



Queries and responses on the request for research proposals

Firm-level and tax analysis using micro data

Question 1:

I am a PhD student in economics. I have been working along the same theme of the call for my PhD thesis. Unfortunately I have been using the old Regional Programme on Enterprise Development database to carry out my work due to unavailability of easily accessible database. I would like to know whether I can participate in the call as a student. Is it necessary to be in a team?

Answer:

Proposals are welcome from individuals, groups, and NGOs. Students are welcome to send proposals.

An important consideration for any proposal is being able to physically access the data sets. Due to the confidential nature of the data, access is only permitted at official facilities in Pretoria. This may be a prohibitive barrier for someone based outside South Africa.

Question 2:

1. Would it be possible (in addition to firm-level data) to obtain from the statistical office information on ICT (information and communication technology) use, or e-government implementation at the region/municipality/city/town level?
2. Would it be possible (in addition to firm-level data) to obtain from the statistical office either individual-level data on propensity to save (how much money individual keeps in bank) (maybe it can come from labor survey or other individual/household surveys), or the data on bank's balance sheets and location of banks, or simply the same information on banks but aggregated at the region/municipality/city/town level.

Answer:

An objective of the overall effort is to attempt to link data sets. This is almost invariably difficult for a series of reasons. It is incumbent on the proposing team to argue that any proposed matching is feasible, relevant, and can be done in a way that preserves confidentiality.

Question 3:

1. The period of time one would have to work with the data specified in the call is quite a lot shorter than the period usually required to produce an academic research paper. Would the researchers lose access to the data on 30 Sept 2016, or is it instead the case that a working paper has to be ready by then but the researchers can continue accessing the data beyond that date to finalize a version of the paper that is ready for journal submission?
2. Would the researchers have to be physically present in South Africa to work with the data or can remote access be granted?

Answer:

At the moment, the data are only available within the Treasury building in Pretoria. This is, we realize, a significant barrier for those outside of RSA.

On the first question, facilities are, at this moment, a constraint (and part of the reason for the call). Our hope is to organize a new location outside of NT over the next few months. This would more easily allow continuations.

Question 4:

Can I submit a proposal on any of the broad themes mentioned in the call such as determinants of productivity, investment, employment, exports, profitability and output by different firms with different characteristics (incl. size, sector, ownership, export intensity, degree of competition faced, age, past behaviour, and skills makeup) with reference to India or it should be related to South Africa.

Answer:

The call focuses on administrative data for South Africa. We would expect a focus on these data. In addition, due to the confidential nature of the data, analysis must proceed while physically present in Pretoria South Africa.

Question 5:

Regarding research proposal 9, objective 2.

There are a large number of government incentives available to firms in South Africa. When looking at the impact of tax and non-tax incentives can the research proposal focus on a sample of specific sectors or firms? For example, incentives for firms in Special Economic Zones or the Business Process Services incentive. Must the focus be broad or can it be narrow?

Answer:

A narrower focus is fine as long as confidentiality issues are kept in mind. If the focus boils down to the point where individual firms become identifiable, we would encounter difficulties with confidentiality of information.

Question 6:

Eligibility to submit a proposal- can I submit a proposal from here at Makerere University when I am not a national of South Africa and obtain data as indicated in the call for the proposal? Or can I submit a proposal which is going to utilize firm level dataset from another source?

Answer:

The proposal is focused on the RSA data.

Question 7:

Is the proposal scope limited to SA firms?

Answer:

Mainly.

Question 8:

Is the proposal scope limited to SA firms?

Answer:

Mainly.

Question 9:

Are you only looking for econometric type studies? I have an idea for using the data to develop theory around firms and government relationships. The analysis will use methods developed other than econometric methods, but valid methods, to build theory. It will however have a strong empirical foundation.

Answer:

Proposals of this type are welcome.

Question 10:

Can researchers outside the Republic of South Africa, without collaborators in South Africa, submit a proposal?

Answer:

Researchers outside of RSA may confront serious logistical difficulties as the data are only available onsite in Pretoria.

Question 11:

Do you have potential researchers in South Africa we could collaborate with?

Answer:

This is a good general idea. We do not have anything set up yet.

Question 12:

What set of variables are in the data set we will be working with?

Answer:

See the data inventory.

Question 13:

The call for proposals indicates that some (most?) of the data can not be accessed remotely. Can you specify exactly which datasets are not available to researchers that work remotely? Moreover, would it be possible for researchers to come to Pretoria and gather data but analyse the data remotely, i.e. will it be possible to take the data with us in electronic form?

Answer:

For the administrative records, the raw data are only available on site in Pretoria. It is only possible to take away summary statistics where the summary is for a sufficiently large population to maintain anonymity.

Question 14:

In case of a successful proposal, are researchers allowed to utilize the available data to undertake additional research projects (that were not specified in the original proposal)?

Answer:

The idea is for researchers to work on their projects.

Question 15:

The call for proposals states that "Researchers/institutions will transfer copyright of research produced under the contract to UNU-WIDER". How much influence do researchers have about a final publication outlet of their paper? Depending on the type of publication, e.g. in an edited volume, are spin-off publications allowed? And, if the paper is only published in the UNU-WIDER working paper series, can the researchers pursue other venues of publication?

Answer:

Copyright is passed to UNU-WIDER in order to formally permit the working paper to be published on the UNU-WIDER web site and to allow UNU-WIDER to negotiate with publishers with respect to grouped publications such as a book or a special issue of a journal. If the choice is not to pursue a group publication or if an effort to generate a group publication fails, then copyright is returned to the author who is encouraged to seek publication options. Multiple publications from a single initiative are welcome so long as the publications are in fact different pieces of work that contribute in their ways to the literature in keeping with standard publication policies.