Towards Effective Grantmanship

Funding for Research: Opportunities and Challenges

JPR Ochieng’-Odero PhD, HSc
Trustee, NRF

September 15th, 2016
The questions you need to be reflecting on:

- Why is there so much Cap⁻ve within a sea of sustained investment in the Cap⁺ve activities?
- How do we proactively re-design and reinvigorate research training to yield better returns?

After more than 40 years:

✓ I invite you to reflect with me
1982-1984: worked as Animal Husbandry Officer with the National Beekeeping Station of the Ministry of Livestock Development

- Initial exposure in research
- Research Assistant to Prof. Isaac Kirea Kigatiira who was completing his PhD in Cambridge on migratory patterns of the African honeybee *Apis mellifera mellifera*

http://yoroguyo.co.ke/content/honeybee-man
Closely mentored by TRO:

- TRO was founder Director of ICIPE (1970-1994)
- Seconded to Planning Development Unit of ICIPE in 1993
- Worked closely with Thomas R. Odhiambo to mobilize leadership and funding to support R&D on Africa (RANDFORUM/AAS)

Lessons and culture of regular performance evaluations at all levels

http://yoroguyo.co.ke/content/reminiscing-being-career-scientist-africa-part-1
National health capacity strengthening

Joined CNHR in 2008:

- Began operations in 2008
- Collaborative initiative
- Built capacity through a research leader model
- Established 4 Centers of Research Excellence
- Provided Research Leadership and Career Development Grants

View the CNHR Documentary on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hh2BL0hnFG8
PART 1:
Recent Performance of the University Sector in accessing Research Funding in Kenya
Authority and character of the NRF

Establishment: ST&I Act No. 28, Section 32 of 2013
- National reach in all its funding
- Funding all sectors of the economy

Function: Mobilize, Allocate and Manage funding
- Creation of knowledge and innovations in ST&I for the growing of national economy

Operations: Several Strategic funding schemes
- Training fellowships, multidisciplinary research grants, institutional support grants etc.

Collaborative Funding: To meet strategic objectives
- Newton Utafiti Fund is but one example
What is the strategic objective of NRF funding?

**General Principles for Accessing Funding from the NRF**

- Mobilize, allocate and manage financial resources to facilitate an effective National Innovation System that would create required knowledge and innovations in all fields of Science and Technology for the growing economy

**Hence:**

- Production world class researchers **is a priority**
- Building world class research facility **is a priority**
- Developing enabling environments and systems that facilitate thriving of research culture **is a priority**
NRF Inaugural Calls in November, 2016:

- Three (3) Research Calls
- Research Training (Masters 396; Doctoral 439)
- Multidisciplinary Collaborative Proposals: 511
- Infrastructure Support 195 (to be evaluated later)
Design of the call:

British Council (Lead Organization)

In partnership with

Newton Fund
UK

National Research Fund
Kenya

Areas:

- Health: Systems Research, mental, NCDs, re-emerging diseases
- Food Security; sustainable and renewable energy
- Environment & Climate change; Economic Transition skills (SMEs)
- Governance, Conflict Resolution and Security

Budget:

Pounds 700,000: Newton
KShs 20 Million: NRF
Types of grants available from NRF

Strategic Programmes:

- **Research Partnership Funding** *(NACOSTI, KENIA, CUE)*
- **Competitive Research Grants** *(Research training PhD/Masters/PDF)*
- **Bilateral Funding** *(International funding agencies e.g. Norton Fund)*
- **Strategic Research Funding** *(Special priority research)*
- **Research Priming Grants** *(Proof of concept)*
- **Contract Research Funding** *(Linkage with private sector)*
- **Participation in Global Research Citizenry** *(e.g. Conf. attendance)*
All eligible applications for NRF funding have to undergo a formal merit review process undertaken by experienced external and independent peer reviewers.

Reviewers provide recommendations to the Board of Trustees of the NRF through its Technical Committee (TC).

Provide detailed feedback to applicants to assist them improve future applications submitted to NRF or elsewhere.
Selection of reviewers

Entirely based on competence:

- Are eminent academicians and researchers
- Have a wide experience in academics, research as well as in policy matters
- Are people of high integrity
- Posses wide experience in the review of research proposals and grants, and posses excellent analytical and writing skills
Conflict of interest means that an individual has to declare any academic, financial or other interests that could (be perceived to) compromise the performance of the individual with respect to the matter being reviewed.
Examples of CoI’s:

- From the same organization as an applicant
- A close personal friend or relative of an applicant
- Involved in long-standing scientific, professional or personal differences with the applicant (leading to bias)
- In a position to gain or lose financially from the outcome of the application
- A supervisor, project leader, co-investigator or advisor to a project for which grant is being sought
- In the management group (Head of Department, Dean, Principal, Head of Research Group) of any organization / section of an organization at which the applicant is based
- Actively involved in permanent advisory board or teaching/research section and being on staff of the same section of an organization at which an applicant is employed
- A referee for the applicant
In case of **uncertainty** a conservative **attitude is recommended**

(i.e. if in doubt, **opt out**)
NRF Performance of infrastructure by discipline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Received</th>
<th>126</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shortlisted</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses by theme of applicants</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Sciences</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological Sciences</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Sciences</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRF Call</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multidisciplinary Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>0</td>
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Total Received Applications for Kenya Awarded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
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<td>12%</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Cutting</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14%</td>
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Inaugural Call in July 2016:

- One Research Call
- Institutional Links: 11 applications reviewed
- Trilateral (Kenya, UK, SA) Researcher Links: 12
- Bilateral (Kenya, UK) Researcher Links: 4
### Performance of 2016 Newton Utafiti call

| Total Received | 50 |
| Applications for Kenya | 27 |
| Awarded | 14 |

#### Responses by theme of applicants

<table>
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2nd Call in April 2017:

- Institutional Links: 71 (TUK: 1)
- Trilateral (Kenya, UK, SA) Researcher Links: 13 (TUK: 0)
- Bilateral (Kenya, UK) Researcher Links: 16 (TUK: 0)
## Lessons learnt from the performance of the calls

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<th>Multi-disciplinary</th>
<th>Infrastructure upgrade</th>
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</thead>
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<td>● Considerable appetite for research funding by higher education sector</td>
<td>● Lengthier process of review which will include site visits and interview of the teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● General lack of understanding on what was expected under this call</td>
<td>● Institutions need to prioritize their applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Need for better support for university researchers</td>
<td>● Proposals should include explanations of how the infrastructure will be maintained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Need take care of national priorities</td>
<td>● Identification of experienced peer reviewers could be a challenge</td>
</tr>
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What is the EARF?

• The EARF is a funding facility managed by PwC on behalf of DFID’s East Africa Research Hub (EARH).

• Through this facility, DFID’s country offices in eastern Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan) are supported to use evidence in order to drive development impact and value for money, linking with UK’s wider science and research agenda in the region.

• The projects that EARF handles are categorized under two funding windows, namely:
  – The Regional Research Programme
  – The East Africa Country Research Programme
Procurement process is flexible and adaptable to the needs of each research project.

Since inception in September 2015, the EARF has applied the following procurement options:

- **Open and Full Competition: One Stage** - 10 research projects
- **Open and Full Competition: Two Stage** - 3 research projects
- **Restricted Competition: One Stage** - 4 research projects
- **Restricted Competition: Two Stage** - 1 research project
### EARF Call on Urbanization

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total received</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortlisted</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International bidders</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional bidders</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is our EARF funding experience saying?

- Our regional research suppliers (Universities etc.) are badly out-competed by others

  Of the 15 calls made since 2015 only 3 have been won by regional organisations

- Poorly conceived, designed and written proposals, poor teaming and poor track record

Common Shortcomings found Application Bids to the East Africa Research Fund (EARF)

http://www.earesearchfund.org/common-mistakes-and-shortcomings-application-bids
Lessons from CNHR are no different

Very few young researchers can write a convincing proposal

Performance of the CNHR DRePHA Call, 2016
- Total Applications received: 73
- Applications from Public Universities: 42
- Applications from Private Universities: 7
- Applications from women researchers: 25
- Shortlisted applications: 36
- Applications recommended for funding: 19
- Applications from TUK: 0
Common reasons why proposals do not rate highly

- Not providing a financial risk and ViM analysis
- Failure to use templates
- Not keeping to the deadline for submission
- Not meeting the eligibility criteria
- Failure to describe a clear research methodology
- Lack of narrative explanations to explain budget costs
- Lack of clear demonstration of capacity to undertake the research work
- Quality of personnel not well-articulated and demonstrated
- Page limits as specified in the ToR are not adhered to
- Lack of well described supportive annexes
- Failure to benchmarking professional fees
What must we do to change?

PART 2:

What investment and management models do universities need to increasingly adopt to ensure effective research training?
Ultimate Goal 1:

Avail research resources that attract researchers to respond by writing proposals
Ultimate Goal 2:

Ensure that our researchers are skilled in writing winning proposals that can resource research and training at the universities.
Ultimate Goal 3:

⇒ Ensure that our universities provides the required enabling research management environment that encourages researchers to wish to pursue proposal grant writing and do research.

**Sourcing Inlets**
- Research and Policy Institutions
- Private Universities

**Programme Activity**
- Graduate level Health Research Internship
- Masters level Research Training Programme
- Doctoral-level Research Training Programme
- Research Career Leadership Development (RCLD)
- Senior Research Fellows (SRF)

**Outputs**
- Informed research interns
- Trained junior-level scientists
- PhD-level trained young scientists
- Postdoctoral level scientists
- Experienced researchers leading well resourced teams on research rich career paths

**Capacity Intervention**
1. Open competitive call
2. Open competitive call
3. Open competitive call
4. Open competitive call
5. Open competitive call
What do we need to do?

Universities must invest in effective research training and management

- Ensure that research training is managed more effectively
- Make sure the graduate output is able to compete in the global marketplace
- Build skills in other areas beyond the focal discipline
- Universities must actively engage NRF

- Turn supervisors to be ‘mentors’ for research career development
  - Involve fellows in writing of papers and grants
  - Provide career opportunities for fellows
  - Give pastoral care and moral support

Introduce & nurture research-rich career pathway in the Universities
Every university needs to establish a Grants Management and Coordination Office

Review the new standard called Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP) advanced by the AAS

Affiliate with the Eastern Africa Research Innovations Management Association (EARIMA)

Get in touch with Prof. Lucy Irungu of UoN who is the Kenya Rep.
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East Africa Research Fund (EARF)
Thank you all for your kind attention