

Science Granting Councils Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa (SGCI)

Theme: Public Engagement in Research and Innovation for Development

Concept Note and Terms of Reference

INTRODUCTION

The Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) seeks to commission a state-of-the-art paper on the theme: *“Public Engagement in Research and Innovation for Development.”*

Each year, the SGCI convenes Annual Forums (AFs) that bring together the Initiative’s participating Councils from 15 African countries¹ and other key stakeholders around the world to deliberate and develop interventions in strategic areas of interest to the Councils and the wider science, technology and innovation (STI) community. To facilitate sharing of lessons and good practices, the SGCI commissions a state-of-the-art paper on a topic of critical importance for the work of Africa’s Councils. The paper provides the basis for a Masterclass to be held during the Forum.

This document provides guidelines on the concept for a research paper to be commissioned on the above topic and serves to invite eligible and interested experts to apply for the authorship of the paper.

The SGCI is a multi-donor Initiative which aims to strengthen the capacities of Science Granting Councils (SGCs) in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in order to support research and evidence-based policies that will contribute to economic and social development.

The Initiative is jointly funded by [Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency \(Sida\)](#), United Kingdom’s [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office \(FCDO\)](#), Canada’s [International Development Research Centre \(IDRC\)](#), South Africa’s [National Research Foundation \(NRF\)](#) and the [German Research Foundation \(DFG\)](#).

¹ The SGCI currently works with 15 sub-Saharan African countries namely: Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Côte d’Ivoire, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Ghana, Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi, Namibia, and Zimbabwe

Background and Context

In 2005, Africa's S&T Consolidated Plan of Action (CPA) was developed, as a common instrument for the implementation of the African Union strategy on STI. The CPA's vision was 'to set up a robust STI foundation for Africa's competitiveness and socioeconomic development, and a future in which innovation will become the main driver of socioeconomic transformation'. One major axis of the CPA focuses on increasing Africa's human and institutional STI capacity. A crucial element is that Africa must have the capacity to look into the longer-term future of science, technology, the economy and society with the aim of identifying the emerging generic technologies likely to yield the greatest economic and social benefits. The CPA has now been succeeded by the AU Agenda 2063 and its medium-term implementation strategy, (STISA-2024)². STISA's mission is to "Accelerate Africa's transition to innovation-led knowledge-based economies".

Science Granting Councils (SGCs) are important 'intermediaries' in promoting public participation and dialogue within the national innovation systems. They also perform the following related functions³ that contribute to the evolution and effective functioning of national STI systems including:

- i) Valorization/dissemination of research results and promote uptake of research results and findings;
- ii) Conduct policy dialogues, advice and advocacy;
- iii) Collection of data, indicators, statistics and evidence;
- iv) Capacity strengthening of stakeholder organizations and individual researchers through scholarships, grants and other forms of support.

Launched in April 2015, the Initiative is strengthening the ability of Councils in 15 countries in order to i) manage research, ii) use of data and evidence for policy and decision-making, iii) manage research competitions for impact and development, iv) support strategic communication, knowledge uptake and networking among Councils and with other science system actors, and v) strengthen the capacities of Councils in gender and inclusivity. These activities are expected to lead to more effective research investments and strengthened research leadership for development in sub-Saharan Africa.

Capacity strengthening and other forms of technical support are implemented through customized coaching as well training courses and workshops led by teams of Collaborating Technical Agencies (CTAs). [The Scinnovent Centre](#) is leading the theme on Strategic Communications and Knowledge Uptake and to promote networking among Councils and with other science system actors.

² African Union Commission (2013). African Union Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024.

³ CREST Scoping Report - Science Granting Councils in Sub-Saharan Africa (2014).



The anticipated outcome arising from these outputs is more effective Councils that will strengthen national systems, leading to nationally-led research that contributes to development in participating countries. The Initiative seeks to improve the quality and relevance of science research, increase the uptake of research findings, and increase coordination between the key science system actors.

Key issues and considerations

The emergence of digital technologies in the recent decades have led to new ideas about the opportunities that they offer for science and how science systems and norms might need to be re-configured in order to seize the opportunities they offer. Particularly important is the role of social media and other participatory technologies in defining the socialization of science, including emergence of new actors and the re-organization of their roles and responsibilities. There are new tools, mechanisms and methodologies as well as new socialization arenas and platforms. Similarly, the outbreaks of pandemics such as the COVID 19 bring forth new challenges to the conventional interactions between science and its publics/stakeholders but also creates new opportunities and innovative responses. Jointly and separately these shape public engagement and inclusion in research and innovation.

In 2019, The SGCI Annual Forum focused on theme, “*Open Science in Research and Innovation for Development*”⁴. During this Forum, it emerged that Africa’s Science Granting Councils were already working collaboratively in bilateral and multi-lateral cooperation, sharing resources, infrastructures, skills and capacities. These collaborations promote openness and, in some cases, have led to peer – to – peer learning, experience and knowledge sharing and replicability.

In the same vein, The Global Research Council (GRC), comprising the heads of science and engineering funding agencies from around the world, recently published a report titled “*21st Century Public Engagement and Mission-oriented Research*” and provided case studies of public engagement initiatives in its participating councils. The report highlights the challenges of public engagement in the participating Councils and (in Africa) covers the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa. This commissioned paper will build on this foundation and expand the scope to include all the 15 Councils in the SGCI.

⁴ The Annual Forum was held in Daar es Salam, Tanzania and hosted by the Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH)



The 2021 thematic focus is underpinned by several strategic issues including (but not limited) to the following:

Policies and strategies for managing data: Noting the need for evidence-based decision-making and the important role of reliable data in driving and guiding public engagement, there's demand for African governments to enact and harmonize policies, strategies and incentives for data acquisition, publication, use and disposal.

Capacities and infrastructure: Within the context of participatory social technologies and citizen science, there's a need for enhanced capacities for co-creation of knowledge between users/beneficiaries and researchers. This is anticipated to help the continent to harness the potential for open science and public engagement. This could be accompanied by skills and capacity enhancement, support for researcher mobility, sustainable funding and creation of accredited data centres.

Science community and consensus building: Continuous dialogue is required to set priorities, goals and ambitions. There's a need to create platforms and forums for regular engagement of the different players including public and private sectors as well as the funders.

Linguistic and cultural diversity: Public engagement is affected by the cultural and institutional contexts characterized by diverse languages – English, French, Portuguese and other national languages and dialects – there's a need to harness the opportunities presented by this diversity to promote valorization of research findings, enhance inclusivity and participation.

Strategic communication and knowledge uptake: Communication of scientific outputs has been identified as a weak link that undermines uptake of research findings. There's a need to enhance and exploit the existing opportunities to promote sharing of information and strengthen knowledge use.



Scope and Terms of Reference

In consideration of the above issues, the 2021 Masterclass paper could include the following broad areas. Applicants are invited to suggest others or alternatives:

Digital technologies and tools: This could cover, amongst other issues, the use and applications of participatory social technologies (such as mobile phones) as vehicles of participation and engagement. It may also address issues related to the development of citizen science/citizen technologies and citizen innovations. Engaging user communities through various forms of digital media/social media platforms and how these have re-shaped public engagement should be considered.

Policy and governance: this concerns the user communities' level of engagement with both upstream and downstream actors as well as their participation. It also includes a consideration of the various methods and approaches used in managing participation, dialogue and engagement. More broadly, it considers how the STI ecosystem is regulated and governed.

Data, evidence and impact: Generating and documenting impact stories could be viewed as a way of evaluating public engagement. Data and evidence could be valuable indicators of success, allowing for sharing of lessons, good practices and scaling of successful initiatives thereby guiding decision-making. Issues to be covered here may include innovative methods of engaging with user communities; innovative ways of applying STI knowledge and ways of evaluating the success of engagement initiatives.

Pandemics and futures: The Councils have to retain their roles and execute their mandates during the pandemic as well as in the post-pandemic context, making capacity strengthening and reviews of *modus operandi* an ever-present necessity. This paper should provide guidance to the Councils on how to respond to such pandemics (with specific reference to COVID 19 but more broadly to any future pandemics) including how to set priorities for rapid responses; channel resources and investments, and strengthen response capacities.

Gender and inclusivity: Women, youth and people with disabilities often face particular challenges that shape and even impede their participation and engagement in scientific dialogues and processes. The SGCI places high premium on gender and inclusivity and as such the paper should give due attention to guiding the Councils on issues affecting women and other marginalized and minority groups, taking an intersectional approach as appropriate.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS

Approach

Interested authors are invited to propose a methodology/ approach for delivering the paper. Such methodology or approach could draw from primary data, secondary data, as well as insights and experiences of practitioners and other experts.

Expected Outputs

In addition to the final masterclass paper which will be presented at the SGCI Annual Forum scheduled for November 2021 via Zoom (tentatively set for 15th – 19th November 2021), the authors are expected to produce the following:

- i. An Expression of Interest (Eoi) comprising detailed CV(s) of potential author(s); an annotated outline of the paper and a detailed work plan
- ii. Final technical paper incorporating review comments by the Scinnovent Centre and its partners as well as participant views and observations after the Annual Forum
- iii. At least one article published in an international peer-reviewed journal
- iv. At least one policy brief emanating from the paper and the discussions at the Annual Forum

PROCESS AND TIMELINES

| S/n | Deliverables | Timeframe | Remarks |
|-----|--|------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Call for expressions of interest (Eoi) | 15 th July 2021 | Closes on 23 rd August 2021 (six weeks) |
| 2 | Selection and contracting of authors | 31 st August 2021 | Eoi, detailed CVs, annotated outline/table of contents and detailed work plan required |
| 3 | Submission of the 1st draft paper | 30 th September 2021 | Reviews by Scinnovent Centre/partners and revision by authors |
| 4 | Submission of the 2nd draft paper | 15 th October 2021 | Second round of reviews by Scinnovent Centre/partners and revision by authors |
| 5 | Submission of final draft paper | 31 st October 2021 | This version should be ready for circulation |
| 6 | Presentation of the paper during the 2021 Masterclass/AF | 15 – 19 November 2021 ⁵ | Draft final paper presented by lead author at the 2021 AF and additional input collected and incorporated into the masterclass paper |
| 7 | Submission of the final paper | February 2022 | After inclusion of comments/additional input from stakeholders and revision of the draft final paper |

⁵ Tentative dates

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| 8 | Submission of draft article for publication in a peer-reviewed journal | February 2022 | Journal to be selected in consultation with Scinnovent Centre; Manuscript preparation and publication is the responsibility of the author(s). |
| 9 | Submission of Policy Brief | February 2022 | Authors in consultation with the Scinnovent Centre |

SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

The deadline for submission of the Expression of Interest, Detailed CV(s), Annotated Table of Content, and Work plan is on or before **Monday, 23 August 2021 by 6:00 pm East African Time**. All submissions should be sent to info@scinnovent.org with a copy to Bolo@scinnovent.org. Submissions received after this deadline will not be considered.

The successful candidate will be notified within one week after the deadline. Please note that the **Expression of Interest** should not exceed one page of an A4 paper, single spacing, font type - Times New Roman, and font size- 12. The **CVs** should demonstrate experience from previous related assignments and publications around public engagement in research and innovation.

BUDGET

An estimated budget of up to **US\$25,000.00** has been ear-marked for this assignment. Applicants are highly encouraged to form teams that demonstrate relevant expertise and experience. Gender and inclusivity are key considerations. Please note that it is a requirement that the main author of the paper be available to present the paper during the Masterclass/Annual Forum event.

CONTACT ADDRESS

Should you require any additional information or clarification, contact Dr. Maurice Bolo on email: Bolo@scinnovent.org with a copy to info@scinnovent.org or telephone: +254 727 701 917 /+254 733 670 979 on or before **30th July 2021**



