Future Climate for Africa (FCFA) Frequently Asked Questions for the 2014 Regional Consortium Grants Call

This document provides answers to some frequently asked questions related to the FCFA regional consortium grants call, for world-leading, interdisciplinary, regionally-focussed research programme consortia working under the three pillars of FCFA.

For any query not answered in this document, please contact the FCFA Secretariat.

Section 1: Administrative questions

1. **Is my organisation eligible for funding for FCFA?**

Section 4 of the Announcement of Opportunity outlines the organisation eligibility requirements for this call. To summarise, FCFA will fund both UK and non-UK organisations, where these are found to be eligible.

For organisations that are not normally eligible to receive research council funding, three requirements must be met for the organisation to directly receive FCFA funding (i.e. to be named as a PI): (1) the organisation must be a legal entity, (2) the organisation must be able to demonstrate an independent in-house capability to undertake and lead research and training in the field or discipline in which it wishes to be funded and (3) the organisation must meet the accountability and audit requirements of the FCFA funders.

If these requirements cannot be met, the organisation may not act as the lead organisation and will not directly receive funds from FCFA. However, they may be named as a Co-I, Project Partner or sub-contractor organisation and receive funds through the lead organisation. All organisations that are to receive funds through FCFA must meet minimum financial and management due diligence criteria.

2. **My organisation is not based in the UK, am I eligible to apply for funding through FCFA?**

Yes, it is not essential for any project teams to include researchers or research institutions based in the United Kingdom or any other developed countries. However, FCFA projects are expected to have a clear and significant role for African researchers and/or institutions.

There are no other restrictions on where researchers are located or their nationality and no geographic restrictions on where research institutions are based, providing they meet the administrative eligibility requirements for funding (Section 4 of the AO).

However, despite the absence of restrictions of the geographical locations of researcher and research institutions, to meet the requirements of this FCFA call it is a condition that proposals demonstrate pathways to impact that can improve the lives of poor people in low and lower middle-income countries and will enhance the resilience of African people to climate variability and change.

3. **I work for a CGIAR Research Centre – are these centres eligible to apply for FCFA funding?**

Yes, CGIAR Research Centres are eligible to apply for funding and be involved in project, subject to additional funding conditions.

Under DFID funding rules, they should not apply as developing country partners, given that they have competitive international terms and conditions and are able to recruit internationally. Full cost recovery should be based on the CGIAR system wide guidance on cost (set out in Financial Guidance No5, and it is expected that the 2% system wide cost levy is to be absorbed within all their projects). It is also expected that a clear position with regards to alignment of all research projects with the 15 CGIAR Research Programmes (the CRPs), since the Fund Council expect all CGIAR research to fall within the CRPs in due course regardless of funding modality.

4. Are regional consortia expected to submit a notification of intent form?

No, a notification of intent for is only required for proposals submitted for the Global Climate Model Development for Africa project.

The first deadline for consortia submitting proposals to the regional consortium grants call is 4pm UK time (BST/GMT +1/UCT +1), July 15th 2014. By this time, outline proposals must be submitted. The outline proposal form can be found at http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/funded/programmes/fcfa/news/ao-regional/.

5. How many Co-Is are allowed? Do they all have to hold doctorate degrees?

There is no limit on the number of Co-Is included in the proposal – it is appropriate to include as many or as few as you feel necessary to cover the expertise necessary to effectively carry out your proposed programme of research.

The standard eligibility criteria for a Co-I is that they have at least three years of relevant post-doctoral experience, or an appropriate equivalent level of research experience. It is possible for equivalent research experience to take a number of forms, such as a good track record of long term in depth professional experience in a relevant field of work (i.e. they do not necessarily need to hold a doctoral degree).

In addition, Co-Is are required to be employed (at the time of application) by the Research Organisation submitting the proposal and have an assurance (at the time of application) that, if the proposal is successful, the contract of employment will extend at least three months beyond the end date of the grant. If the Co-I is not employed at the time of application they must either be scheduled to move to the submitting organisation before the proposed start date of the grant, such that the above criteria is met, or have an existing formal arrangement with the organisation which enables him/her to carry out research there and receive all necessary management and infrastructure support from the organisation.

More information about Co-Is and other research roles is available in the AO, Section 5.

6. I have been approached by several potential partners, how many applications can I be named on?

With the exception of project partners and ‘staff’ (researchers and technicians), individuals may be named on a maximum of two regional consortium grant proposals submitted, and may be named as lead principal investigator (PI) on only one (applicants may, in addition, also be named on two Global Project proposals). Individuals should ensure that total time commitments across the applications with which they are involved does not exceed 100%. It individual are named on more than two submitted proposals for each call they will be asked to retract their involvement from the additional proposals, which may be to the detriment of both the individual and projects concerned.

There is no limit on the number of proposals a particular research organisation can be named on, the limits apply to individual investigators. Equally, it is permissible for the same organisation to be named on more than one consortia targeted at the same climatic region.

Section 2: Questions about the scope of the call

1. **FCFA calls for regional consortia, but how can it deliver a coherent set of analyses across Africa?**

The rationale for the structuring the regional project across approximately three consortia covering different climatic regions of Africa (based on common climate drivers) is to ensure that research was strongly tailored to the specific needs of decision makers and the challenges of climate science in different regions of Africa.

However, this approach left a gap in developing GCMs and pan-African processes, hence the Global Climate Model Development for Africa project, calling for a step-change in the performance of GCMs over Africa. The Global Project will develop processes in climate models that are relevant to both global and regional models, and consequently, robust projections. Moreover, the Global Project will also be expected to work closely with the regional consortia.

Equally, it is intended that the regional teams will work closely together to share lessons and this could lead to the implementation of shared methodologies in some areas, such as the evaluation of climate projections, which has the potential to lead to 'standardised' outputs or products across the consortia. However, it could equally be scientifically beneficial for different methodologies to emerge from different consortia; providing quality is ensured this promotes innovation.

Finally, there are two mechanisms in place to promote collaboration, where appropriate, across the consortia and the Global Project. First, in April 2015 a launch workshop will be held with the intention to identify and organise opportunities for collaboration. Second, if gaps in the programme are identified there will be 'supporting projects' launched in years 2 and 3 or the programme, although the funding available will be small in comparison to the consortia projects.

2. **The AO talks about regional consortia, but do consortia need to cover an entire climate region or can they be limited to a subset of countries?**

A broader coverage of a climatic region (defined as a group of countries with shared climatic drivers, such as teleconnections) is desired, but ultimately proposed regional consortia will be assessed on their research excellence and the fit to call (see Section 9 of the Regional AO). The AO specifies that each proposed regional consortia should focus on a specific climate region of Africa (see Section 3 of the Regional AO), but equally it specifies that stakeholder engagement, the co-production process and case studies should be targeted at very specific medium-term decisions (Section 2.3.6 of the Regional AO). Hence, it may be that whilst the scope of the climate science covers a broader area, the co-production and case studies within the consortia are targeted at specific decision makers within a subset of countries, where there is the greatest opportunity for high-quality research and development impact.

3. **Where does regional climate modelling fit in?**

We anticipate that most research related to regional climate modelling will occur within the regional consortia, given that the purpose of the Global Climate Model Development for Africa project is to develop GCMs (General Circulation Models).

4. **Do regional consortia need to cover all three pillars of FCFA?**

Yes, successful consortia will be expected to provide research that covers the three pillars of FCFA as detailed in Section 2.3.2. Around half of the effort of each proposal should be directed towards research under the first pillar with the remainder addressing pillars two and three.

5. **Can case studies involving agricultural systems be included in the regional consortia?**

Yes, but the focus of the programme is on medium-term decision making (timescales of 5 to 40 years) and applicants will need to justify the relevance of their research decisions made on these timescales. Many decisions in agriculture have much shorter timescales.

6. **The AO talks about African leadership, does this mean that all proposals must have an Africa-based PI?**

The AO states that consortia do not need to be led by an Africa-based PI (Section 2.5.4 of the regional AO, footnote). However, FCFA does promote African leadership and international partnerships. Proposed consortia are expected to have a clear and significant role for African researchers and/or institutions. This should represent meaningful engagement which supports capacity development for all partners.

7. **The AO talks about pilot case studies and the need for the full proposals to draw on results from these, is there any more information available for the outline proposal stage?**

Four pilot studies were initiated in March 2014, as part of the scoping phase of FCFA, in order to better understand the needs and opportunities for climate information to support adaptation. Written outputs for these pilot studies are not expected until September 2014. However, the organisations leading each of the pilot studies are as follows:

Ghana/Mozambique – University of Cape Town, START Network and Stockholm Environment Institute

Malawi – Kulima and the University of Leeds (http://kulima.com/tag/fcfa/)

Rwanda – Global Climate Adaptation Partnership

Zambia – Red Cross Crescent Climate Centre, Indigo and UK Met Office
(http://cdkn.org/2014/06/opinion-zambia-a-country-on-the-move/?loclang=en_gb)
(http://www.climatecentre.org/site/news/535/future-climate-for-africa-pointers-on-resilience-from-zambia)