



Cornell University

Calls for Concept Proposals for the Structural Transformation of African Agriculture and Rural Spaces (STAARS) project

Background

The CGIAR Research Program on Policies, Institutions and Markets (PIM), supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and Cornell University are calling for concept proposals for the Structural Transformation of African Agriculture and Rural Spaces (STAARS) fellowship program. The STAARS project is a collaboration with Cornell University, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), the Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP), and the World Bank. PIM has established a collaboration agreement with Cornell University to provide technical mentorship and support for selected early-career African researchers.

The STAARS project, as conceptualized and developed by the initial institutional members of the consortium, builds on the World Bank “Myths and Facts in African Agriculture” project to pursue in-depth, rigorous, policy-oriented research on the causal determinants of productivity and income growth, asset accumulation, rural employment and risk management in African agriculture and rural spaces. Cornell University is the technical lead and global center of excellence in building and strengthening the initiative in collaboration with PIM. Other invited collaborators also continue to contribute to the development of the full initiative with funding support from AfDB and other sources.

PIM provides competitive grants for travel and training for bright, early career African researchers, in collaboration with Cornell University and other partners. STAARS fellows will be selected through this competitive call for proposals. Once selected, STAARS fellows will be paired with mentors at Cornell University with whom they will jointly author a paper on a topic of mutual interest relating to structural transformation in sub-Saharan Africa. PIM will support the publication of resulting research findings in high quality journals and as working papers. In addition, PIM will facilitate fellows’ participation in scientific and policy conferences.

The STAARS Fellowship began in 2016 and to date has supported eight fellows from diverse backgrounds. Information on past fellows can be found here:
<http://barrett.dyson.cornell.edu/staars/fellows/index.html>.

Scope of Research and Geographic Focus

Prospective STAARS fellows are invited to develop proposals in the following thematic areas.

1. Dynamics of agriculture inputs use, technological change, and productivity growth in sub-Saharan Africa.
2. Rural factor market performance, labor exits and productivity in sub-Saharan Africa.
3. Food security, nutrition and health linkages in sub-Saharan Africa in sub-Saharan Africa.
4. Poverty dynamics and resilience against shocks in sub-Saharan Africa.

STAARS fellows' rigorous policy analysis should use existing panel data, such as the Living Standards Measurement Study - Integrated Surveys on Agriculture (LSMS-ISA) or similar datasets. LSMS-ISA panel datasets are available for a number of countries in Africa including Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Malawi and Uganda.

Eligibility

The call is open for early career African researchers, either late stage Ph.D. students or those who have completed their Ph.D. since 2011. Researchers must be based and working in Africa, with priority given to proposals relating to the research themes indicated above. Qualified female researchers are particularly encouraged to apply. While a Ph.D. is not mandatory, STAARS encourages fresh Ph.D. graduates who can benefit from a mentorship and additional training to become solid researchers. Fellows are expected to complete the proposed project by publishing findings as a working paper and submitting to a peer-reviewed journal by December 15, 2017.

The selected applicants will receive funds to cover travel and participation in a three week mentorship program at Cornell University. No funds are available to support an individual's time, so permission from one's supervisor will be required.

Application Process

The STAARS fellowship application process is managed by Cornell University, in collaboration with PIM. Applicants are required to prepare a maximum 2500 word (5 page) concept proposal, which motivates the selected research issues and objectives, outlines data sources, proposed methodology and contains a convincing plan for completing the project by December 15, 2017. All proposals shall be prepared in English. All proposals will be peer reviewed by experts from PIM and Cornell University.

The deadline to submit a concept proposal is March 15, 2017. Applicants should submit their completed proposal via email to staars@cornell.edu. Accepted applicants will be notified in mid-April and are expected to begin remote collaboration with their mentor immediately upon acceptance.

Not covered under this call

The proposed research and capacity development is expected to be undertaken as part of an ongoing effort by the scholar; STAARS will not cover the scholar's time allocated to this research. The program also cannot support costs for any new data collection. Researchers are expected to be familiar with existing panel data sets and having a strong working knowledge of Stata or other econometric software and an interest in econometric analysis of large panel data sets.

Template for preparation of concept proposal

- Applicant name, gender, nationality and country of residence.
- Date of completion (or expected completion) of Ph.D.
- Applicant's current affiliation(s)
- Title of the proposed research
- Targeted country (countries)
- Introduction and motivation that includes clear statement of research objectives and hypotheses.
- Description of data sources and any prior experience working with the proposed data.
- Proposed methodology
- If applicable, summarize any preliminary results.
- Proposed timeline for the research.
- Bibliographic references (not included in the 2500 words)
- CV of the applicant (not included in the 2500 words)