

Press Release

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A Free Open-Source Digital Grants Management System Developed for Science Granting Councils in Sub-Saharan Africa

Accra, Ghana and Nairobi, Kenya (October 12, 2021) - A digital grants management system has been developed and positioned for adoption by Africa's Science Granting Councils. This forms part of activities being implemented by the Research Management Project under the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI).

The Research Management Project of SGCI, seeks to strengthen the capacities of Africa's Science Granting Councils to play their essential roles in research, knowledge generation and innovation through training, technical support, and peer-to-peer learning.

In an increasingly digitalized world, the development of the online system is critical and aims at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the SGCs' grants management processes. The partners involved - the Association of African Universities (AAU), the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) developed the system as part of activities outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the parties.

The AAU, AAS and UNCST undertook to upgrade the UNCST grants management system and strategically position it for adoption by all the 15 SGCs participating in the SGCI. These are the Science Granting councils in Ghana, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Botswana, Malawi, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Ethiopia, Namibia, and Rwanda.

Working collaboratively with the Councils, the system development partners ensured that the online grants management system is well equipped with multi-lingual functionalities and the flexibility to accommodate the different needs of the SGCs.

"To promote quick adoption of the system, an engagement process with key stakeholders and the SGCs has been carefully executed by the partners to ensure clarity concerning the differences that exist amongst the SGCs in terms of managing granting processes" said Ms. Nodumo Dhlamini, Director of ICT, Communications and Knowledge Management at the AAU.

In ensuring that all requirements were met for the different groups of stakeholders who will be utilizing the system, the team put together for its development comprised of Project Management and Oversight; Grants Management Experts; Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Experts; Systems Engineering and Software Development Experts; as well as Finance and Audit personnel.



“The team was cognizant of the need to promote standardized processes among all the SGCs while preserving requirements for the grants management processes of the individual SGCs” she added.

The digitalized grants management system broadly encompasses functions such as Calls for Proposals (publication and receipt of applications); Reviewers Database Management; Proposals Completeness Check and Criteria Establishment; Technical Review of Proposals and Criteria Establishment; Grants Awarding and Contracting; Grants Monitoring, Progress Reporting, Evaluation, and Learning. Other functions include Financial Management and Monitoring; Rolling out and implementation of the system; Knowledge Transfer and Continuous improvement of the Grant Management System.

The implementation of the digital grants management system by the SGCs will contribute towards integrated national data systems and facilitate the flow of data among diverse users and stakeholders.

The SGCI is a multi-funder initiative that is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID), Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC), South Africa’s National Research Foundation (NRF) and the German Research Foundation (DFG).

The Association of African Universities, the African Academy of Sciences and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) are strongly committed to working closely with the Science Granting Councils to ensure full adoption of the system and optimum derivation of the benefits therein.

Notes to editors

The Association of African Universities

The Association of African Universities (the project lead) is an international non-profit, non-governmental organization created by African Universities to promote cooperation among them on the one hand, and between them and the international academic community on the other. Created in 1967, the AAU is the voice of higher education in Africa. AAU aims to improve the quality of African higher education, and to strengthen its contribution to Africa’s development by supporting the core functions of higher education institutions and facilitating critical reflection and consensus building on issues affecting higher education. It is headquartered in Accra, Ghana, has a membership of more than 400 HEIs and has three regional offices – North Africa Regional Office (NARO) in Cairo, Egypt; East Africa Regional Office (EARO) in Khartoum, Sudan; and North America Office (NAMO) in Washington DC, USA. The Association is the technical implementing arm of the African Union in higher education – with coverage and mandate across the language divide of Africa. We have influence in the francophone, anglophone, lusophone and arabophone regions. The AAU is the coordinating agency of the Higher Education Cluster of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) of the African Union Commission (AUC). Through our guidance, our member universities are responsible for implementing the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024) of the AUC. (Website - <https://www.aau.org/> | Facebook – Association of African Universities| Twitter -@aa_u67)



The African Academy of Sciences

The African Academy of Sciences (AAS) is a non-aligned, non-political, not-for-profit pan African organisation whose vision is to see transformed lives on the African continent through science. Our tripartite mandate is recognising excellence through the AAS' highly prestigious fellowship and award schemes, providing advisory and think tank functions for shaping Africa's Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) strategies and policies and implementing key STI programmes addressing Africa's developmental challenges.

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The Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST)

The Uganda National Council for Science and Technology was established in 1990 for the purpose of inter alia advising on and coordinating the formulation of national policy on all fields of science and technology. Over the last thirty years, the UNCST has been at the forefront of promoting the development of indigenous science and technology and strengthening local and international partnerships that drive STI-led growth. As part of its Knowledge Management Strategy, the UNCST has developed and implemented over fifteen platforms on Research Management, Research Quality Assurance, Technology Transfer Management, STI-Knowledge Repositories among others. UNCST has also built lasting South/South partnerships for knowledge sharing with regional and international partners.

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Media Enquiries

The Association of African Universities,
Accra, Ghana

Felicia Kuagbedzi
fnkrumah@aau.org
+233 246 425 147

The African Academy of Sciences,
Nairobi, Kenya

Shylee Mbuchucha
s.mbuchucha@aasciences.africa
+254 727 660 760; +254 20 806 0674

Uganda National Council for
Science and Technology

Collins Mwesigwa
c.mwesigwa@uncst.go.ug
+256 752807890