STRENGTHENING THE CAPABILITY OF AFRICA'S SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS IN RESEARCH MANAGEMENT

AAU-AAS;

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SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS INITIATIVE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Research Management Project

GUIDELINES FOR
STAFF EXCHANGE & LEARNING VISITS

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Research Management Project

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAU	Association of African Universities
AAS	African Academy of Sciences
DFG	German Research Foundation
DFID	Department for International Development
GFGP	Good Financial Grant Practice
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
NRF	National Research Foundation
R&D	Research and Development
RQ+	Research Quality Plus
SGC	Science Granting Council
SGCI	Science Granting Councils Initiative
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
S&T	Science and Technology
STI	Science, Technology and Innovation

FOREWORD

The development of this document has been kindly supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada in collaboration with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), South Africa's National Research Foundation (NRF), and the German Research Foundation (DFG). The generous support was accessed via the competitive Research Management Project of the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI). The SGCI seeks to, *inter alia*, strengthen the ability of Science Granting Councils (SGCs) from 15 sub-Saharan African countries to manage research through training, technical support and peer-to-peer learning via visits to other Councils.

The purpose of this SGCI Research Management Guidelines for Staff Exchange and Learning Visits document is to assist interested SGCs across Africa to effectively engage in the process of international staff exchanges, providing them with a clear idea of the key issues and processes involved.

The SGCI Staff Exchange Programme will assist the SGCs in Africa to share skills and knowledge, as well as foster best practice, and ultimately help to develop employees and their organisational capabilities. Participation in the SGCI Staff Exchange Programme brings fresh ideas, skills and resources to areas where it is needed most for overall organizational progress.

Sustainable growth in Africa is contingent on the capacity of national governments to train human capital that will help carry out and support this effort. In this process, the SGCI Staff Exchange Programme plays a key role in training qualified individuals who will be capable of implementing new technologies and using innovative methods in the SGC work environment. The SGCI Staff Exchange Programme Guidelines document delineates the salient features of what the Staff Exchange Programme is all about. It is expected that the content of this document will be useful to African SGCs, higher education policy makers, scholars, and other key players in the field.

Prof. Etienne E. Ehile
Secretary General

About the SGCI

The Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) is a multi-donor Initiative organized into Phase 1 (SGCI-1: 2015 – 2020) and Phase 2 (SGCI-2: 2018-2023) and supported by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and South Africa's National Research Foundation (NRF).

Since its inception in 2015, the Initiative has been strengthening the capacities of Science Granting Councils (SGCs) in 15 sub-Saharan African countries (Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Ghana, Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana) in order to support research and evidence-based policies that will contribute to economic and social development. Specifically, the Initiative is strengthening the ability of participating Councils to: i) manage research; ii) design and monitor research programmes, and to formulate and implement policies based on the use of robust science, technology and innovation (STI) indicators; iii) support knowledge transfer to the private sector, and; iv) establish partnerships among Councils and with other science system actors. Two crosscutting dimensions, namely research excellence and gender equality and inclusivity have been added as new activities in SGCI-2.

The SGCI's principal outputs include i) more effective research management practices among Councils, ii) strengthened ability of Councils to design and monitor research programmes, and to formulate and implement policies based on the use of robust STI indicators, iii) increased knowledge exchange with the private sector, and iv) increasingly coordinated and networked Councils. More effective Councils are expected to strengthen national science, technology and innovation systems, and ultimately lead to nationally-led research that contributes to development in participating countries.

About the SGCI 2 Research Management Project

The Science Granting Councils Initiative Phase 1 (SGCI-1) Project has helped in strengthening the ability of Science Granting Councils from 15 sub-Saharan African countries to manage research through training, technical support and peer-to-peer learning via visits to other Councils. Despite these impressive achievements, there are still some gaps in knowledge and skills, as well as operational challenges in research management that call for attention.

The Association of African Universities (AAU) and the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) are the consortium partners for the SGCI-2 Research Management project. Both AAU and AAS are two continental higher education bodies with experience in research management, and the AAU has participated in the SGCI-1 as part of the "Theme 3" Consortium. The SGCI-1 provided the AAU with an invaluable experience and lessons of working with and being part of activities taking place at the level of national science systems. The SGCI-1 experience and lessons learnt has been brought to bear on the SGCI-2 and is helping strengthen the capacity of Science Granting Councils to effectively and efficiently play their essential roles in research, knowledge and innovation. The SGCI-2 Research Management project will strengthen the capacity of the Councils to be familiar with the key elements of research excellence including research ethics, open science, and Research Quality Plus (RQ+), as well as enhance their role as catalysts for bilateral, multilateral and intersectoral research and scientific cooperation and collaboration.

The overall goal of the SGCI-2 Research Management project is to fortify the capability of Science Granting Councils in explicit areas of research management, namely research excellence (particularly the knowledge and use of tools such as Research Quality Plus framework), research ethics, emerging scientific practices (especially open data, open access and citizen science) Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP) benchmarking exercise and development of online grant management systems (including databases of peer reviewers).

About the SGCs

Science granting councils (SGCs) are government ministries, agencies, or specific institutions that fund science (activities in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities) and research.

In Africa, such agencies are identified by various names even though their functions are similar. The SGCs include national commissions for science and technology, national sciences councils and national academies of science. The SGCs are essential actors in national systems of innovation. The SGCs perform a number of crucial functions that contribute to the effective and efficient functioning of such systems, amongst others: disbursing funds for research and development (R&D); building research capacity through appropriate scholarships and bursaries; setting and monitoring research agendas and priorities; advising on science, technology and innovation (STI) policies; managing bilateral and multilateral science and technology (S&T) agreements; and assessing the communication, uptake and impact of publicly funded research. Ideally, such councils act as fair and disinterested agents of government while, at the same time, representing the interests of the scientific community nationally, regionally and internationally. They are crucial intermediaries in the flow of international funding and technical support to institutions that perform R&D in a country.

Staff Exchange Programme Rationale

The SGCI Research Management Guidelines for Staff Exchange Programme aims at facilitating SGC staff mobility and encouraging networking among SGCs in Africa, as well as contributing to improvements in the quality of work and professional development in the African SGCs. Under the Staff Exchange Programme personnel of new or emerging SGCs are sponsored to undertake visits to more established SGCs in Africa for purposes of learning from them and improving their skills for better service delivery upon getting back home. The SGCI Staff Exchange missions allow SGC staff to get acquainted with different work environments, get mentored and meet their colleagues involved in the same profession and in the long term help build cooperation, collaboration and networking between sending and hosting SGCs.

The SGCI Research Management Guidelines for Staff Exchange Programme are one means of broadening an individual's experience and the SGC's overall capability. The benefits of exchange programmes include sharing skills, ideas, best practices and staff development.

Staff Exchange Programme Objectives

As the Staff Exchange Programme gives an opportunity to network SGC partners to gain and share experience, knowledge and ideas, its key objectives include:

1 Improving the quality and skills of SGC staff members who may lack skills in certain areas.

2 Sharing good practices, new ideas and information among the SGC partners.

3 Promoting networking among SGC staff.

4 Promoting cooperation between the host and guest SGCs.

How the Staff Exchange Programme can help Staff

The SGCI-2 Research Management Project Staff Exchange Programme is a training programme and by definition will require considerable effort, commitment and adaptability from exchanges or staff of beneficiary SGCs. The SGCI Staff Exchange Programme is meant to provide greater professional and personal development for SGC colleagues. The staff of one SGC benefit from spending time at another SGC where there is significant opportunity to share with and to learn from counterparts. The rewards of the Staff Exchange Programme are considerable and include:

- Career development.
- Learning your work supports a bigger picture.
- Building international relationships.
- Reviewing, thinking and learning about new challenges.
- Reflecting and re-valuating the challenges in your job position.
- Developing insights and cultural understanding.
- Sharing skills and experiences.
- Influencing the thinking and behaviour of yourself and others.
- An opportunity for personal development and cultural exposure.

How the Staff Exchange Programme can help Beneficiary SGCs

The SGCI Staff Exchange Programme expands and deepens staff members' knowledge about each other's councils and strengthens the alliance. The Staff Exchange Programme can help beneficiary SGCs as their staff seek to learn from partner institutions and build a network of international peers. The Staff Exchange Programme can help beneficiary SGCs in several ways including:

Foster professional development for individuals with potential for accelerated learning.

Develop individual and organisational capability.

Reinvigorate existing staff to develop their skills further, shift thinking and rebuild enthusiasm.

Facilitate and share knowledge and best practices between agencies

Build industry relationships that enable the transfer of skills, experiences, and knowledge both now and into the future

Build each participating agency's reputation as an employer of choice.

Participation in the Staff Exchange Programme: Key Information

The SGCI-2 Research Management Project Staff Exchange Programme is open to all relevant staff of the SGCs in Africa. The staff (or exchangees) who will participate in the Research Management Project Staff Exchange Programme must be officially nominated by the heads of their respective SGCs. This is because the Staff Exchange Programme seeks to empower staff of new or emerging SGCs on the continent with the skills and knowledge needed to run their outfits by spending time with more established SGCs. The AAU will be ready to sponsor one or two (maximum) staff of a new SGC to spend one week in a more established SGC in Africa for skills enhancement. However, the number staff from a beneficiary SGC may increase depending on availability of funds, and the capacity and willingness of the host SGCs to receive additional staff.

The SGC staff are encouraged to stay longer if this could benefit the achievement of the exchange goals but the special arrangement must be agreed between the two SGCs, while associated costs must be borne by the SGC sending its staff for the exchange programme.

Once an agreement has been reached in terms of sending staff from a beneficiary SGC to a host SGC for the Staff Exchange Programme, the host SGC should appoint a contact person who will be responsible for the logistical and administrative aspects of the exchange and should be in touch with his/her counterpart at the beneficiary SGC in order to ensure a seamless Staff Exchange visit.

The staff guests from the beneficiary SGC in the Staff Exchange Programme should respect confidentiality rules concerning the host SGC organisation which includes nondisclosure of confidential matters learned during the exchange.

Targeted Learning Areas During the Staff Exchange Programme

The SGCI-2 Research Management Project Staff Exchange Programme is expected to cover a wide range of targeted learning areas during exchange visits including but not limited to:
1. Online Grants Management Systems
2. Research Management and Monitoring
3. Organizational Development
4. Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP)
5. Organizational Policies and Guidelines

Where the Staff Exchange Programme Will Hold

The SGCI International Staff Exchange Programme is restricted to only the personnel of SGCs. The Exchange destinations will depend on where positions are available. The AAU will advertise for available visit destinations and interested SGCs will officially apply to send their staff to those SGCs indicating why they need to embark upon the Staff Exchange Programme. For a list of participating SGCs which are eligible for the SGCI International Staff Exchange Programme, please refer to the Appendix 1 of this document or visit the AAU website (www.aau.org) and the SGCI website
 (https://www.idrc.ca/en/initiative/science-granting-councils-initiative-sub-saharan-africa).

How Much the Staff Exchange Programme Will Cost

The SGCI International Staff Exchange Programme is free of costs in the sense that the beneficiary SGCs are not expected to be charged any amount of money as training fee for a maximum of two staff from each beneficiary SGC. However, funding for the programme is expected to be provided by development partners interested in supporting the SGCI International Staff Exchange Programme. Where such funding is not available, the beneficiary SGCs will be expected to fund the participation of their staff in the exchange learning visit and training programme. In contributing to the participation costs of their staff members undertaking the exchange programme, the beneficiary SGCs are expected to pay for, among other things, direct travel costs (international and local); hotel accommodation; feeding; visa and vaccination costs; health insurance; and any additional cost that may be incurred while on exchange.

There are no costs involved for the host SGCs. The costs for the staff members participating in the programme as guests are covered by their own organisations or via funding support from development partners, as indicated previously. These costs are eligible on the basis of the work programmes and budgets approved by the SGCs themselves.

Because of the importance of the SGCI International Staff Exchange Programme in promoting skills enhancement, network, collaboration and tangible outcomes for the participating SGCs, it is imperative to sustain the SGCI Staff Exchange Program beyond the lifetime of the current the SGCI-2 Research Management Project.

Staff Exchange Programme Host and Guest Organization

The SGCs are welcome to apply as host or guest organisations for the Staff Exchange Programme:

Host: The SGC Host Organization is an organisation that is willing to welcome SGC staff members to exchange knowledge and expertise in different SGC activities (including Disbursement of various categories of research grants; Disbursements of masters and doctoral students' scholarships and loans; Funding support for infrastructure development; Valorisation of results or dissemination and uptake of research reports and findings; Supporting scientific publishing/scientific journals; Advocacy for STI; Collection of data and statistics on S&T and R&D; Capacity building/training of researchers;   Policy advice; Setting research agendas/research priorities; Management of scientific collaborations and agreements; and Coordination of the national innovation system).

Guest: The SGC Guest Organization is an organisation that appoints one or several staff members to visit a host organisation, according to specific needs and/or interest in the given business region or field of activities.

## Staff Exchange Programme Evaluation

At the end of the SGCI Staff Exchange period, every staff guest is expected to fill in a short online evaluation report in the AAU staff exchange web-based platform.

The main purpose of evaluating the SGCI Staff Exchange training programme is to gain knowledge about whether it has achieved or failed its objectives. Analysing the SGCI Staff Exchange training programme event is expected to help improve the outcomes of future trainings to a considerable extent. Because evaluation of the exchange programme is essential for future planning, each individual who participates in the exchange programme and the host SGC should give feedback regarding the exchange experience and any suggestions for future changes in the programme.

To this end, the SGCI Staff Exchange training programme evaluation targets both the personnel that has/have undertaken the training and the host SGC institution. Appendix 2 provides the Staff Exchange Evaluation Form for beneficiary SGC personnel undertaking the exchange programme, while Appendix 3 presents the Staff Exchange Evaluation Form for host SGC. The completed evaluation forms (containing structured and open-ended questions) will be analysed and used to improve future SGCI Staff Exchange training programmes.

Contact Information

Interested SGCs that want to benefit from the Staff Exchange Programme, whether as hosts or guests, should contact the AAU Director of Research & Academic Planning (jcmba@aau.org).

Staff exchanging information and knowledge   *Happy staff in a pose*
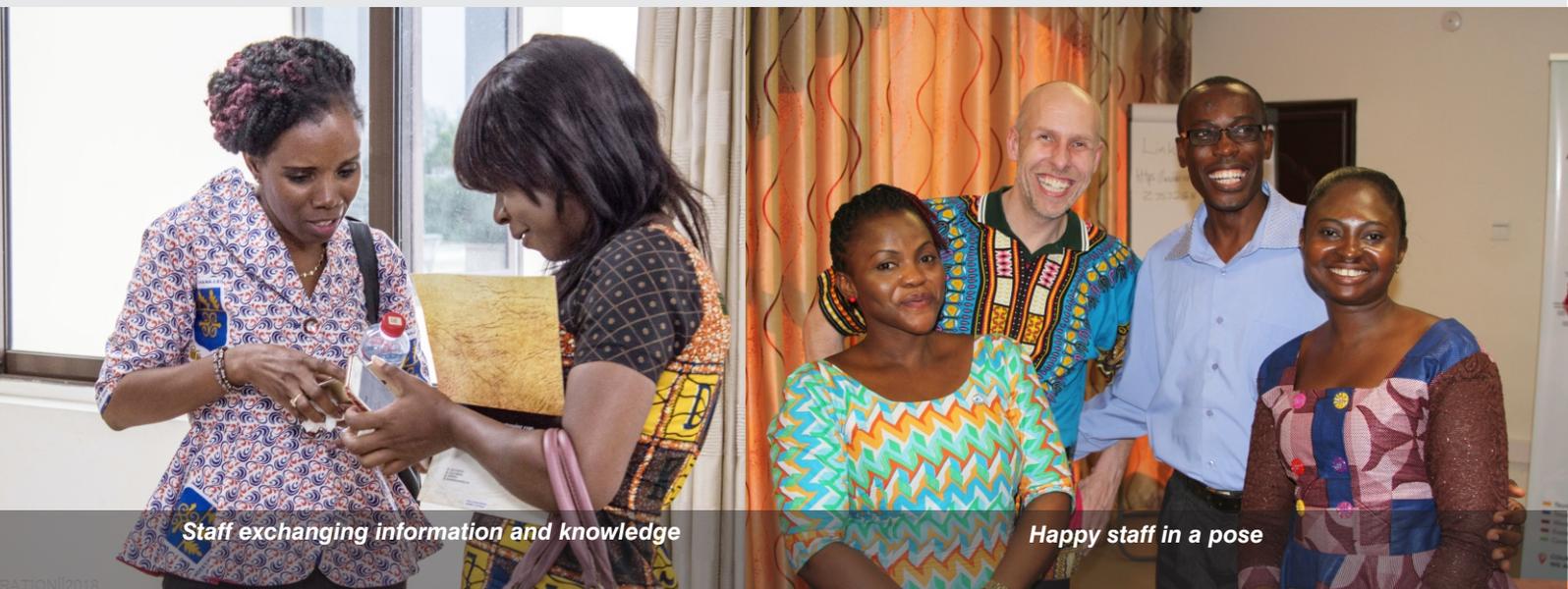
LIST OF PARTICIPATING SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS IN AFRICA

S/No.	Name of the Science Granting Council	Country
1.	Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology	Botswana
2.	Le fonds National pour la Recherche et de l'Innovation pour le Developpement - FONRID	Burkina Faso
3.	Programme d'Appui Strategique a la Recherche Scientifique - PASRES	Cote d'Ivoire
4.	Ministry of Innovation and Technology	Ethiopia
5.	Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI)	Ghana
6.	National Research Fund (NRF)	Kenya
7.	National Commission for Science and Technology	Malawi
8.	Fundo Nacional de Investigacao	Mozambique
9.	National Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRST)	Namibia
10.	National Council for Science and Technology	Rwanda
11.	Le Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche/ Ministry of Higher Education and Research	Senegal
12.	Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH)	Tanzania
13.	Uganda National Council for Science and Technology	Uganda
14.	National Science and Technology Council	Zambia
15.	Research Council of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe

Group photo of a section of SGCI stakeholders

3. How do you anticipate your exchange experience will contribute to your professional performance within your own organization?

_____

_____

_____

4. What changes would you like to see to improve the future exchange programme?

_____

_____

_____

5. Do you have any other comments about the exchange programme?

_____

_____

_____

Signature & Date of the Exchange Personnel _____

Please return to Exchange Coordinator at _____.

APPENDIX 2:
STAFF EXCHANGE EVALUATION
(for beneficiary SGC personnel undertaking the exchange programme)

NAME _____

TITLE/POSITION _____

NAME OF SGC _____

HOST SGC _____

SGC SUPERVISOR'S NAME & POSITION_____

SGC UNIT WHERE POSTED_____

DATES OF EXCHANGE _____   to   _____

Brief description of activities while at Host SGC:

1. What were the best aspects of the experience?

_____

_____

_____

2. What difficulties did you encounter with the staff exchange programme?

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX 3:
STAFF EXCHANGE EVALUATION (for host SGC)

To: (Staff Exchange Coordinator)

For: _____
                                    (Exchange Staff)

Host Position/Title: _____

Host Organization: _____ Te lephone: _____

Dates of Exchange: _____ to _____

Exchange Div/Dept: _____

(Please circle one number)

1. To what extent was the expertise/experience of the exchanged candidate appropriate to the exposure s/he had in your organization?

☐ *Not at all*	☐ *poor*	☐ *good*	☐ *A great deal*

2. To what extent was the exchange experience useful for your organization?

☐ *Not at all*	☐ *poor*	☐ *good*	☐ *A great deal*

3. Would you consider a faculty/staff exchange assignment again?

☐ *Not likely*	☐ *May*	☐ *Likely*	☐ *Very likely*

4. What difficulties did you encounter with the staff exchange programme? (Please be specific and candid.)

_____

_____

5. What changes would you like to see to improve the exchange program?

_____

_____

_____

6. How do you anticipate this particular exchange experience contributing to the enhanced performance of your organization?

_____

_____

_____

7. Please provide any other comments about the exchange programme that you may have

_____

_____

_____

Please return to Exchange Coordinator at _____.

@ATPSN/SGCI