



Invitation for Proposals

The Michigan State University Alliance for African Partnership (AAP) is inviting proposals for its initial partnership activities in 2017. As a university-wide initiative, AAP invites proposals from diverse disciplinary perspectives that address the priority areas of agri-food systems; water, energy and the environment; youth employment; education; cultural heritage development; and health and nutrition.

Successful proposals will be submitted by teams that include both MSU faculty and partners from African organizations. Proposed activities may entail cooperative research, capacity building, outreach and/or other activities in line with the three AAP pillars described below. This invitation for proposals is designed to support “inception stage” partnership activities (such as background research, planning meetings, or preparation of proposals for larger grant applications) and also “mid-stream stage” partnership activities that will supplement ongoing work (e.g., adding capacity-building or research-to-practice components to existing initiatives). All proposed activities should be designed to lay the foundation for longer duration and sustainable partnerships between MSU and African partner organizations.

Proposals may be submitted for one of the following three funding levels:

1. Up to **\$50,000 small grants** that can support initial-stage or midstream-stage partnership research activities, travel support for developing joint funding proposals, capacity building activities such as short-term training, network development, research symposia, or other activities that fall under the three AAP pillars listed below.
2. Up to **\$100,000 planning grants** that engage multiple partners in inception-stage research activities, projects that focus on bringing research to practice, larger research networking events or symposia, broader institutional capacity building projects, or other activities that fall under the three AAP pillars listed below.
3. Up to **\$200,000 scaling grants** which can be used for developing ideas and activities that could go to scale, supporting broader institutional linkages, or other activities that fall under the AAP pillars listed below.

Projects for all funding levels are to be carried out over an 18-month time frame. Selected partnership projects will be showcased at the upcoming launch of AAP in May 2017. All projects are expected to leverage the AAP funding to pursue external grant funding.

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Proposals should contain the following sections:

1. A cover sheet with the project's title and names, institutional affiliations, and contact information of all Principle Investigators.
2. A description of the MSU and Africa-based partner organizations and individuals involved. This should include:
 - A general description of the partners and individuals who will take part in the project.
 - The history of partnership between those involved and the potential for sustained future engagement.
 - A description of the partners' shared vision and how each partner will benefit from the proposed activities.
3. Explanation of the motivation for the proposed activities. This section should address:
 - How the activities connect to the AAP's three pillars of transforming lives, transforming institutions, and/or building bridges (described below) and the AAP's priority areas.
 - The scientific and/or methodological merit of the proposed project.
4. The objectives of the proposed project.
 - The objectives should clearly demonstrate the project's potential to create positive developmental impacts and/or social value in line with AAP's priority areas and themes.
5. Description of how the activities will be carried out, and anticipated outputs, outcomes, and impacts.
6. Identification of potential sources of external grant funding that the project will pursue as part of their AAP grant activities.
7. A timeline for achieving the anticipated outputs, outcomes and impacts.

Final submissions should include:

- Proposal document, not to exceed 5,000 words; one appendix with cited references/bibliography may also be included.
- Budget and short budget narrative describing the rationale for each main budget category.
- Letters of support from departments, organizations, institutions or units involved in the proposed partnership activities.

All documents should use standard, easy-to-read font and formatting.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals should address at least one of the AAP's priority areas of:

- Agri-food systems
- Water, energy and the environment
- Youth employment
- Education
- Cultural heritage preservation
- Health and nutrition

Proposals should also fall within at least one of the AAP's pillars listed below:

- **Transforming Lives:** Supporting research with real-world impact that improves African lives and livelihoods. Illustrative activities under this theme could include bringing research to practice by working with NGOs or private sector organizations to implement research findings, conducting inception-stage research which will lay the foundation for real-world impact, improving dissemination of research outputs to practitioners, innovating research-to-practice methodologies, or improving input into policy making.
- **Transforming Institutions:** Promoting sustainable and effective partnerships among institutions, enhancing resources, and increasing institutional capacity. Illustrative activities under this theme could include institutional capacity development at universities, NGOs, or in the public sector such as building financial management capacity, improving teaching and learning at universities, or increasing grant writing skills, etc.
- **Building Bridges:** Bringing people and organizations together to work toward common goals. Illustrative activities under this theme could include sponsoring thematic symposia or workshops that bring people together across sectors and disciplines or travel for preparation of proposals for larger grant applications. This also includes network development, communications among research groups or networks (e.g., digital innovations and digital forums), dissemination of knowledge through online journals; sharing/mentoring among institutional partners that seek common goals.

Submitted proposals will be evaluated according to the following five criteria:

1. Evidence of a shared vision and mutually shared interests among the partners as well as how well this project will expand the foundation of existing partnerships and/or creating synergies that provide opportunities for young MSU faculty to build long-term sustainable collaboration with African partner organizations.
2. Clarity of the connection of proposed activities to AAP pillars and priority areas.
3. Scientific and/or methodological merit of the proposed activity and potential contributions to the field.
4. Potential to create positive developmental impacts and/or social value in line with AAP's priority areas and themes.
5. Potential for leveraging significant external grant funding.

All selection criteria will be equally weighted during the selection review process.

SELECTION PROCESS

Proposals will be screened by the AAP management team for conformity to the guidelines and selection criteria. AAP management will send selected proposals to three peer reviewers for comments on technical merit. Short-listed proposals will be reviewed by the AAP Advisory Board according to the selection criteria.

Final selections will be made following the AAP Advisory Board meeting in February 2017.

SUBMISSION TIMELINE

- Full proposals (proposal, budget plus budget narrative, and support letters) should be received by **November 21, 2016**, for consideration.
 - AAP will acknowledge receipt of the proposal to the designated Principle Investigators.
- Awards will be announced by February 15, 2017.
- Start dates for awarded projects will be between March 1 and June 1, 2017.
 - Projects must be completed within an 18-month timeframe.

Please submit proposals to aap@isp.msu.edu.