Competition Details

2024 AFRETEC CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR STAFF MOBILITY GRANTS

Dates

Internal Submission Deadline:	Friday, May 17, 2024

Details

Administrator(s):	CIT ADR Office (Owner)
Cycle:	2024
Discipline Subject/Area:	Multi-institution collaborative Engineering and Technology research projects related to the inclusive digital transformation of Africa
Number of Applications Allowed per Applicant:	1

Description

AFRICAN ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY NETWORK (AFRETEC)
CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR STAFF MOBILITY GRANTS

Carnegie Mellon University Africa (CMU-Africa) in support of the African Engineering and Technology Network (Afretec) is launching a call for applications for staff mobility grants to build research capacity in the fields of engineering and technology to accelerate and support the inclusive digital transformation of Africa. This initiative is aligned to the Afretec goal to drive inclusive digital growth on the African continent. The mobility grants will support researchers carrying out transformative and high impact research related to digital technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, information and communication technology, cyber security and so on.

Dates and Details
Start Date: September 1, 2024

Award Period: Up to 3 months

Estimated Awards: It is expected that a total of 6 grants will be awarded depending on the quality of submissions and availability of funds.

Submission Deadline: May 17, 2024 at 17:00 Central African Time

Submission Procedure: Proposals are to be submitted via the application portal found here:

https://cmu.infoready4.com/#freeformCompetitionDetail/1936792

Background and Context
Africa has some of the fastest-growing economies in the world, often driven by the digital transformation of these economies and societies. Africa is home to the fastest-growing workforce in the world. These transformations present novel opportunities for research and application of digital technologies such as AI, machine learning, information and communication technology, cyber security and so on. This is identified as a strategic objective of the African Union.

To assist in driving the inclusive digital transformation of Africa, Afretec aims to build a digital knowledge creation ecosystem that expands technology development and job-creating technology innovation. This initiative was created to build capacity for African-focused research that responds to research opportunities on the continent. This will be achieved by creating multi-institutional research collaborations to build research capacity while working on uniquely African opportunities and innovations in the fields of engineering and/or technology.

The digital knowledge creation ecosystem aims to provide a platform for researchers to share best practices, enhance research capabilities, and establish multi-institutional research collaborations while pursuing exciting and topical research that contributes towards driving the inclusive digital transformation of Africa. The platform seeks to leverage this intentional focus on growing research excellence in order to attract additional funding from a wide set of sources. To this end, CMU-Africa has a multi-year program to develop Afretec researchers, support research events and workshops, and award multi-institution seed and research grants annually.

Objectives of the Program
The goal of this program is to build research capacity on the African continent through the creation of multi-university research teams who collaborate to advance the digital transformation of the continent. This will be partly achieved through supporting faculty mobility and joint research activities by early career and senior researchers across the AFTRETEC network. Digital technologies include artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics, cyber-physical systems, cyber security, and information and communication technologies that advance the AU Digital Transformation Strategy as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa. The UN SDGs touch on every aspect of society. Therefore, applicants should be carrying out research that embed the use of digital technologies to problems in a broad range of application areas, including agriculture, education, energy, environment, financial Inclusion, health, infrastructure, manufacturing, sustainability, transportation, waste management, water systems, and more. Proposed projects can include both innovative development of digital technologies and application of digital technologies in the African context.

Eligibility
Applicants must be faculty members in an Afretec member university with a PhD.

Applications must be submitted before the submission deadline (see page 1).

Applicants must identify a hosting institution and host supervisor or collaborating partner for senior researchers. The host University should be a member of the Afretec network based in Africa. The current list of Afretec Members are as follows (listed alphabetically):

The American University in Cairo

Carnegie Mellon University

University of Lagos

University of Nairobi

University of Rwanda

University of Witwatersrand

The host supervisor or collaborating partner must provide a letter of intent declaring support for the application and to host the applicant if awarded.

The applicant must provide a letter of intent by the home university declaring support for application.

Each Afretec partner institution can only host one (1) researcher.

Evaluation Criteria
Applications will be evaluated against the following criteria:

The applicant (40%):

The individual, collective and complementary strengths of the applicant and the proposed host in the context of the proposed project and Afretec goals as well as the ability to successfully carry out the activities outlined for the mobility.

Gender diversity, inclusion of people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups will be considered.

Technical Merit (30%):

The potential for the proposed activity to advance innovative digital technologies (as defined above) that will accelerate the digital transformation of Africa and lead to positive socio-economic impact on the African continent. This should be demonstrated by clearly articulating the gaps and challenges that your project will address; the intellectual merit of the proposed research; and the potential benefits that the proposed project will present for communities, societies, countries, or the continent.

The potential for the proposed research to address specific SDG targets and indicators, and goals of the AU Digital Transformation Strategy (2020 – 2030) as well as producing outcomes that are inclusive for a broad set of populations.

Project Plan (20%):

The plan for carrying out the proposed activities is well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale.

The plan describes how the applicant will work together with the host supervisor or partner to promote a sustainable collaboration beyond the mobility, facilitate knowledge transfer and capacity building.

Capacity Building (10%):

The proposed project enhances university capacity for engineering and technology research on the continent. This could include supporting activities such as sharing of research tools, methods, and datasets; creating opportunities for sustainable funding, etc.

The potential of the proposed research to advance knowledge transfer between the student and the supervisors and between host and home universities, and to enhance curriculum taught at graduate or undergraduate levels.

The potential of the proposed research to lead to direct or indirect job creation in Africa.

Application Process – Proposal Submission and Format

Applications should be prepared in 11pt minimum font on A4 or US Letter paper with at least 1 inch margins. It should be comprised of the following:

Cover page (1/2 page) – Must contain the following information: (i) project title, (ii) the applicant and host supervisor or partner (names and institutions), (iii) period of proposed stay, and (iv) project abstract up to 200 words.

Project Narrative (2 pages) – Briefly summarize the rationale for the proposed area of research, the potential socio-economic impact of the project on the African continent, and the impact in terms of job creation. In addition, the project narrative should summarize the proposed activities and timeline.

Researcher Profiles (1 page total for applicant and supervisor/partner) - The application should specify the applicants's expertise and experience of host supervisor/partner and provide a brief description of how their expertise will contribute to the success of the proposed research during the mobility

Future Plans (1/2 page) – Briefly summarize potential plans for future collaboration, funding opportunities,

and research questions to highlight the sustainability of the research and the collaboration

Letters of commitment - The host supervisor/partner must provide a letter of intent declaring support for the application. The applicant must also provide a letter of intent by the home university declaring support for application.

Review Process
Proposals will be reviewed by a faculty panel which will make recommendations for the award. The Director of Afretec will make the final award decision in consultation with other key stakeholders.

For any additional questions, please contact the Director of Afretec: director-afretec@andrew.cmu.edu