



# REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL: REVIEW OF THE AERC-NORAD AGREEMENT RAF-3058 RAF-18/0008

## 1. Background

The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) signed the agreement RAF-3058 RAF-18/0008 “Research for inclusive and sustainable African development” on 28.06.2018. The agreement covers the period from July 2018 to June 2023 (the Support Period) and the award amounts to NOK 34,560,000. The grant is exclusively for the implementation of the Core Activities of AERC and two collaborative research programs “Growth, Poverty and Inequality in Africa” (GPIR) and “Climate Change and Economic Development” (CCEDA).

The planned effect of NORAD’s support to AERC is economic policies for inclusive and sustainable development in Africa informed by high quality research (impact). This will be accomplished through the realisation of the four specific objectives (outcomes) below:

- Enhanced capacity for quality economic policy research and graduate training in Africa.
- Improved link between AERC research and policymaking communities and improved uptake.
- Increased private sector participation in economic policy research and capacity building for sustainable development in Africa.
- Enhanced communication and dissemination to inform best practices and policymaking.

### *Description of the African Economic Research Consortium*

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) was established in 1988, and its main mission is “to strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous inquiry into the problems pertinent to the management of African economies, through a synergetic programme combining research with postgraduate training in economics”. To reach that mission the AERC uses an enduring capacity building framework that spans thematic economic research, collaborative economic research, and policy outreach. The delivery mechanisms include the biannual research workshops for early career researchers from around the continent, technical workshops, collaborative training programmes in Masters and PhD in Economics involving a network of 40 African universities, offerings of joint elective courses at shared facilities, and senior policy seminars (as well as national and regional policy seminars) serving as fora for dissemination of collaborative research and policy dialogue among senior African policy makers and AERC researchers. The AERC is, thus, engaged in building both individual and institutional

capacity in policy-oriented research and training. The AERC is a vast network of researchers, alumni, educators, international resource persons, policy makers and universities.

The AERC is a Pan-African research organization and was registered in 1988 as a membership consortium in the State of Delaware, USA. Despite the name “Consortium” the AERC is a not-for-profit and non-governmental organization. A "Host Country Agreement" dated 11 September 1999 between the Government of Kenya and the AERC regulates AERC’s rights and obligations in relation to the Government of Kenya. The management structure is based on three core functions which maintain distinctive functions: The Secretariat, the Board of Directors, and the Programme Committee. The Secretariat, a team of 33 staff, is hosted at the headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. The Secretariat is the executive and administrative unit mandated to execute the strategies, and coordinate and implement all activities. The Programme Committee sets the research and training agenda and is also responsible for the approval of all the research grants and collaborative research projects, as well as monitoring quality of the Training programme. The Board of Directors approves the Consortium’s five-year strategic plans and budgets and provides overall oversight over programme management.

The AERC is currently implementing the third year (2022/23) of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 on *‘Scaling up Capacity Building for Policy Influence and Development Outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa’*. The strategic plan envisages inclusion and equal opportunity for all, ensuring no one is left behind, with gender mainstreaming being a critical component. The strategy is anchored on three themes of improving the **quality** of AERC products from graduates to research output, that will generate a momentum for its own **sustainability**, and create an appropriate platform for **policy influence** across SSA.

The AERC has several funders providing core support and include among others, NORAD, FCDO, SIDA, The World Bank, and the African Central Bank Governors’ Forum.

## **2. Review of AERC - Aim and objectives**

An Evaluation of AERC’s 2015-2020 Strategic Plan was conducted in 2019 and noted overall good performance. Some of the recommendations included possible reforms in relation to research, training, policy impact, diversification of stakeholders and of finance, and administrative issues.

NORAD has requested a mid-term review of RAF-3058 RAF18/0008, which includes both the core support to AERC and the two collaborative research programs GPRID and CCEDA (article 9.1 of the Agreement). The overall aim of the review is to evaluate progress and results to date and

lessons learned highlighting barriers and opportunities to effective and efficient implementation of AERC's strategic plan and the two collaborative research programs.

Specific objectives of the mid-review are as follows:

- a) Assessing the implementation of the recommendations given in that 2019 Evaluation of AERC with particular attention to the impact of AERC's training and research capacity building on **quality** and **relevance** of graduate programmes and research capacity building.
- b) Assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the two collaborative research programs GPIR and CCEDA.
- c) Identifying lessons learned and provide further recommendations.

### **3. The assignment**

The consultant for this assignment will be required to assess 1) the follow up of recommendations from the 2019 Evaluation of the 2015-2020 Strategic plan and 2) the progress made towards achieving the project outcomes in the grant agreement.

#### ***3.1 Follow up of 2019 Evaluation***

##### ***3.1.1 Research Programmes***

- How has the AERC followed-up the recommendations in the 2019 evaluation report regarding the **relevance** and the **quality** of the research undertaken and published? What has been the consequences of these changes, or should other measures be considered?
- How has the AERC followed-up the recommendations in the 2019 evaluation report regarding the support given by the AERC to the researchers? What has been the consequences of these changes, or should other measures be considered?
- To what degree does AERC contribute to high quality research undertaken by African scholars. Is there improvement on African researchers supported by the AERC publishing in peer-reviewed journals?
- How is the quality assurance process of the research presented in AERC's own publications compared to peer reviewed journals? Is it realistic for AERC to establish/hosting a peer reviewed journal on African Economics, and what would be the value added in terms of quality improvement compared to current publication channels?
- If the issue of publication and quality of the papers has been addressed what are the emerging challenges that the AERC is facing in the process and what are the measures considered?

### **3.1.2 *Training Programmes***

- How has AERC followed-up the recommendations regarding training in the evaluation report? What has been the consequences of these changes, or should other measures be considered?
- What is the added value of the AERC technical and financial support and the AERC courses at the universities?
- Assess the quality of the AERC courses compared to similar courses taught at universities (both at collaborating and international renowned universities).
- How has the AERC modernized curricula and teaching materials for collaborating universities? How does AERC address the latest issues within the economic field, including alternative economic theories and models?
- What challenges has the AERC faced in modernizing the curricula and teaching materials and what measures have been put in place to address them?

### **3.1.3 *Policy Impact and Outreach***

- How has the research output in the AERC contributed to policy impact in Africa? Give concrete and recent examples.
- What challenges has the AERC faced in the process and what measures can be considered to address them?
- Is the AERC respected and reputable among its peer organizations, including African Research Councils?
- How have grants given by the AERC contributed to strengthening the research capacity of African researchers?
- What added value does AERC have compared to other research and training funders?
- How effective and impactful are the AERC's platforms used to engage and influence international and regional actors? Assess AERCs involvement in platforms other than their own.

### **3.2 *Collaborative Projects -GRIP and CCEDA***

- What are the intended or unintended, positive, or negative, short-term, and long-term results from the two collaborative projects GPIR and CCEDA?
- What are the main theoretical approaches used to analyse data? Are also alternative economic theories considered?
- What are the main findings from the two collaborative projects?
- Assess the quantity and quality of the articles produced from these two collaborative projects and the relevance of the publication and dissemination channels. Assess also African researchers' contributions in peer-reviewed articles.

#### **4. Approach and Methodology**

The consultant should propose the methodology to be used to carry out the review that adopts a consultative and participative approach to ensure that all the key stakeholders are involved.

Desk review, interviews, participant observations (in seminars) and field visits (to universities offering AERC courses) could be used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. For the desk review, relevant reports will be provided by the AERC Secretariat. Interviews with representatives of the AERC Secretariat and other stakeholders will be face to face or where not possible will be done on virtual platforms.

The geographical area of the evaluation will be at the AERC Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, possibly also visits to some of the collaborating universities.

#### **5. Quality Standards**

The consultant will be required to adhere to OECD/DAC quality standards. All the findings and the conclusion will be backed by reference to evidence and their magnitude. The review process shall be carried out in accordance with recognised ethical standards. The rights and welfare of all participants in the review shall be protected and informed consent obtained. When interacting with stakeholders, the consultant shall behave professionally and respectfully, strive to reduce the time and other demands on stakeholders, and actively manage expectations to avoid unjustified expectations. The review team shall show sensitivity to gender, beliefs, manners, and customs of all stakeholders and act with integrity and honesty. The anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants shall be protected when requested and/or as required by law, the context, or ethical considerations. Direct references to informants' statements in reports shall be done in ways that do not make it possible to trace statements to individuals, unless agreed with the informant concerned or unless the statements were made in public. If the review team during implementation finds any reason to suspect corruption or misuse of Norwegian aid funds, the team shall immediately use the 'whistleblowing' procedures described at NORAD's website. In such cases, members of the review team shall not consult anyone suspected of involvement in corrupt behaviour.

## **6. Deliverables/Reporting**

After the review, the consultant will submit a draft report to AERC. The consultant will present preliminary findings and any areas that require further attention and then discuss these with AERC prior to drafting the Final Report using the following template:

1. Executive summary of maximum 2-3 pages, which should be able to be read as a standalone document.
2. Purpose and scope of assessment
3. Background
4. Description of the organization and aspects to be examined
5. Assessment criteria
6. Methodology
7. Findings and assessments
8. Recommendations for follow-up
9. Sources of information used

The final report should provide recommendations in areas that may need improvements and or reforms and present conclusions backed by reference to findings and give clear recommendations. The recommendations shall be presented in order of priority. The final report shall be no more than 25 pages (excluding annexes). It should include an executive summary of maximum 2-3 pages, which may be read as a standalone document. The report should include an annex with AERC's comments to the report, if any.

The reports content and format should be in line with NORAD's guidelines <https://www.NORAD.no/globalassets/filer-2017/evaluating/guidelines-for-the-evaluation-process-and-reports.pdf>

## **7. Time Frame**

The assignment will commence on 1 September 2022. A start-up meeting at the AERC between the responsible AERC management and the consultant will agree on the work plan and timelines. The estimated time required for the consultant to conduct the assignment and submit a final report is 2 months, that is by 28 October 2022. However, the draft report should be submitted to AERC by 30 September 2022. AERC and NORAD will review the draft and provide comments by 14 October 2022. The final report generated should be submitted to AERC by 28 October 2022.

## Calendar of activities

Activity	Suggested timeframe
i. First draft to AERC	30 September 2022
ii. Feedback from AERC and NORAD on draft report	14 October 2022
iii. Submission of Final report to AERC	28 October 2022

## 8. How to apply

Requirements for the reviewers include:

- a) The consultancy firm shall specify the consultant responsible for the assignment and any other consultants participating in the assignment if a team. Gender inclusiveness will be an added advantage.
- b) The consultancy firm shall specify the level of competence of the consultant(s) allocated to the assignment. The individual or the lead in a team must have a minimum of earned PhD in Economics/ Development Studies with some evidence of training in monitoring and evaluation. It is, however, important that there are no conflicts of interest – for instance, that the consultant is an AERC alumni.
- c) The consultancy firm shall specify the total cost of the assignment, in the form of a daily fee for each category of personnel and any other reimbursable costs for the part of the assignment carried out. Reimbursable costs must as a minimum, when applicable, be specified with costs for per diem, accommodation, and type of flight ticket, to make sure that economy class is used. All types of costs shall be given in US Dollars or Kenya Shillings, excluding VAT. The invoice shall be specified in the same way as the budget as presented in this call.

Interested consultants are requested to submit the following:

- i. A Technical and Financial proposal which should include a description of the proposed methodology to be used and a schedule of planned activities (5 Pages Max)
- ii. CV(s) of the professional(s) with suitable references to undertake the consultancy
- iii. Two (2) samples of previous work.

Consultants who meet the requirements of the assignment should submit their proposals on email to the address below, no later than August 26, 2022.

The Executive Director  
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