



AERC Proposal Submission Guideline May 2021

This template serves as a guide for researchers to follow **before** submitting research projects for funding through AERC's Thematic Research Program. Due to the large volume of new proposals received every year, often priority is given to those proposals that complied with the template given below. *The maximum page number allowed for a proposal is 20 pages with 1.5 spacing including tables, figures, references, and annexes. AERC does not expect you to meet the maximum page number limit. Do not submit the proposal in single spacing.*

1. Title

The title of a research proposal should not be repetitive nor generic nor borrowed from similar work by others. Title needs to be reflective of the main thrust of the research project, preferably short, simple to understand and if possible inspiring. It is not bad to be bold as well.

2. Abstract (350 words maximum)

An abstract for a research proposal is a highly condensed version of the entire project with a sharp focus on what the research project intends to do. As most of our thematic research projects are empirical, start with the objectives of the project (research questions/puzzle), type of data to be used (good to mention only if it is unique or novel) and methods. If preliminary results are available, it helps a lot to report them in the abstract indicating their potential implications to policy or further research.

3. Introduction (maximum 3 pages)

"Introduction" is the most important section of the proposal and offers an insight into the richness and originality of the project. As much as possible spend a lot of time in this section so that the project can win the grant. Once the paper is written this section also remains to be the most important (see this interesting guide on how to write an excellent Introduction section <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/how-write-introduction-your-development-economics-paper>). The following structure helps to develop the "introduction section)

- I. Broad context of the study or motivation (1-2 paragraphs)
- II. Research questions and their relevance (1 paragraph)
- III. Hypotheses or empirical approach including methods (2 paragraph)
- IV. A few sentences describing data to be used (1 paragraph)
- V. Say something about the expected contribution of the study to the literature: what is new in the study relative to the topic and relative to the country that's the focus of the study (1 paragraph)

4. Literature review (1-2 pages)

- I. Focus on the literature that made seminal contributions and are the foundations to the issue, and then move to the work done on Africa including the specific country concerned.
- II. Organize the literature review thematically. Avoid splitting this section into “Theoretical literature” and “Empirical literature”; focus on what previous literature accomplished, state the gaps, and indicate how your project intends to close that gap.

5. Empirical strategy or approach (4 pages)

This is an important section of the proposal where a clear link between the theoretical/analytical /conceptual framework is linked with the empirical model is established.

- I. Theoretical or conceptual framework: this section outlines valid theoretical, analytical, or conceptual construct that frames the empirical work. That means it offers the workhorse or as is often described “the reduced form of the empirical model”. It is in this section that we get the hypothesis (e.g., expected signs of reduced form equations, parameter of interest for the empirical work, etc.)
- II. Describe and motivate the specification of the empirical model.
- III. Describe the econometric approach including the baseline model, issues of endogeneity (selection bias, reverse causality, omitted variable problem, etc), how it could be addressed and indications of robustness.

6. Data and stylized facts from the data (2 pages)

The data section is very important as it provides information on its relevance to answer the research questions, source, issues on sample properties, etc.

- I. Describe the data sources clearly and accurately.
- II. Present some stylized facts (trends, relationships, similarities, differences) on key variables/indicators that will be used in the study.

7. Expected findings: very brief since you have not done the analysis yet (one page)

8. Work Plan and Budget (one page)