



Request for research proposals

Firm-level analysis

Background

United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) is implementing over the period 2017–20 a research programme entitled *South Africa – Toward Inclusive Economic Development (SA-TIED)*, with the aim of enhancing economic research, capacity-building, and policy dialogue.

Understanding the opportunities and constraints to private sector development and productivity growth is key for the design of effective policies for job creation, and economic growth more broadly. The recent availability of tax administrative data on enterprises in South Africa provides a valuable resource for policy-relevant academic research that allows for a deeper understanding of the functioning of the private sector and the mechanisms through which government policy and globalization impact on economic growth and development.

Offer

UNU-WIDER, the National Treasury of the Republic of South Africa (NT) and the South African Revenue Service (SARS), invite proposals from qualified researchers for detailed economic analysis of these administrative datasets. Special consideration will be given to research teams that include junior and early-career researchers.

The objectives of this request for research proposals are to:

- 1 Provide an opportunity to researchers to conduct policy-relevant research on topics of relevance to growth, productivity and job creation in South Africa that can be explored using firm-level analysis.
- 2 Facilitate policy dialogue through engaging with researchers on policy-relevant issues and ensuring that the findings from this research are communicated effectively to all stakeholders — including the academic community, policy makers and civil society via policy summaries and dialogue.

Proposals from individuals, groups of individuals, as well as non-profit organizations are welcome. Researchers can be based in South Africa or internationally, and can combine researchers from different countries and institutions. Researcher(s) with successful proposals will gain access to generally inaccessible datasets at NT, subject to agreed restrictions to preserve confidentiality. The sources of South African administrative tax data available include: (i) company income tax (CIT) data from CIT-registered firms who submit CIT forms; (ii) employee data from employee income tax certificates submitted by employers (i.e., IRP5 and IT3a); (iii)

value-added tax (VAT) data from VAT registered firms; and (iv) customs records from traders. More information about the firm-level data can be found [here](#).

Individual researchers will be issued Consultant Contracts (CTC), while non-profit organizations will be issued an Institutional Contractual Agreement (ICA) by UNU-WIDER. A staff member from UNU-WIDER will assess adequate completion of the contract.

A total research honorarium in the range of US\$3,000-10,000 will be paid upon delivery of a working paper, depending on the qualifications of the lead researcher and assessment of the proposal. In addition, a local expenses allowance of up to a maximum US\$5,000 per proposal (for teams entirely consisting of South African researchers) and US\$10,000 per proposal (for teams with international researchers) will be paid, depending on an assessment of costs required to undertake the proposed research.

The remuneration and local expense allowance will be expected to cover all costs associated with the conduct of all research proposed under the proposal, except attendance at the work-in-progress workshop and other knowledge-sharing and dissemination events.

What is expected of researchers

All successful research grant applicants will be expected to:

- 1 Produce a relevant research paper of sufficient quality to merit publication in the [WIDER Working Paper series](#). Earlier papers that can give a sense of how the data have been used and which topics have previously been explored can be found [here](#).
- 2 Sign agreements and abide by all restrictions imposed by SARS and other government agencies with respect to disclosure of confidential firm-specific information.
- 3 Attend a 1–1.5-day workshop in South Africa (venue tbd) where work in progress will be presented to other contracted consultants researchers, and to selected international experts.
- 4 Prepare a policy summary that brings together the key findings from the research paper and the key policy lessons.
- 5 Participate in a workshop/policy dialogue after completion of the final paper to communicate the policy implications and lessons from the research.
- 6 Be flexible in research approach, particularly for those researchers planning on exploiting datasets that have been lightly analysed to date. Researchers should expect to discuss with SARS staff on which data can be made available.

Dates

15 January 2018	Final opportunity for questions on the request for research proposals.
26 February 2018	Proposals due.
15 March 2018	Target date for informing on funding decisions.
31 March 2018	Target date for completion of necessary administrative procedures.
November 2018	Target window for submission of first draft of papers and work-in-progress workshop.
July 2019	Target window for submission of final paper.
November 2020	Target window for policy dialogue

Evaluation process and criteria

Proposal evaluation will follow the process described below:

Technical panel

A technical panel drawn together by NT and UNU-WIDER will score proposals along four criteria: technical merit, technical capabilities of the research team, policy relevance, and capacity-building. During this assessment, proposals must meet both a minimum level of technical merit and research team capabilities, and a minimum total score.

The assessment of the technical aspects of the proposal will be in accordance with the following criteria:

- 1 technical merit (TM) 30 points
- 2 capabilities of the research team (RT) 25 points

The proposals will need to score a minimum of 40 points out of the total of 55 points awarded for technical aspects to be recommended by the panel.

Assessments by the technical panel of the ability of research teams to adjust to unforeseen circumstance (see point 6 above under **Expectations** section) will form an important part of scoring under these criteria.

As the programme aims to both support policy-relevant research and build research capacity in southern Africa, the proposals will also be awarded points for their potential contribution to southern African analytical capacity and their degree of policy relevance.

- 3 policy relevance (PR) 25 points.
- 4 capacity building (CB) 20 points

A maximum of 100 points can therefore be awarded. Proposals must meet a minimum of 70 points to be recommended by the technical panel to stage two of the assessment. The technical panel will provide written recommendations and total scores to the policy panel for their input.

Policy panel

The policy panel will comprise of officials from relevant institutions such as NT, DTI, SARS, and StatsSA. The policy panel will consider not only the policy relevance of the proposal, but ensure that the proposed paper/outputs can be published without contravening confidentiality issues, and that proposed use of data is in line with their best-practice requirements.

The policy panel will recommend proposals to the technical panel for decision. UNU-WIDER will make final funding decisions taking into account inputs provided by the technical and policy panels.

A maximum number of two (2) proposals per researcher may be received, and only one (1) contract per individual researcher may be awarded (the panel may consider more awards in the case where the researcher is part of multiple teams).

Only the final decision on whether to fund the proposal or not will be communicated to applying researchers.

Other considerations

For successful proposals:

- 1 Researchers or their institutions (non-profit) will sign a consultant contract or institutional contractual agreement with UNU-WIDER that follows the UNU conditions of service for [Consultant Contracts \(CTC\)](#), or [Institutional Contractual Agreements \(ICA\)](#).
- 2 Researchers/institutions will transfer copyright of research produced under the contract to UNU-WIDER. An important purpose of this copyright transfer is to allow UNU-WIDER to effectively negotiate with book publishers and editors of journals in order to seek the most desirable possible publication outlet for a related set of papers. If no (further) publication is to be expected by UNU-WIDER, the copyright can be transferred to the author(s).

Proposal submission details

- 1 The submission of proposals is done electronically using a form on the [RFRP announcement page](#). There are three forms to select from; one for individuals, another for groups of individuals, and a third one for NGOs. Details (such as address, gender, nationality date of birth) of all researchers involved are required to be entered into the form, and the proposal as well as brief CVs (two pages or less) of researcher(s) uploaded. It is recommended to familiarize yourself with the form in advance.
- 2 The technical proposal should be no more than five pages of A4 paper in length excluding cover page and references, using 12 point font, 1.5 line spacing, and standard margins. The cover page should contain the complete contact information of researcher(s) and a 200-word proposal abstract, which should summarize the research question, main methods, data, and expected contribution to the policy debate.
- 3 Submission of a budget is not required for the proposal.
- 4 Any questions on the proposal process should be sent to researchproposal@wider.unu.edu by 7 January 2018. All queries and responses will be published on the [RFRP announcement page](#) after this date.