African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)

Re-advertisement

Call for Institutional Expressions of Interest: Capacity Development for Economic Policy in East Africa Community (EAC) (2021)

Objective: Institutional Partnership between AERC and Think tanks/ Local research and policy institutes/ regulatory bodies/ regional institutions in selected African countries

Established in 1988, the 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, the AERC has produced many alumni who occupy senior policy positions in governmental institutions.

The Call

The AERC is currently collaborating with the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation on a financial inclusion project that seeks to produce research evidence that will inform efforts within the East African Community (EAC) to advance delivery of digital financial services for the poor and support market development. The project also focuses on financial inclusion policy development within the EAC economies and brings together seasoned researchers from within and outside Africa to generate policy-oriented research papers and policy briefs for use and easy application/implementation by national policy makers.

As part of this project, the AERC aims to strengthen the link between research and policy at national level by establishing institutional partnerships with local research and policy institutes, regulatory bodies, and regional institutions in the East Africa region. The AERC is therefore seeking Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for partnerships from institutions that are interested in participating in this project through activities that will strengthen economic policy research and outreach in Eastern Africa. The AERC is particularly keen to partner with research departments of government agencies or regulatory bodies that have a focus on provision of financial services. We also welcome applications from think tanks or research institutes based within and outside universities, and are undertaking research on financial inclusion and underlying determinants. The institutions will be selected from among the following countries: Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. 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.

**Scope of the Partnership**

*Research partnerships:* Through a partnership grant award of up to US$25,000, the AERC will support the conduct of country relevant research, within the project theme, to be determined by partner institutions to enhance both quality and national policy impact through various channels. First, working with national policy think tanks or research in helps the AERC research to respond to the needs of the host country, as the research agenda is locally determined. Second, the 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, the AERC will strive to build and enhance the capacity of researchers in the partner institutions to carry out policy relevant research. Capacity building of researchers from the identified institutions can be accomplished in several ways; namely, (i) researchers from partner institutions will be invited to participate in the AERC biannual research workshops. 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 point (i) above, once the researchers are brought to the biannual, where necessary the AERC will identify mentors to work closely with these researchers, in line with their chosen research areas that fall within the project theme of financial inclusion and market development. (iii) the AERC will enhance the skills of the researchers from these institutions through their participation in AERC organized technical training workshops, and exposure of the researcher through networking with researchers from other countries, and (iv), 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 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, regulatory and policy institutions are hereby invited to respond to the call for expression of interest. The expression of interest should be accompanied by:

i) A self assessment form downloadable from the following link: Self Assessment Form

ii) Profiles of the institutions and research staff, including their resumes.

iii) A two page motivation note describing why the institution 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.

iv) A brief explanation of how the institute will contribute to the project theme.

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

1. Must be a think tank or research institute based within and outside universities, undertaking research on financial inclusion and underlying determinants, or research departments of government agencies or regulatory bodies that have a focus on provision of financial services.

2. Must be from any of the following countries: Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

3. Must have been in operation for at least five years.

Eligible institutions are strongly encouraged to apply. The deadline for receiving the expression of interest is July 9, 2021. The expression of interest should be sent by email to research@aercafrica.org copied to sheila.lyaga@aercafrica.org and cresearch@aercafrica.org.

NB: Institutions that responded to the initial call for expressions published in February 2021, and submitted their applications, need not reapply.