

Proposal Development Workshop for Early- to Mid-Career African Scientists

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July 13-16, 2015

Introduction

The Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESA) is a joint initiative of the African Academy of Sciences and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This initiative is also established in partnership with three major funders, namely, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), the Wellcome trust and the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

AESA is a funding, strategy and think tank platform that will support research in Africa. The initial focus of the platform is in health sciences, although with time, other areas of priority concern, such as Food and Nutrition, Agriculture, Energy, etc. will be addressed. This project is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Grand Challenges team. Grand Challenges is a family of grant programs fostering innovation to solve key global health and development problems for those most in need. Grand Challenges partners, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Grand Challenges Canada, USAID's Grand Challenges for Development, Grand Challenges Brazil, and Grand Challenges India are all guided by the following set of principles:

Strategic and well-articulated grand challenges serve both to focus research efforts and to capture the imagination and engage the world's best researchers.

- Projects are selected based on public, transparent calls for proposals seeking the best ideas.
- Funders, investigators, and other stakeholders actively collaborate to accelerate progress and integrate advances to ensure these advances serve those most in need.
- Projects are selected not only for scientific excellence, but also for their likelihood to achieve the desired impact, and they are milestone driven and actively managed to that end
- Projects and investigators make global access commitments to ensure the fruits of their research are available to those most in need.

To date the Grand Challenges partners have collectively made over 1600 grants in 80 countries. The Gates Foundation is interested in continuing to increase the quality of good applications that comes into its Grand Challenges pipeline of ideas.

To this end, the AAS is planning to organize two proposal development workshop in 2015, the first of these workshops will be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in July 2015, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences (EAS).

Background and Rationale

One notable limitation to research output in Africa is the low quality of proposals submitted by early and mid-career scientists from African research centers and universities. Few of these end up attracting funding with a success rate of less than 20%. The majority get dismissed, not because they are lacking in scientific relevance but because they fail to meet required standards

set by the granting organizations in terms of rationale, approach, resources requested, or they simply fail to convince the reviewers. Thus the major aim of these workshops are to impart knowledge on key principles of writing grant winning proposals and thereby improve the quality of proposals.

Specifically, participants will also be inducted on the principles, requirements and formats of various applications, including Grand Challenges applications. Additional communication skill training will be given with the goal of equipping applicants with compelling story telling skills. Trainers and facilitators chosen from among AAS and EAS Fellows, BMGF staff and other experts will serve as resource persons for these workshops. The workshop intends to attract and encourage the best minds in Africa who are working in areas of public health and development. It is hoped workshops and other measures will make substantial contributions to improve the quality of applications coming from African institutions.

Objectives and expected outcomes

The workshop's aim is to:

Train a new cadre of African Scientists on proposal development techniques and prepare them to respond to any competitive Request for Proposals globally

- Boost capacity of African scientists in competing for research grants
- Raise research quality and output in Africa

Methodology and target group

Participation to the workshop will be selected from across the continent based on qualifications, experience, research interests and support from home institution. Scientists who are newly qualified as PhDs, are working as post-doctoral scientists, or are in mid-career (less than 5 years since PhD qualification) are particularly encouraged to apply. The scope of the workshops will focus on compelling story telling; walking through the grant making process; tips and tricks from mentors; grant management and project implementation. This will be delivered over three days in the form of plenary, interactive and parallel breakout sessions.

Applications:

Applications are invited from interested scientists who may benefit from participation in this workshop.

Applicants are required to fill the attached form and send to:

African Academy of Sciences, Email: workshop@aasciences.org; Tel: +254 725 290 145.

Deadline for Application is **20 April 2015 at 5pm East Africa Time**