



RUFORUM COMMUNITY ACTION RESEARCH PROGRAMME CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Call ID: [RU/CGS/CARP/15/02/2010](#)

CONCEPT NOTE DEADLINE: [FEBRUARY 15, 2010](#)

For selection in March 2010

BACKGROUND

This is to announce the **RUFORUM Community Action Research Programme (CARP) First Call for Concept Notes**. The purpose of the Programme is to demonstrate innovative approaches towards strengthened University engagement with development practice in Eastern and Southern Africa. Initially, priority will be given to projects that focus on scaling-up and out research outputs from the most successful RUFORUM CGS projects. Projects to be funded will be action research closely linking participating university researchers with all stakeholders along the value chain, including national and international research and development agencies, where appropriate. Please consult attached guidelines for writing CARP proposals. Concepts that do not follow guidelines closely may be disqualified.

For more information on RUFORUM, please visit www.ruforum.org

TIME FRAME for Call ID [RU/CGS/CARP/15/02/2010](#)

1. Deadline for Concept Note submission to RUFORUM Secretariat by **15 February 2010**.
2. Compliance Review by RUFORUM Secretariat **1 March 2010**.
3. Technical Committee to select potential proposals with comments to Secretariat and Secretariat to return to PIs by **15 March 2010**.
4. Full Proposals to be developed by PIs by latest **10 April**
5. Full Proposal Writing Workshop to be held before **30 April 2010**.
6. Secretariat to compile proposals for final selection and approval by Technical Committee by **15 May 2010**.
7. Results from the selection will be communicated to PIs by **end of May, 2010** at the latest.
8. Projects to commence implementation by **end of June, 2010**

THE RUFORUM COMMUNITY ACTION RESEARCH PROGRAMME (CARP) AWARD PROCESS

GENERAL INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES

University led Community Action Research Programme (CARP):

RUFORUM announces a new programme of commissioned community-action research along thematic lines recommended by the Technical Committee in consultation with the National Forums. This pilot programme will support **multi-year research projects each to a ceiling of \$300,000**. A total of US\$900,000 is currently available under this Call. The programme will include linkages with National Forums, farmer organizations, representatives of NARS, policy-makers, university faculty, internship awardees, and other relevant stakeholders.

This is a **First Call for Concept Notes**. Concept Notes are invited from interested University Staff (See eligibility criteria below). The concept note proposals by university teams will be considered on a competitive basis. Each project will be expected to have at least one (1) Ph.D and three (3) M.Sc. graduate students, and span 3 years. Submitted concept notes will be considered at the March 2010 Technical Committee Meeting and successful candidates will then be asked to prepare full proposals.

The aim of the programme would be either to scale-up and out research outputs from the most successful RUFORUM CGS projects or to link university researchers with existing development initiatives across the value chain. As an example, the CARP could link with on-going pilots developed by CGIAR centers, international NGO's, or extension pilot programmes such as National Agricultural Advisory Services. A clear methodological framework will be a critical aspect of the final proposal and an indication of the approach to be used should be included in the concept note. Like the competitive RUFORUM Graduate Research Grants and the Field Attachment Programme, the CARP will be used to intensify university engagement in strengthening farming communities and will look to see social benefits accruing to participating and beneficiary communities.

Applicants will be asked to detail in the Concept Note how their research will be action-oriented and engage participation and collaboration with farmers and frontline actors in the NARS. The CARP will be expected to take a value-chain approach, be interdisciplinary and link to public and private sector actors with the farmers. Potential themes should address a specific project that could include either strengthening institutions or addressing commercialization, food security or sustainability. Preference will be given to proposals that build on successful RUFORUM CGS projects or other related initiatives. However other interesting proposals will be considered. The following are cited as examples and are not necessarily themes to pursue: *“Understanding farmer organizations and expanding their capacities for service provision,”; “Moving from harvest to market: How agribusiness can increase its effectiveness for small-holders.”; “Commercialising (or scaling up the production, processing and marketing of) a new commodity – or new technology” “Improving sustainable natural resource use, mitigating climate change risk and taking advantage of the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD) opportunities”*

The following principles will guide the selection of concept notes:

- Teams must include multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder partnerships;
- Focus should be on out-scaling research outputs from the most successful RUFORUM CGS projects or to link university researchers with on-going pilots

developed by partners (CGIAR centers, international NGO's, or extension services);

- Need to focus on a value chain approach and explore possibilities of focusing on an identified geographical area or commodity;
- An outline of how the process will be institutionalised to support future experiential learning and used to support curriculum reform;
- The depth and breath of partnerships will be a key criterion for proposal selection as will the level of participation of small farmers or service agents; and,
- Two pilot zones will be identified, one each in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Call for Concept Notes:

Please note that non compliance with these guidelines could lead to disqualification.

Concept note submission

- The grants are for up to a maximum of US\$300,000 to support one PhD and three M.Sc. students. Ph.D students should be registered in one of the RUFORUM Supported Regional Programmes. A list of RUFORUM supported programmes can be found on the RUFORUM website. Pre-proposals (preparatory) grants are not funded;
- The grants are to support participatory action research and training of Ph.D/ M.Sc. students;
- Applicants must initially present Concept Notes prior to preparation of Full Proposals;
- Each grant will have one University-based Principal Investigator working in collaboration with colleagues and non-university institutions. The RUFORUM Technical Committee is responsible for selecting concept notes and proposals and approving the grants. Members of the Technical Committee are not eligible to participate. Technical Committee members will not participate in deliberations while proposals from their institutions are being tabled;
- Under the CARP, a maximum institutional administrative support fee of 5% will be charged on all grants.

Eligibility and Compliance:

1. The Principal Investigators (PI) must be Ph.D holders (or in exceptional cases Full Professor without PhD), on full time employment in any one of the RUFORUM member universities. Applicant universities must have satisfied requirements to access funding from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
2. Applicants may not participate as PIs if they have pending accounting of RUFORUM funds or projects.
3. Concept notes will only be received in response to calls. The RUFORUM website will be kept updated with all calls.
4. All applications must be channeled through their respective University offices (usually the Deans) who should specify in a signed covering letter (scanned copy) that the proposals have undergone internal review within their respective institutions.
5. The research should demonstrate its relevance and/or response to demand. The final proposal must have a monitoring and evaluation component and a dissemination strategy for exploitation of the project results. For concept notes, in addition to indicating links with National Forums and demonstrating relevance, provide an indication of the particular issues to be researched by each of the participating students.
6. There must be partnerships with other institutions, faculties and/or departments, whether local, regional or international. Partners may include private universities, government departments, local and international research centres, NGOs/CBOs and agencies or other relevant institutions. In due course, the full proposals will require letters from each

partner, indicating their role, before they are sent for final selection to the Technical Committee.

7. Only concept notes that comply to the budget limit and duration of the project and are achievable within the time limit will be considered.
8. The proposal should follow the proposal writing guidelines attached.

Proposal review

This is a specific Call for Concept Notes focusing on community action research and enhancing social benefits of participating communities. PIs are encouraged to relate their proposals to the broad thematic/learning areas as described in the RUFORUM business plan (www.ruforum.org) and these include:

1. Engaging with communities to strengthen innovation capacity and knowledge generation;
2. Increasing productivity and enhancing sustainable natural resource use and management;
3. Risk analysis and designing coping strategies for mitigating against climate variability and change, and associated crop-animal-human health epidemics;
4. Exploiting potential of indigenous vegetables for food security;
5. A strong emphasis on some of the emerging research areas specifically: agribusiness, technology up-take pathways, farmer commodity value chains, climate change and variability, markets and local trade policy;

Proposals on topics which are outside these areas will be considered but their demand and the rationale for selection will need to be clearly articulated.

The Concept Notes will go through an internal review, a compliance review and Technical Committee Selection. A short list of selected concept notes will be developed and the full proposals will undergo compliance review, peer review and final Technical Committee selection and approval.

The Internal Review

To help to ensure high quality and that they are focused on outscaling RUFORUM/FORUM and related outputs, each Concept Note must be internally reviewed by the submitting Department or Faculty, normally through faculty peer review teams.

Compliance

Submitted Concept Notes will be screened by the RUFORUM Secretariat to ensure that they are compliant with guidelines provided. Non-compliant concept notes will be rejected. The Secretariat will then send them to the Technical Committee for selection.

Technical Committee Selection

Compliant concept notes will be conveyed to the Technical Committee for selection. A maximum of four Concept Notes will be selected by the Technical Committee and requested to prepare full proposals.

Criteria for Technical Committee evaluating concept notes

- Overall project design and feasibility, including write-up;
- Demonstration of how the project will address university-farmer linkages;
- Demonstration of multi-disciplinarity and multi-agency partnerships
- Interdisciplinarity along the value chain linking with a wide range of stakeholders, particularly the smallhold farmers and SMEs;

- A strong rationale for the demand for such a programme;
- Demonstration of previous RUFORUM/FORUM research on which this project is building on;
- Appropriateness/relevance and contribution to RUFORUM objectives;
- Clear identification of achievable research issues and objectives for each participating student indicating how farmers are involved in the research;

Revision of Proposals

Comments from the Technical Committee will be sent to PIs through the Secretariat. A proposal writing workshop will be organised to finalise the prepared full proposals of approximately four (4) full proposals from the selected Concept notes.

The External Review Process

All full proposals will be reviewed by at least two, and sometimes three, external reviewers. RUFORUM relies on the professional expertise, experience and judgment of the reviewers. Reviewers should be objectively critical providing rationale for their recommendations.

The emphasis for the reviewers is on the technical soundness of the proposal and its contribution to RUFORUM's goal of linking universities more closely into the rural development agenda. Reviewers will also consider in particular whether there is:

- Evidence of a good understanding of the literature and the theoretical basis for the research;
- Well articulated methodological framework with evidence of good understanding of applicable methods
- Contribution to scientific knowledge and methods

Selection by the Technical Committee:

Following external review, two proposals will be selected by the technical committee.

Criteria for selection and ranking by Technical Committee

- Good external reviews
- Clear articulation of problem/hypotheses and evidence of quality approach to research
- Realistic timeline and budgets and achievable objectives (not over-ambitious)
- Clearly defined role of the graduate students and relationship with client groups, supervisors and partners
- Participatory, action oriented research for rural development will be prioritised and any pure science enquiry will require strong motivation
- Alignment with RUFORUM goals and core values and that of the CARP Programme;
 - Proposals with recognition and steps to promote women and/or marginalised groups will receive some preference
 - Proposals that are inter-disciplinary are essential
 - Alignment with thematic areas will receive preference but well articulated proposals outside these areas will be considered,
 - Relevance; potential for subsequent internships, promoting sustainability and/or scaling up; quality, bringing new dimensions (value addition) etc will all be taken into consideration.
 - Response to demand by farmers/rural communities/governments/civil society
 - Partnership and the effective integration of partners in the process
- Evidence of systems for internal monitoring and evaluation of the ongoing research. Clear Results Framework and accountability to RUFORUM on expenditures and results.

- Clearly outlined dissemination plan

Grants awarded:

Grant letters are prepared for each approved proposal, and sent to the Vice Chancellor of the respective University. The grant award letter specifies the amount of the grant, purpose and responsibility of the university in monitoring the use of the grant funds and reporting requirements. Funds are only disbursed after full commitment, through signature by the respective University Senior Official. Grants awarded are published in the RUFORUM News and are posted in the RUFORUM website (www.ruforum.org).

Student recruitment

Once the proposal has been approved, the respective university, through its established procedures, recruits the graduate students. The names of students recruited and their biodata must be submitted to the Secretariat as soon as the universities have selected the students. The students will be expected to constitute themselves into groups within respective universities and across universities and become actively involved in RUFORUM activities which include retreats, workshops, seminars and conferences.

Student mentorship

The PIs of funded projects and their partners are expected to form mentorship consortia for their students within and across universities and partner institutions.

Reporting requirements

PIs are required to submit half-yearly progress reports (narrative and financial) to allow for close monitoring by RUFORUM Secretariat's Grants and M&E Units. In addition, students are expected to produce brief quarterly progress reports to the PI. Two months after termination of each grant, the PIs must submit a substantive report, detailing outputs and or outcomes of the project. Non-cost project extensions may be requested by the PI, but must be accompanied by satisfactory progress and financial reports.

Accounting of funds must be timely. If accounting of funds is not received within the authorized period, then RUFORUM suspends consideration of proposals from that university and any other remittance of funds to that university, until satisfactory account statements and reports have been received and approved by the Secretariat.

PIs are required to submit a copy of student's thesis and all publications to the Secretariat whenever these become available.

Proposal Submission

A soft copy, in Word, of the Concept Note with the complete application package must be submitted attached to the same email (including all supporting documents), . Where an applicant submits more than one proposal, each must be sent separately. Applications should be addressed to:

The Grants Manager

RUFORUM Secretariat,

[Call ID: *specify*]

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