BRITISH COUNCIL

Innovation for African Universities
——

Terms of Reference

About the British Council

The British Council builds connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language.

We work in two ways – directly with individuals to transform their lives, and with governments and partners to make a bigger difference for the longer term, creating benefit for millions of people all over the world.

We help young people to gain the skills, confidence and connections they are looking for, to realize their potential and to participate in strong and inclusive communities. We support them to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognized qualifications. Our work in arts and culture stimulates creative expression and exchange and nurtures creative enterprise.

We are on the ground in 19 countries in Sub Saharan Africa, delivering impact across these listed areas, and in the last 3 years, we also worked in additional 6+ countries working with local institutions and partners on the ground

Our Work in Higher Education

We build partnerships between UK higher education institutions and other countries, and support the exchange and mobility of academics, scholars and students.

We contribute to the development of a global academic community by providing international networks and platforms to discuss higher education and by promoting innovative research. We support policy and practice in the UK and internationally through our market analysis, research and intelligence

Introduction and Background to the Programme

Youth are Africa's greatest asset. Africa's youth population is rapidly growing and expected to double to over 830 million by 2050. If properly harnessed, this increase in the working age

population could support increased productivity and stronger, more inclusive economic growth across the continent. However, today, majority of youth in Africa do not have stable economic opportunities. Of Africa's nearly 420 million youth aged 15-35, one-third are unemployed and disenfranchised, another third is vulnerably employed, and only one in six is in wage employment.

In addition to high levels of unemployment and underemployment, Africa's youth are confronted with multiple challenges ranging from mixed growth economies lacking job creation capability for its rapidly growing populations, to the global financial and economic crisis. Africa is the only region where the youth bulge will continue to grow in the foreseeable future. This presents both an opportunity to reap the demographic dividend and an imminent time bomb threatening social cohesion in the absence of appropriate policies to harness this dividend coupled with massive migration in search of opportunities.

Given the dire economic situation and uncertainty across the continent, it is critical to explore alternatives and potential solutions to improve the employment situation. The quest for solutions has triggered a renewed focus on the higher education landscape. Higher Education Institutions are producing graduates with limited skills and require further training to meet workplace/ employer needs. While graduates need to be more employable, universities also "need to produce job creators instead of job seekers. Universities are gravitating towards innovation and entrepreneurship as exploratory solutions to the youth employability issue

Beyond providing a platform for learning, research and knowledge creation, Universities have the role to play as catalysts for change and drivers of economic growth in their various communities. Through their academic programmes, universities can provide graduates with knowledge and skills to contribute to the growth of new and existing companies. In addition, universities can foster and support the creation of new ideas, innovation and commercialisation. They also have an important role to conduct research into the ecosystems that support innovation and entrepreneurship, contributing to the growth of small to medium enterprises (SMEs).

In response to this need, the British Council has developed and designed the **Innovation for African Universities (IAU)** project to foster the culture of innovation and entrepreneurship within Universities and facilitate the development of skills required to build industries, companies, products and services

The Innovation for African Universities project is designed to support the development of Africa – UK University Partnerships that build institutional capacity for HE engagement in entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems in selected African countries

IAU is a learning and collaboration platform which brings together Universities in the UK and SSA to engage, interact and learn from one another with the aim of developing mutually beneficial partnerships that strengthen the capacity and capability of Higher Education systems in both locations. Over a period of 18 – 24 months a total of 22 organisations (including Universities, enterprise support organisations and other key ecosystem players) * will collaborate with the aim of exchanging best practice that supports increased functionality of Universities

Ecosystem Player could be (but not limited to) Technology Hub, Entrepreneurship Support Organisation

Geographic Scope for this Programme

The programme activities will be delivered in SSA and the UK. The opportunity is open to Universities in **Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and South Africa and the UK**. British Council is seeking Expressions of Interest from Universities based in the UK and in any of the African countries listed above.

Programme Objectives and Components

This overarching programme objective is to strengthen the capacity of Universities and increase their capability to participate and provide meaningful contributions as key players within the entrepreneurship ecosystem. The desired results and impact from the partnerships include a strengthened entrepreneurship ecosystem and improved support for young people seeking to develop job creation entities and sustainable enterprises

Programme delivery will be structured into the components as outlined below and will comprise of the following specific activities:

Component 1
Establishment of 1 Centre of Excellence

The component will comprise of two stages:

1. Identification and selection of 2 Universities (1 SSA and 1 UK) with existing links to their local entrepreneurial ecosystems and established reputations for making significant contributions nationally, regionally, and internationally through their three core functions of education, research and economic development. The two institutions will form the centre of excellence and be selected through a competitive process and must be able to demonstrate existing knowledge of how – through partnerships they can influence and shape innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems

2. The two selected institutions, also known as centre of excellence, will establish a partnership to support peer learning and exchange of knowledge on a variety of approaches to entrepreneurship ecosystem strengthening. They will also be responsible for running all the other components of the programme and lead on the selection of network partners that will be engaged in the programme.

Component 2
Peer Learning between Network Partners with guidance from Centre of Excellence

With support and guidance from the centre of excellence, the programme will provide a virtual interface and interactive platform to connect and support partnership development and peer learning between a cohort of 20 network members, selected through a competitive call

This network will engage in activities to improve their understanding of the roles of Universities in entrepreneurship ecosystem and how to develop flexible and adaptable models in response to identified needs.

The centre of excellence will be responsible for facilitating international knowledge-sharing within the network and provide capacity building and mentoring support to network members. A full needs assessment will be undertaken by the centre of excellence to determine the optimum mix of capacity-building support to be provided to the selected network members.

Given the prevailing circumstances caused by the pandemic, the activities of the network will be delivered virtually. The centre of excellence must be able to demonstrate expertise in using digital resources to design online training and network activities able to sustain engagement of members, virtually.

Possible areas of focus that the network will exchange knowledge and ideas could include but are not limited to:

- University leadership development and upskilling
- University links and partnership between academics, students and Industry and other key stakeholders within the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem
- Entrepreneurial and employability skills as an integral part of the curriculum including the development and delivery of complex skills to UG and PG students
- Community / Industry relevant curriculum design building on collaborations between universities, industry and communities
- Ecosystem knowledge and learning: legislation, IP
- Technology transfer offices – located within the university acting as the point of contact and providing advice for university / industry exchange for contract research, student industry projects and placements.

Component 3
Collaboration Grant Projects Delivery – Network Partners

Network partners will be given the opportunity to apply for grants to develop projects responding to specific thematic areas. With the recent disruptions to the academic calendar and attendant need for universities to pivot to the use of digital resources and virtual offerings, the grants will fund projects around digital innovation in the first instance. In line with British Council's COP26 priority areas; raising awareness on the impact of climate change, priority will be given to projects that address climate change challenges, specifically around adaptation and resilience in helping people, economies and the environment adapt and prepare for the impacts of climate change.' The grants will require participants to develop interventions/ projects (around these areas: digital innovation and climate change) incorporating the skills, knowledge and expertise developed through the peer network learning sessions and activities. Projects will require active participation of students. In the first instance, grants will be awarded to a cohort of 14 partners to develop digital and climate innovation projects, in entrepreneurship ecosystems in Africa, leveraging SSA / UK HE capacity. Grants will be administered by the centre of excellence through a process jointly managed and approved by British Council

Component 4
Collaboration Grant Projects Communications and Showcasing – Network Partners

The communications and showcasing element will create awareness around good practice and workable models for innovation and entrepreneurship development across Universities in Africa.

Through this component, with support from the centre of excellence, grant funded projects will be identified and promoted through mini exhibitions and/or digital case studies to demonstrate the impact of the model. These grant funded projects/products by network partners, will have the opportunity to pitch ideas, product and innovation to industry partners, established innovation hubs and funders to receive constructive feedback and access investment opportunities for scale up

Component 5
Collaboration Grant Projects Dissemination – Network Partners

Engagement with policy makers and key programme stakeholders across programme delivery locations to share findings, outputs and outcomes

The Opportunity

The British Council is inviting applications from Universities in the UK and SSA to submit proposals for the role of Centre of Excellence as outlined in **Component 1.** This opportunity is open to joint applications involving one UK and one SSA university, each with expertise in designing and delivering activities that support entrepreneurship engagement by students, graduates and faculty

These two selected institutions will comprise the Centre of Excellence   and will jointly implement the components of the IAU as detailed above

Over the programme lifecycle, the selected institutions will engage, interact and learn from each other and convene and manage a network of 20 - Universities, enterprise support organisations and other key ecosystem players as outlined in **Component 2**.

Expected Programme Outputs and Deliverables

The centre of excellence/ implementing partners will work closely with British Council staff and experts in the UK and Africa to further refine and shape the programme outcomes and outputs.

The centre of excellence will be expected to perform leadership and supporting functions across the various programme components. While proposed deliverables are outlined below, it is expected specific deliverables and timelines will be negotiated with the selected institutions:

For Component 1:
- Detailed workplan to ensure delivery of the programme components in line with agreed timelines and quality standards required by British Council. It should include plan for selection and coordination of network partners, grant administration and showcase, anticipation and mitigation of possible challenges to delivery.

- Recruitment and selection of 20 (at least 50% -Universities) Ecosystem Entrepreneurship Players that will be trained on strategies for sustainable University engagement in entrepreneurship ecosystems. Selection criteria and final shortlist to be approved by British Council

- Conduct full needs assessment to determine the optimum mix of capacity-building support to be provided to the selected network partners

- Develop programme content that would facilitate reciprocal knowledge sharing and understanding among the two selected institutions

For Component 2:
- Develop programme outline, module content, mentoring and advisory support for the peer learning network

- Facilitate international knowledge-sharing between SSA university leader's ecosystem players and UK partners. Due to the disruptions caused by the pandemic, all activities including regional workshops and study tours should be planned for virtually.

- Provide plan for selection of 14 collaboration grant partnerships

For Component 3:
- Oversee and facilitate the development of at least 14 Institutional Partnerships: each including at least 1 African University, 1 UK University and 1 African Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Player
- Develop and manage an active network of Africa / UK Universities supporting entrepreneurship development in Africa

For Component 4:
- Oversee and manage the selection of grant projects case studies to be promoted
- Manage and host showcasing activities – digital case studies, pitch events and/or mini-exhibitions
- Work with British Council to identify potential funders for scale up of innovative grant projects

For Component 5:
- Co-deliver programme dissemination events with the British Council

Roles of Partners

A successful partnership is one where partner organisations share the following:
- Commitment to the goals of the proposed programme including shared responsibility for its oversight and success
- Willingness to commit their own organisational resources to the programme in cash or in kind
- Clearly defined roles and reciprocal obligations between and among all partners
- Commitment to assume performance and monitoring obligations including assuring access to data and fulfilling reporting requirements.
- Accountability for the use of IAU resources.

Benefits to Participating Institutions

- **Strategic Alignment:**
  IAU provides a strong platform for the development of international higher education partnerships. The programme provides an opportunity and platform for Institutions with a strong internationalisation agenda looking to build partnerships within SSA

- **Visibility**
  The programme provides additional visibility for the selected institutions and positions them for future collaboration opportunities and supports the strengthening of cross continental collaborations

- **Contribute to entrepreneurship and innovation in Africa:**
  Participating in this programme provides an opportunity to champion entrepreneurship and innovation within the higher education space and support its development across SSA.

- **Positioning:**
  The center of excellence partners will be able to position their respective brands as leaders within the international and African higher education space and develop relationships with critical stakeholders at both policy and practice level within the education sector across SSA and the UK.

- **Data and Insights:**
  Access to market data, insights and information through partnerships developed through the programme.

Eligibility

1. Universities must be accredited, licensed to operate and based in the locations they are applying from within SSA and UK
2. Have evidence of an existing partnership agreement or MOU as proof of partnership between institutions
3. Have experience and provide evidence of working and delivering with international partners. For UK universities, preference will be given to institutions already working in international contexts specifically in SSA
4. Have knowledge of establishing enterprise and innovation hubs in Universities in UK and SSA with evidence of successfully supporting start-ups, developing high growth entrepreneurs with spin offs and contributing to entrepreneurship ecosystem strengthening and development.
5. Be an active stakeholder within the sector and broader ecosystem with the required international links across academia and industry to support the development of the peer

learning network and credibility to convene and secure buy in from the critical stakeholder groups within the sector

6. Demonstrate ability to support beneficiary partners within the network to build communities of practice with local start-up ecosystems
7. Provide evidence of collaborating to co-create and co-deliver similar capacity building sector specific projects in the last 3 – 5 years and demonstrate an understanding of the needs underpinning the design of a capacity building programme for beneficiary partners.
8. Have the requisite experience, resources and capability to host, manage and sustain the proposed events and activities outlined as part of the programme and sustain networks and opportunities that arise from the programme.
9. Have contextual knowledge regarding the challenges of higher education and business development in SSA. Preference for partners already working within local entrepreneurship ecosystems in SSA
10. Have extensive experience of using digital and new technologies to work internationally and engage stakeholders and entrepreneurs with digital resources.
11. Have MEL experience and an understanding of safeguarding, gender in context of HE delivery

Estimated Calendar for Key Programme Dates

Activity	Date
Launch of Expression of Interest (EOI)	**27 January 2021**
Clarification call for interested Universities	**5 February 2021**
Deadline for submission of EOI	**19 February 2021**
Grants Agreement signed	**15th March 2021**
Planning and Approval of final workplan for the selected Centres of Excellence	**End of March 2021**
Delivery phase for successful projects	**Commencing after March 31st, 2021**
M&E plan finalised	**End of April 2021**
Delivery of approved project plan and work strands commences	**May 2021**
Reporting, lessons learning and final dissemination from successful projects	**June 20th, 2022**

Indicative budget

The Centre of Excellence will receive a grant of **£ 700,000.00** which they will be expected to use for implementing IAU activities. A maximum of £ **50,000.00 per project**. would be disbursed as

collaboration grants to a total of 14 shortlisted institutions from the peer learning network as outlined in **Component 3**

Selection Criteria

In this call, we invite institutions to put forward proposals as centre of excellence partners that will manage the delivery of IAU through the development of the peer learning networks, co-creation of capacity building support that facilitates knowledge sharing, granting and partnerships as well as dissemination of best practice for promoting University engagement in entrepreneurship ecosystems in Africa.

The centre of excellence partners will be selected by the British Council through a competitive process that will identify experienced institutions with national, regional and international experience supporting ecosystem strengthening and development. The institutions will also be required to have direct and meaningful contextual knowledge regarding the challenges of higher education and business development in SSA

The selection process will involve a competitive call for proposals seeking candidates that demonstrate:

- Depth in expertise in entrepreneurship and innovation partnerships delivery within Universities.
- Understanding of the needs underpinning the design of a capacity building programme for beneficiary partners.
- Ability to support beneficiary partners to build communities of practice with local start-up ecosystems.
- Experience delivering capacity building relevant to offering support network partners
- Expertise in using technology and digital resources to deliver higher education programmes
- Track record of working in the Green Economy and with local climate and innovation ecosystems