



Request for research proposals

Regional growth and development for southern Africa's prosperity

Background

United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) is implementing together with its partners over the period 2017–20 a research programme entitled [Southern Africa – Toward Inclusive Economic Development \(SA-TIED\)](#), with the aim of enhancing economic research, capacity-building, and policy dialogue. This request is for research proposals relevant to South Africa's role in the larger regional economy of southern Africa.

As southern Africa's largest economy, South Africa's national economic policy decisions often have regional repercussions. This area of research is designed to enhance our understanding of the South African economy within the larger southern Africa regional context. It consists of five focus areas: (i) South Africa, SADC and Beyond, (ii) South Africa as a Regional Investor, (iii) the Spatial Economy of southern Africa, (iv) the Political Economy of Regional Growth, and (v) Strengthening Regional Value-chains. An important aspect of the research design is to encourage systematic integration of political economy perspectives under each focus area.

Offer

UNU-WIDER, the National Treasury of the Republic of South Africa (NT), and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) invite proposals from qualified researchers for high quality economic and/or political economy analysis in any of the five focus areas set out in the Background section. Key research and policy questions in each of the five focus areas are given in Annex A to this request for research proposals (RFRP).

The objectives of this RFRP are to:

- 1 Provide an opportunity to researchers to conduct policy-relevant research on topics of relevance to South Africa's role in the larger southern African regional economy.
- 2 Facilitate policy dialogue through engaging with researchers on policy-relevant issues and ensuring that the research findings are communicated effectively to 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. Special consideration will be given to southern African research teams that include junior and early-career researchers as well as researchers from previously disadvantaged groups.

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\$2,500 per proposal (for teams entirely consisting of South African researchers) and US\$5,000 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 workshops 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 which topics have previously been explored can be found [here](#).
- 2 Sign agreements.
- 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. A key focus will be on specific policy-relevant recommendations that can be taken forward through a further phase of work.
- 5 Participate in a workshop/policy dialogue after completion of the final paper to communicate the policy implications and lessons from the research.

Dates

2 May 2018	Final opportunity for questions on the request for research proposals.
25 May 2018	Proposals due.
08 June 2018	Target date for informing on funding decisions.
30 June 2018	Target date for completion of necessary administrative procedures.
31 January 2019	Target window for submission of first draft of papers and work-in progress workshop.
31 March 2019	Submission of final paper.

Evaluation process and criteria

Proposal evaluation will follow the process described below:

Technical panel

A technical panel drawn together by DTI, 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) 25 points
- 2 capabilities of the research team (RT) 25 points

The proposals will need to score a minimum of 35 points out of the total of 50 points awarded for technical aspects to be recommended by the panel.

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) 30 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 be comprised of officials from relevant institutions such as NT and DTI. The policy panel will consider the policy relevance of the proposal and 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.

In undertaking their review, the policy panel will place special emphasis on the extent to which proposals will result in specific, actionable steps resulting in changes in strategies, policies and/or investments by regional agencies, governments and/or the private sector.

A maximum number of two (2) proposals per researcher/consortium 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 UN procedures require researchers/institutions to 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. In specific cases where this requirement may inhibit the ability of the researcher or institution to participate, the issue will be addressed before the contract is issued. 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 2 May 2018. All queries and responses will be published on the [RFRP announcement page](#) after this date.

Annex A: Background and Key Questions in the Five Focus Areas

Focus Area 1: South Africa, SADC and beyond: The improved growth dynamics in Africa in general and in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have led to rapid growth in regional trade combined with an improved political and economic environment within the region. So far, however, regional integration has mainly involved the ‘easy’ first steps toward integration – exchange of market access. Research could address such questions as:

- What is the most appropriate model for developmental regional integration in SADC? How deep should it go and how fast?
- What are the implications of the recently concluded EPA for SACU?
- To what extent is SADC trade explained by South Africa’s role as a logistics hub in the region whereby goods from elsewhere are cleared in SA, there is bulk-break and then re-exported into the region?
- How can countries in the region leverage their engagement with South Africa to promote higher levels of domestic economic growth?
- What are appropriate regulatory frameworks in both competition policies and standards, to support balanced regional integration? How does non-compliance to these policies by member states hold back integration efforts?
- What forms of flexible and pragmatic coalitions at the sectoral or issue level could move regional integration ahead more rapidly?
- How is e-commerce affecting trade in the region and what regulatory frameworks are appropriate?
- What does regional integration in southern Africa mean in the global context? What is the appropriate role for international co-operation partners (ICP’s) in the integration agenda across SADC?
- Is there a debt crisis in the region and if so, how does this affect opportunities for industrialization in the region?
- Does the role of the AU conflict with that of the REC’s and what should the optimal relationship be, in terms of roles and the transfer of resources?

Focus Area 2: South Africa as a Regional Investor: Research into the pattern of investment and the role of South African corporations in other African markets can help to identify productive engagements between South African companies and regional host countries. Among the issues that can be explored in Focus Area 2 are several related to the role of South African companies as regional investors:

- How big is South Africa’s economic influence as an investor on the sub-region and the rest of the continent, and how will it evolve?
- How does financialization in South Africa impact on markets in the region?
- What is the nature of South Africa’s trade and investment into Africa and the region, and how does it differ from that of other international partners?
- What is the nature of firm capabilities embodied in South African firms and how can these capabilities be transferred to domestic firms in the region, including through the participation in regional supply chains and supplier development initiatives of South African firms?
- Does South Africa act as a gateway for non-African foreign investors, and is there evidence of hub and spoke relationships?
- What are the possibilities for leveraging investments in natural resource exploitation for greater development and complementary infrastructure investment for the region?
- Does the take-over of domestic players by global multi-national firms curtail the opportunities for regional integration and mutual benefit between domestic firms?

Focus Area 3: The Spatial Economy of Southern Africa: Increasing trade flows, natural resource discoveries and the improving connective infrastructure associated with them offers an opportunity to think about spatial industrial policies in the region. Research should deal with questions such as:

- What are the relative roles of infrastructure, institutions and competition in determining transport costs?
- What is the potential for growth corridors to exploit synergies between infrastructure investments and other private sector activity? Importantly, to understand how these corridors connect major regional clusters and nodes and how trade flows across these economic hubs.
- What is the role of burgeoning border economies along critical economic corridors and what impact has this had on trade?
- Would a strategy of encouraging the development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) – perhaps involving transnational Zones – help to spur growth and employment?
- What is the role of SEZs in fast-tracking focused services to deepen or develop new areas of industrial activity and strengthen value-chains?
- What are lessons from regional case studies into spatial initiatives that have succeeded and those that have failed?

Focus Area 4: The Political Economy of Regional Growth: Despite relatively rapid growth of intra-regional trade, momentum for deepening the relationships among the countries of the sub-region appears to be faltering. Research in this area should consist of political economy analysis of why the situation is as it is, the stakeholders who are resistant to or open to change and the appropriate interventions and policies that need to be formulated in response to these interests. Relevant issues are:

- How can popular support for regional integration be built in an increasingly anti-globalist political environment?
- What are the trade-offs between collective action and sovereignty that governments face in the provision of regional public goods?
- How can regional bodies tackle collective action problems, such as decisions regarding the location of key industries in the region, effectively?
- How can the private sector be involved in policy processes in SADC?
- A review of South Africa's foreign policy towards the region and whether its economic diplomacy and strategy should be reset.

Focus Area 5: Strengthening Regional Value-chains: Regional value-chains form a critical component of the SADC Industrialization Strategy. More detailed understanding of the existing capabilities and competitiveness gaps in regional value chains is needed, as is an understanding of the impact that has occurred in product areas across different countries. Some questions include:

- What are the lessons from other regions for SADC in the implementation of regional value-chain processes?
- Which value-chains are better carried out at a regional level in contrast to those that are better suited to national value-chains?
- What are the gaps in potentially important regional value-chains (for example in Wool; Cotton; Fertilizers; Agro-processing; Fruits)?
- What are the interventions/policy measures/incentives required to kick-start missing segments of potential value chains?
- What is the political economy of attempts to improve the performance of regional value chains?
- What possible amendments or additions are required to support the expansion of trade in services in the region keeping in mind recent developments in the Trade in Services Protocol in SADC, and in particular the requirements by key sectors.
- What are new value-chain opportunities that are unlocked by rapid urbanization in the region and what are the strategic levers and partnerships that could be used to benefit from this trend.