



Call for expressions of interest to undertake the evaluation of a research - funding programme “Leading Integrated Research for Agenda 2030 in Africa”

Terms of Reference

Introduction

Leading Integrated Research for Agenda 2030 in Africa (LIRA) is a research funding programme that seeks to increase the production of high-quality, integrated (inter- and transdisciplinary), solutions-oriented research on sustainable development across African cities.

The LIRA programme is implemented by the International Science Council, in partnership with the Network of African Science Academies (NASAC). It is funded primarily by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

The initial programme timeframe was 5 years, 2016-2020, but was extended to Dec 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme supported 28 collaborative transdisciplinary projects across Africa led by African early career scientists in Africa. These projects are expected to generate knowledge on sustainable urban development in Africa – in partnership with local authorities, industry, communities, and government.

The primary objectives of the LIRA programme are:

- To strengthen capacity of early career scientists to undertake inter- and trans-disciplinary, solutions-oriented knowledge on sustainable development in African cities;
- To increase the production and use of this knowledge to promote sustainable urban development in Africa;
- To foster African scientific leadership for the implementation of the global Agenda 2030;
- To foster research collaboration within Africa;
- To mobilise institutional and financial support for TD research and capacity building in Africa, and globally.

The distinctive features of the LIRA programme include:

- It supports inter- and trans-disciplinary research;
- It promotes research collaboration, each project involves cities across at least 2 countries;
- The target audience is early career scientists in Africa.

At the end of the programme, an independent final evaluation of the LIRA programme is scheduled to take place between March and October 2022. The evaluation is commissioned by the International Science Council (ISC). This document sets out the Terms of Reference for this evaluation.

The Call for Expressions of interest is open until 22 March 2022.

Objectives of the evaluation

The objectives of the LIRA programme guide the evaluation of progress and outcomes. The evaluation process should:

1. Evaluate how LIRA has performed against the objectives of the programme;
2. Identify key achievements and challenges: to assess whether the programme generated, or is expected to generate significant positive/negative, intended/unintended effects, and what the contributing factors were;
3. Assess whether the effects of the programme are likely to continue;
4. Identify how a future programme could build on the achievements and learnings of the LIRA programme.

The evaluation should identify a clear list of recommendations to be considered in the design and the implementation of similar research funding programmes in the future.

Methodology and process

The expression of interest should propose a provisional methodology for conducting the final evaluation. The final methodology will be defined after the discussion with the ISC leadership. In light of ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, the evaluation will not require physical site visits of the programme partners or projects. The evaluators will arrange all logistics, including the organization of interviews with stakeholders.

A range of documentation and inputs that can be made available to inform the evaluation:

- Original LIRA programme proposal and its “logframe”
- Lira website <https://council.science/what-we-do/funding-programmes/lira2030/>
- 28 LIRA projects’ final progress reports
- LIRA annual programme progress reports
- Lira learning study report: <https://council.science/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/LIRA-2030-report-2020-04-29.pdf>
- Virtual discussions with the representatives of LIRA programme management team, the Scientific Advisory Committee, and trainers
- Virtual discussions with project teams
- Reports from the projects’ site visits (both physical and virtual)

Relevant documentation will be provided by the ISC. Contact details of interviewees will be provided by the ISC.

The evaluation is expected to start in April and be finalized by October 2022. A tentative evaluation timeline is provided below.

Activity	Timeline
Initial discussion with the ISC	Early April 2022
Presentation of the inception report*	Early May 2022
Review of the documentation	Early May 2022
Interviews planned with the LIRA programme management team	June-July 2022
Interviews with LIRA projects and other relevant stakeholders	July-August 2022
Preparation and submission of the draft report to the ISC	By mid-September 2022
Feedback from the ISC	Early October 2022
Submission of the final report** with key findings and recommendations and presentation to the ISC and Sida	October 2022
Publication of the evaluation report	End of October

***The inception report** will form the basis for the continued evaluation process and shall be approved by the ISC before the evaluation proceeds. The inception report, which will be shared with Sida, should be written in English and cover evaluability issues and interpretations of evaluation questions, present the evaluation approach/methodology (incl. possibly how a utilization-focused and gender-responsive approach will be ensured), methods for data collection and analysis as well as the full evaluation design (which could include for example an evaluation matrix).

****The final report** shall be written in English and be professionally proofread and edited. The final report should have clear structure. The executive summary should be maximum 3 pages.

The report shall clearly and in detail describe the evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection and analysis and make a clear distinction between the two. The report shall describe how intended users have participated in and contributed to the evaluation process and how methodology and methods for data collection have created space for reflection, discussion and learning between the intended users. Limitations to the methodology and methods and the consequences of these limitations for findings and conclusions shall be described.

Evaluation findings shall flow logically from the data, showing a clear line of evidence to support the conclusions. Conclusions should be substantiated by findings and analysis. Evaluation questions shall be clearly stated and answered in the executive summary and in the conclusions. Recommendations and lessons learned should flow logically from conclusions and be specific.

The report should be maximum 30 pages, excluding annexes. If the methods section is extensive, it could be placed in an annex to the report. Annexes shall include the Terms of Reference, the Inception Report, and the evaluation matrix if one is developed. Lists of key informants/interviewees shall include personal data only if deemed relevant. Note that the inclusion of personal data in the report must always be based on a written consent.

Evaluation team qualifications

The evaluation should be undertaken by an evaluation team composed of at least three experts, including at least one from Africa. The evaluation process should be led by a senior consultant with high level of evaluation competence. The following required qualifications include:

- Academic background: An advanced university degree in a relevant discipline (science policy studies, urban studies, etc.). Practice and understanding of transdisciplinary research would be an asset.

- Professional background: at least five years of experience in undertaking evaluation projects; experience in evaluating transdisciplinary research is desirable.
- Experience working with international organizations would be an advantage.
- An excellent level of oral and written communication skills and excellent drafting ability in English.

Furthermore, it is expected that the evaluation team include the following competencies:

- Understanding science systems realities in Africa;
- Understanding urban development issues in Africa.

A CV for each team member shall be included in the expression of interest. It should contain a full description of relevant qualifications and professional work experience. It is important that the competencies of the individual team members are complimentary. The evaluators must be independent from the evaluation object and evaluated activities and have no stake in the outcome of the evaluation.

Budget

The maximum budget amount available for the evaluation is 45 000 Euro. Invoicing and payment shall be managed according to the following:

- a maximum of 30 % of the total amount after approval by the ISC of the Inception Report;
- a maximum of 30 % of the total amount after submission of a draft Evaluation Report;
- a max of 40 % after approval by the ISC of the Final Report and when the assignment is completed.

Deadline and contact

All expressions of interest should be sent via the online form on the [ISC website](#).

Should you have any questions, please contact Salvatore Arico at salvatore.arico@council.science

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