

Eastern and Southern Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence Project

Terms of Reference
for
Regional Facilitation Unit

I. INTRODUCTION

The World Bank is developing a regional higher education project to promote regional specialization among participating universities within areas that address particular common regional development challenges and strengthen the capacities of these universities to deliver high quality training and applied research. The higher order objective of the project is to meet the demand for skills required for Africa's development in areas such as agriculture, energy, extractive industries, etc., while strengthening best African universities in education and training in agriculture, industry, health, applied statistics, and education. This project is the Eastern and Southern Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence Project (ACE II). Eight countries in the region – Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia –are participating in the ACE II project.

The ACE II project will be implemented by the competitively selected African Centers of Excellence (ACEs), with project facilitation and coordination support from the Regional Facilitation Unit (RFU) and technical assistance from selected consultants as necessary. Each individual ACE is responsible for strategic planning and implementation of its selected proposal and approved implementation plan, with appropriate monitoring, evaluation and reporting. The ACE will also be responsible for all fiduciary aspects required under the World Bank guidelines for financial management, procurement and environment and social safeguards. The RFU is a regional body with at least five professional staff that deals with project coordination and facilitation, support to ACEs for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and various technical assistance as necessary. The RFU will have a team that is selected to assist and complete the tasks outlined below. This team is expected to include a Project Facilitator responsible for the overall project coordination and facilitation, and an adequate number of staff in key function areas, including a finance officer, a procurement officer, an M&E officer, and a partnership facilitator. The ACE II project will operate under the overall guidance and oversight of a Regional Steering Committee (RSC) whose main task is to set project preparation and implementation guidelines, review results and progress, oversee the RFU and steer ACEs to ensure the achievement of the project objectives.

II. OBJECTIVES

Given its regional nature, the ACE II project requires a Regional Facilitation Unit (RFU) to coordinate and facilitate regional activities for the ACEs and partner institutions, and to be responsible for preparing and implementing regional activities for participating in the project. The RFU will not implement or compete with the ACEs in the project implementation. Rather, the RFU will work in close collaboration with the ACEs to ensure smooth operation of the project and will support the project implementation through:

- i. Facilitate the selection of ACEs and other project preparation activities;
- ii. Ensure effective and efficient coordination and facilitation of regional activities;
- iii. Support the monitoring and evaluation needs of the selected ACEs as well as aggregated M&E needs of the overall project;
- iv. Support the Regional Steering Committee in delivering its tasks;
- v. “ Provide capacity building support for partnership development and to implement the scholarship program
- vi. Provide information and assistance to institutions that wish to form partnerships with the ACEs; and
- vii. Facilitate knowledge-sharing and network building among the ACEs.

III. SCOPE OF WORK

The RFU is expected to support the ACE II project in the following specific areas:

1. During the project preparation phase, the RFU will:
 - (i) Prepare the call for proposals with the guidelines from the RSC;
 - (ii) Coordinate and facilitate the selection and evaluation process of proposals;
 - (iii) Support preparation of Memorandum of Understanding for ACEs with partner institutions;
 - (iv) Compile and aggregate data from ACEs to create a baseline study for project results framework; and
 - (v) Fulfill the secretariat role for and provide support to the Regional Steering Committee.
2. Implement Component 2 of the project, i.e., regional project coordination, M&E, and tertiary education support to small and fragile countries participating in the project. The RFU will:
 - (i) Promote and implement regional activities in the region, including supporting the PASET Regional Benchmarking Initiative in order to improve the quality of regional institutions;
 - (ii) Provide support for (a) Capacity Building for Partnership Development with the Private Sector and (b) Competitive Scholarships Program;
 - (iii) Support the capacity building, knowledge sharing and coordination among the ACEs and partner institutions through joint lessons learning and capacity building

- events;
 - (iv) Play a facilitation role when needed among different project stakeholders, including supporting the coordination between the ACEs and concerned ministries/departments of respective national governments as well as the World Bank;
 - (v) Organize two annual supervision missions and semi-annual meetings between ACEs and the RFU;
 - (vi) Support the ACEs to prepare and complete the required semi-annual reports on project implementation, prior to the supervision missions;
 - (vii) Coordinate and finance the activities of the RSC, including facilitating the bi-annual RSC meetings; and
 - (viii) Support the provision of technical assistance to ACEs in thematic and other tertiary education areas when requested.
3. Provide M&E support to the ACEs in the following particular areas:
- (i) Overall data collection for M&E;
 - (ii) Support in M&E activities;
 - (iii) Aggregate reports from all the ACEs into a summarized report for the entire project;
 - (iv) Guide the operations of M&E Specialists in the ACEs and partner institutions through providing advice and support on addressing issues (problems and solutions) raised by ACEs and partner institutions;
 - (v) Support the development of procedures for regular monitoring of performance of the ACEs;
 - (vi) Conduct/commission evaluation of training programs offered by the ACEs and other relevant studies, and disseminate the findings; and
 - (vii) Publish and update regularly the RFU website and make the ACE II project related information available to the public, e.g., results of proposal submission and selection, findings from M&E studies, and other information required under the Disclosure Management Framework.
4. Provide support to interested institutions in partnering with the ACEs.

IV. REQUIRED QUALIFICATION

The Regional Facilitation Unit will need to be a regional organization which is involved in capacity building in Africa and has credibility within the higher education community in the region. While the RFU is not a beneficiary itself and has extensive capacity building and higher education experience, participating in the ACE II project will enhance the overall capacity of the RFU.

The RFU will be selected from existing regional organizations involved in capacity building in higher education in Africa, according to the following criteria:

- (i) Headquartered in Africa, with an independent legal entity status;
- (ii) Experience in managing donor funds;
- (iii) Long-term mandate in higher education;
- (iv) Established working relationships with higher education institutions;
- (v) Evidence of experience in working across sectors;
- (vi) Extensive experience in capacity building;
- (vii) Evidence (based on due diligence assessment) of well-established fiduciary capacity or a credible plan to build such capacity in procurement, financial management, and environment;
- (viii) Evidence of regional coverage across thematic areas;
- (ix) Ability to work in English; French and Portuguese desired; and
- (x) Experience with project implementation and coordination.