

# KEY RESULTS FROM THE RFI AFRICA CONSULTATIONS

A CAAST-Net Plus-COHRED Briefing Note

Between May and August 2016 three multi-stakeholder consultative workshops on the Research Fairness Initiative (RFI) were carried out in Kenya, Nigeria and Senegal. The goal? To identify strengths of the RFI in the context of Africa-EU research cooperation, and to identify critical areas of improvement.

## Strengths

- + **Timely.** Participants agreed the RFI is a timely and relevant tool. Many case studies were provided by participants to illustrate experiences where the RFI could have been a helpful instrument to address existing problems (Box 1).
- + **Valuable.** The RFI is a valuable instrument for the improvement of partnerships in research and innovation in the Africa region. RFI will help make partnerships fairer, but also stronger and more competitive, by raising participants' awareness on IP rights, contract negotiation issues, benefit-sharing, and gender equality.
- + **Useful.** Participants agreed the analytics produced by the reports and made available on the RFI platform will help organisations assess their strengths and weaknesses, as well as where they stand in comparison to other participating institutions' practices and policies.

### BOX 1. CASE STUDY: HOW RFI CAN HELP WITH RESEARCH BUDGETING ISSUES

An African research institution that participated in the consultations has templates for developing programme and project budgets, as well as a unit that has experts for negotiating collaborative research grants. However, the research scientists within the organisation said that they did not have sufficient negotiation skills and wanted training to improve these skills. The RFI framework would help to ensure the organisation and its researchers fully benefit from any research partnerships in which they are involved, by pinpointing key areas for improvement and by encouraging the organisation to address these gaps.

## Areas for improvement

- + **Process and governance issues.** It was not clear to participants how Team RFI would provide feedback on institutional reports. The practical aspects of how the RFI works should be explicit for the users of the RFI platform. The extent to which the institutional reports will be confidential on the RFI platform needs to be confirmed.
- + **Capacity and support issues.** RFI will be even more valuable as a platform if it not only assesses fairness in partnerships, but also proposes methods to maintain and improve fair enabling conditions in research and innovation collaborations. Overall, the RFI platform for sharing information on bi-regional partnerships will offer even greater benefit to participating institutions if the RFI could focus effort on addressing organisational capacity needs that are identified in the reporting process. Participants expressed interest in the provision of support from Team RFI to improve organisations once they have conducted the internal analysis and report preparation, such as through capacity building courses.

## Available RFI documentation

- + **Process and governance guides.** COHRED has produced three documents that clarify all issues related to process and governance of confidential information. They are the *RFI Summary Guide*, the *RFI Reporting Guide*, and the *RFI Governance and Management Guide*. The *RFI Process Management Guide* is nearing completion. All RFI 'transactions' will take place in a secure online environment. The RFI platform is under construction and will be ready for use by the end of 2016.

## Way forward

The RFI is nearly ready for implementation. CAAST-Net Plus partners and COHRED anticipate that this Brussels meeting will facilitate the adoption of the RFI as a key tool to improve science collaboration between Africa and Europe.

### PURPOSE OF THIS BRIEFING NOTE

On 28 September 2016 the Council on Health Research for Development (COHRED) and CAAST-Net Plus partners will present the results of three RFI consultations that were held in the context of African and European research collaborations in health, food security and climate change. To be optimally prepared for the meeting, we ask that you read the documentation sent to you before this meeting as well as consult the RFI website (<http://rfi.cohred.org>).

### THE RFI IN BRIEF

The RFI is a...

- + **REPORTING SYSTEM** and unique **COMPLIANCE TOOL** aimed at improving the quality, fairness and efficiency of research partnerships, and;
- + **LEARNING PLATFORM** where best practices and benchmarks are shared and developed.

### LEARN MORE ABOUT THE REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS

- RC1.** Nairobi, Kenya, hosted by the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) on 23-24 May 2016. <http://l.caast-net-plus.org/kY>
- RC2.** Abuja, Nigeria, hosted by the National Office for Technological Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP) and held at the Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC) on 25-26 July 2016. <http://l.caast-net-plus.org/kF>
- RC3.** Dakar, Senegal, hosted by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research (Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche [MESR]), Senegal, and Pharmalys, Ltd. and held at the Cheikh Anta Diop University on 3-4 August 2016. <http://l.caast-net-plus.org/kF>