value for money culture;
• Works with the other departments and divisions of the Secretariat to ensure the smooth functioning and high performance of AERC and to exploit successful linkages;
• Ensures that reports on Communications activities are provided to the AERC Board, donors, Programme advisory committee and management as required;
• Reviewing & updating policies and procedures for the AERC Communications and Policy Outreach Division
• Establishing performance standards and targets for the Division and ensuring that adequate records are maintained to assess the Division’s performance in each of the key areas in which it is tasked
• Updating the Management on communications with the network, donors and other stakeholders.
• Preparing the Division annual budget and revisions and directing the implementation of the Division’s Program of Work and Budget.
• Preparing the required management and donor reports.
• Managing all assets under the Division.
• Regularly reviewing communication processes and tools for continuous improvement.

2. Publications

• Overseeing the operation and performance of the outsourced publications function in terms of existing SLA’s and contracts as well as the development, production and distribution of AERC corporate and promotional materials, including annual reports, brochures, and newsletters.
• Reviewing all communications material to ensure that it is of the highest standards and enhancing the overall impact of the organization’s communications internationally.
• Establishing clear guidelines for what to publish in print form and on the website and ensures that these are achieved within agreed performance standards.

3. Information Resources Management

• Overseeing the day-to-day running of the online library to ensure it serves the needs of AERC, its network and partner institutions.
• Negotiating key contracts for subscriptions to electronic journals with a view to providing access for researchers and trainees.
• Overseeing the quality of the content that goes onto the AERC website.

4. Alumni Relations

• Building and enhancing the AERC alumni network to drive the AERC agenda to its key stakeholders notably donors, governments, universities, etc.

5. Marketing, Branding, Media and Public Relations / Public Affairs

• Overseeing the implementation of the brand strategy for AERC that ensures marketing and branding of AERC to the various publics ensuring constant visibility of the AERC brand at all the partner universities including their websites.
• Leading the development of on-going relationships with key national and regional media outlets that result in an increased positive representation of AERC programmes, research outputs and events.
• Engaging and building a robust network with mainstream media outlets and involve them in AERC events to publicize the events, milestones and achievements as well as research outputs impacting public policy.
• Monitoring AERC’s media presence and prepare quarterly reports on the effectiveness of the organization’s PR and media campaigns.
• Implementing a public affairs programme for AERC which includes information for civil society and the media as well as for policymakers, and which encompasses web-based and event-based activities.
• Developing a system of targeted information packages for different stakeholder groups and audiences and integrates the different resources and media of the Communications Division.

6. Resource Mobilization and Donor Relations

• Liaise with Senior Management Team (SMT) in the development of the resource mobilization strategy;
• Setting fundraising targets,
• Actively identifying and developing new sources of income, approaching and negotiating partner relationships with donors and coordinating fundraising activities.
• Actively seeking opportunities to partner with organizations that support the vision of AERC outreach/brand AERC.
• Deepening and broadening relations with donors through informed dialogue and assist the Executive Director in maintaining effective relations with donors and network members
• Ensuring creation of synergies between activities in different departments that will enhance fundraising efforts.
• Representing AERC in meetings with key donors/ partners to push the fundraising agenda for the organization and following up on the implementation of recommendations and agreements.

7. Events Coordination and Policy Outreach

• Overseeing the development of promotional material as well as the image and positioning of AERC to existing and potential donors.
• Coordinating and organizing major AERC policy outreach events and conferences, including the AERC Senior Policy Seminar and National Policy Workshops.
• Working closely with the Executive Director and Program Directors in developing intellectual content for the Senior Policy Seminars and National Policy Workshops, including commissioning of papers.
• Collaborating closely with Research & Training Directors in planning for workshops and seminars, such as the Biannual Research Workshops and Thesis dissemination workshops
• Using events such as Biannual Workshop, and Senior Policy Seminar, Thesis Dissemination Workshops as a strategic platform for dissemination of policy research to the body of stakeholders and place emphasis on positioning and packaging the outputs from Research favorably to donors.

8. ICT

• Overseeing the implementation of the ICT strategy and implementing operational plans within the framework of the strategy approved by the Board
• Ensuring development, implementation and maintenance of all policies related to ICT services, including project management, ICT security and an active business continuity plan.
• Overseeing the implementation of ICT activities to ensure that ICT is used to achieve effective program implementation and efficient operations of the Secretariat including outreach and dissemination.
• Responsible for maintenance of current information on AERC website. Review material submitted for publication to ensure quality and accurate content. Assess content for compatibility and consistency with the site as a whole and make recommendations for improvement.
• Ensuring AERC knowledge resources are readily accessible on the web; facilitate web-based networking such as social networks, blogs, etc; support learning events, workshops and senior policy seminars.

9. Social Media Management
• Overseeing the implementation of the social media strategy.
• Ensuring AERC presence on relevant social media platforms;
• Leading in the development of a vibrant and sustainable social media environment to drive conversations on AERC programmes with students, donors, researchers and other key stakeholders.

10. Secondary Responsibilities
• Undertake any other duties as may be directed by the Executive Director.

Required Qualifications

Education
The ideal candidate will hold a Master’s degree in Communications, marketing or Public Affairs.

Relevant Experience
• Master’s degree in Communications, Marketing or Public Affairs
• Significant experience in policy outreach and strategic dissemination of policy relevance
• Professional qualification in Electronic Publishing
• Knowledgeable in publications, website development, information resources, or journalism
• Eight (8) years of relevant experience in management with at least three (3) years at senior management level.
• Experience in managing outsourced service providers is an added advantage.
• Experience in developing and implementing communications strategies for NGOs
• Experience in resource mobilization.
• Policy dissemination skills - Able to translate the technical reports from the Research department into a story that diverse stakeholders can relate with.
• Excellent team leadership and management skills; has the ability to get the team to work collaboratively with other teams.
• Able to manage a significant Communications budget - two to three million US dollars
• Cross-cultural experience – can live and work with diverse cultures and especially African culture.
• Ability to communicate in French is an added advantage.

Required Competencies
• Proven ability to work with communications and presentation software
• Previous experience in publications, website, information resources, or journalism
• Exceptional writing skills with proven ability to produce concise, well-structured and very high-quality written materials
• Excellent presentation skills
• Excellent report-writing skills
- Excellent networking skills
- Marketing, Branding, PR and media relations competencies
- Knowledge of Social media management tools
- Excellent oral and written communication skills
- Well organized and able to multi-task and meet deadlines
- Good interpersonal skills
- Ability to act as a team leader and to work collaboratively
- Able to work in a computerized office environment;
- Ability to work under pressure

Terms of Appointment

This is a full-time position with the successful candidate being contracted on a five-year basis with the possibility of renewal. Salary is competitive and commensurate with qualifications and experience.

How to Apply

If you wish to be considered for this position, please forward a copy of your CV and a supporting letter in Microsoft Word format, along with any relevant documentation to AERC-CCPOO@sri-executive.com on or before 12 June 2020. All information will be in the strictest confidence as we pride ourselves on our professional service. We will revert to you as soon as feasible when we have reviewed your application.