Call for Proposals
Building Research Capacity in Least Developed Countries

SECTION 1. OVERVIEW
The research environment and quality of research undertaken and produced in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are influenced by several factors, most notably: low individual and institutional capacity and expertise in carrying out cutting-edge research; limited graduate and PhD programs; restricted funding opportunities; inadequate infrastructure, resources and data availability; weak research to policy connect; and limited opportunities to engage, collaborate and network with peers locally, regionally and globally. This low capacity environment restricts the ability of researchers in these countries to undertake credible work and to inform the policymaking community with timely and reliable analysis and evidence. As a result, there is low demand for their research, and this self-sustained vicious circle of low-capacity, low-credibility, and low-demand works as a “low research capacity trap.”

In this context, with the support of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Global Development Network (GDN) is launching a specific project on Building Research Capacity in Least Developed Countries; with a focus on scientific research in economics and social sciences that is designed to inform national and local policymaking. Under this project, GDN will select up to four research institutions based and working in LDCs on the basis of a 24 month (two year) research capacity building program that they will design and propose; and will partner with them over the duration of the program to refine, implement and monitor it. For information regarding GDN’s mission and activities, click here.

SECTION 2. THE CALL
Through this competitive call, GDN invites research institutions to propose a research capacity building program for the duration of 24 months (two years). Competing institutions should design the program on the bases of their specific research capacity needs, and propose interventions that can support and strengthen their research capabilities in a sustainable manner.

GDN is looking for research capacity building programs that are:

- Demand-led, designed to support the selected institutions in addressing their research capacity gaps with an aim to raise and strengthen their research and outreach skills in a sustainable manner;
- Inclusive, tailored and suited to the country-context and the local needs;
- Designed to build identifiable capacities and skills for individual researchers to help them initiate, conceptualize and undertake quality development research that is timely and can contribute to evidence-based policymaking in their country in the long-run;
- Open to the global research community in order to help connect local researchers with their peers and benefit from quality mentoring;
- Focused on policy-oriented social sciences, though they could draw on other disciplines as relevant.

The grant for each selected institution will range between US$ 40,000 to US$ 100,000 per year for a period of 24 months (two years), contingent on the scope and success of the proposed program.
**GDN’s Support:** Throughout the application process GDN will provide assistance to applicants in defining and designing the objectives and scope of their research capacity building interventions, making them comprehensive and feasible. Once selected, GDN will work closely with the partner institutions to provide them with the support needed (beyond funding) for the effective implementation and monitoring of the proposed research capacity building program throughout the grant period. Additionally, GDN will also engage a panel of advisors to mentor and support the selected partner institutions as and when required. These advisors will provide guidance on the program design, development, implementation and effectiveness.

**SECTION 3. GUIDELINES TO APPLY**

### 3.1. ELIGIBILITY

**Who can apply?**
- This Call is open to non-partisan, not-for-profit, research institutions headquartered and working in some LDCs. For the list of eligible LDCs, [click here](#).
- GDN is concerned with the capacity, functions, skills, and interests of institutions rather than with the formal type or classification of an institution, and, accordingly, a variety of research institutions may participate including:
  - Universities
  - Think-tanks
  - Stand-alone research institutions
- The applying institution must be headed and managed by members who are citizens of developing or transition countries and currently residing in LDCs. The applicants can be asked to submit proof of their citizenship and residency through documents with legal standing at any point during the Call.

**Who cannot apply?**
- Individuals cannot apply in their own capacity to this Call, but as members of an institution.
- Institutions headquartered in developed countries but working in LDCs are not eligible.
- Staff members who are citizens of developing or transition countries but currently residing in a developed country are not eligible to apply in the name of the institution.
- Multilateral, bilateral and other donor organizations (DFID, IDB, IDRC, IMF, UN agencies, the World Bank etc.) are not eligible.
- Submissions concerning a baseline, evaluation or research study will not be considered.
- Submissions for funding unrelated conferences and seminars, or the purchase of equipment will not be considered.

### 3.2. APPLICATION

Interested institutions should prepare and submit their proposal for a research capacity building and strengthening program that will make a difference to their research skills and capabilities in a sustainable manner. The proposal should provide a description of the pressing research gaps and needs at the institution and recommend well-defined, innovative and feasible research capacity building interventions to address them. Institutions are expected to select a few research capacity building goals and may draw on the below ‘toolbox’ of capacity building instruments to define the approach taken in designing the specific interventions proposed. This toolbox is formulated in broad categories and in a simple and generic way so that various combinations and innovations are possible:
- Workshops that focus on “how to design and conduct empirical research” (how to write a research proposal, design methodologies that are in-line with research objectives, present results etc.).
- Methodology workshops – for a variety of themes and disciplines.
- Specific training programs in data collection, computational and analytical skills.
• Research visits, lectures by regional and global experts in the given field or methodology; Faculty exchange program from LDCs to other countries to scale-up their mentoring skills.
• Online tutorials or on-site mentoring on methods and data for young researchers.
• Refresher courses/ workshops on contemporary topics of research for mid-career researchers and academics to improve quality of research, teaching and peer-learning environments in universities and think-tanks.
• Scholarships for Masters’ students and guidance to try and steer more towards pursuing PhD and research.
• Small grants/ fellowships to allow researchers to participate in relevant summer courses in some of the established universities in the world.
• Scholarships for PhD thesis – partial grants for field research or primary data collection, stipends, paper presentations in international conferences, short duration stay in an advanced university with an assigned mentor.
• Mentoring (both from very senior researchers, and also from mid-career ones).
• Career skills workshops for young researchers.

Please Note: Proposals that suggest research capacity building programs that are open to researchers from other institutions in the country are welcome.

3.3. TWO STAGE SUBMISSION PROCESS:

The submission process has been divided into two stages:

Stage I - Expressions of Interest (EoI): As a first step, applicants should submit an EoI highlighting their research capacity building goals with a description of how they will be pursued and implemented. Guidelines to submit an EoI are as follows:

A. The EoI should be submitted as a Microsoft word document file only. Submissions should be less than 4 pages. Format should be in Times New Roman, 11-point font with single-line spacing and one inch margins.

B. The following documents should be submitted as annexes to the EoI:
   1. Short statement on how the proposed research capacity building program and the broad objectives of this GDN project relate to the applicant institution’s business plan and institutional development strategy (no more than 2 pages)
   2. Institutional Background Documents:
      i. Mission statement of the applicant institution;
      ii. Legal status of the applicant institution with proof of headquarters (copy of the incorporation or registration certificate);
      iii. Brief description of the applicant institution’s past experience in implementing and managing similar research capacity building programs that have proven to build research capacities, including recent program/ institutional evaluations (not mandatory); and;
      iv. CVs of the coordinator and all team members.

C. The deadline for submitting the completed EoI is 18 July 2014 (6:00 PM Indian Standard Time). Any submissions/ documents received after this date will not be considered.

D. To submit your EoI, click here.

Stage II - The Full Proposal: ONLY eligible and shortlisted applicants will be asked to submit their full Proposal detailing their research capacity building program and interventions. While preparing the full Proposal, applicants should bear in mind the selection criteria given below. Guidelines to submit the full Proposal are as follows:

A. The full Proposal should be submitted as a Microsoft word document file only. Submissions should be less than 15 pages. Format should be in Times New Roman, 11-point font with single-line spacing and one inch margins.

B. Submissions must include all the sections listed below in a single word document file:
   1. Proposal cover sheet
2. Table of contents
3. The expanded proposal with a detailed description of the research capacity building goals, comprehensive and detailed plan on how they will be pursued, implemented and monitored, along with information on how results will be documented.

C. The following documents should be submitted as annexes to the full Proposal:
   1. Detailed budget and work plan/timeline;
   2. A copy of the recent financial audit of the applicant institution (if available); and;
   3. Additionally, GDN will be circulating a short questionnaire on financial operations and practices. Applicants must fill and submit this questionnaire as an annex to their full Proposal.

D. The deadline for submitting the full Proposal is 2 September 2014 (6:00 PM Indian Standard Time). Any submissions/documents received after this date will not be considered.

E. The link to submit the full Proposal will be activated by the last week of June, after the EOI stage is completed and the preliminary results are declared.

3.4. IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER:
- The application process has been divided into two stages – Stage I: EOI, and Stage II: Full Proposal. Only eligible and shortlisted applicants from the EOI stage will be invited to submit a full Proposal under stage II.
- Applications (EOI/Full Proposal) must be submitted in English or in French.
- An institution cannot submit more than one application (EOI/Full Proposal).
- Incomplete applications (EOI/Full Proposal) will not be considered.
- Information and details provided in the application (including the institutional details) should be correct and verifiable; else the submission will be liable for disqualification.
- GDN will accept submissions as electronic files only. Submissions by any other method will not be accepted. Therefore, please carefully review the instructions given above and submit your completed applications at www.gdn.int/rcbplatform.
- For queries, email us at rcb2014@gdn.int.

Please Note: GDN-supported research capacity building programs must be carried out in accordance with common research and professional ethical standards, related to plagiarism, surveys and other forms of data collection that involve human subjects, confidentiality and transparent use of financial and human resources. In their proposals, applicants are required to clearly identify all possible ethical issues relating to their proposed program.

Furthermore, all forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable to GDN, plagiarism being one of them. Plagiarism is unauthorized use of other people’s work, ideas and/or writings (in part or in full) and presenting or giving notion of these work(s), ideas and/or writings being one’s own work, idea(s) and/or writing(s). GDN takes plagiarism very seriously and will take immediate and appropriate action, including and not limited to withdrawal of funding for any such grantee found guilty of plagiarism.

SECTION 4. SELECTION CRITERIA
Eligible and complete proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by a selection committee, based on the following criteria.

Quality of the proposal:
- Needs assessment: What research capacity building challenges does the institution face? To what extent is the proposed program demand-driven and sustainable? Does the institution have a clear sense of the research environment and is the proposed capacity building program contextualized and tailored to the environment?
- Monitoring, learning and evaluation: Does the proposal clearly specify the objectives of the program in terms of research capacity building? How does the institution envisage building
research capacity through the program? Is there a specific theory of change? What tools will be used to monitor implementation and progress against the expected results?

- Clarity and coherence: Given the needs assessment, to what extent is the program well-defined and justified? Does the program fit within the institution’s overall organizational strategy and capacity?
- Feasibility: Given the country/regional context, is the proposed program feasible? Does the institution have a clear assessment of the risks involved, as well as a well-defined plan to mitigate such risks?
- Beneficiaries and scale of operations: Who are the primary beneficiaries of the proposed program? How does the institution plan to identify and select its beneficiaries? What is the extent and reach of the proposed program?
- Value for money: Does the proposed program promise substantial research capacity building results in a cost effective manner?
- Work plan and budget: Has the institution provided a clear and comprehensive work plan along with a detailed and feasible budget?

**Institutional capacity:**

- Commitment to building research capacity: Whether the long-term mandate of the institution is to strengthen research capabilities and needs in low capacity environments.
- Institutional ability and relevant experience: Whether the institution is well positioned to implement and manage capacity building programs. Does it have previous experience in undertaking programs that have proven to build research capacities?
- Knowledge sources: Does the institution have in-house expertise to develop and deliver capacity building programs? To what extent does the institution draw on external resources to execute such programs?
- Access and links: Does the institution have links with other organizations implementing similar programs within the country/region? How effective are its networking services in ensuring access to resources and information, and facilitation of links with other stakeholders?
- Quality controls: Does the institution have a transparent governance structure and financial operations/records? How well is the Monitoring and Evaluation component embedded within the activities of the institution, from their design and inception to completion? Does it have clear and measurable objectives for research capacity building?
- Potential for continuity and expansion: Is there a perceived interest and ability for the institution to expand the program beyond the support provided by IDRC-GDN?

Applicants will be notified of the selection committee’s decision by mid-September 2014.

**Please note:** GDN reserves the right to modify, cancel or not award grants at any stage of the Call and grant-making.