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**Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa**

**U.S. Business in Africa Awards**

**Celebrating Excellence. Creating Knowledge**

**Prototype Proposal, August 2021**

**Project Summary**

This collaborative, innovative and inspirational-cum-aspirational initiative aims to launch and sustain a culture of responsible and good corporate citizenship by U.S. corporate organizations and entrepreneurs operating in Africa. Every year from October 2022, exemplary U.S. multinational companies (MNCs) and small and mid-sized enterprises (SBEs) contributing meaningfully to African economies will be identified and recognized through an elaborate and impartial process. The excelling companies will be showcased through knowledge production and publicity thereby serving as case studies, corporate ambassadors, and role models.

The initiative is focused on the direct financial, technological, infrastructural, and human resource contributions of U.S. companies to African economies rather than aid programs. The focus is on for-profit companies rather than the corporate social responsibility or philanthropic arms of businesses. It has been acknowledged that trade in goods and services between Africa and its foreign partners is a key ingredient for long-term and sustainable development of the continent. There are thousands of U.S. companies of varying sizes in diverse sectors that have invested substantially in African economies thus enabling the continent to participate in the global economy. However, there is little in the way of structured, systematic, and rigorous bodies of information and knowledge on U.S. companies with the highest and positively consequential impact on the development of African economies through trade and investment flows.

Every year, the project will recognize, award, and showcase 10 excelling American corporations and entrepreneurs through an impartial identification and judging process. By “excelling American corporations and entrepreneurs”, we aim to recognize and award excellence at two levels. One category of awardees will be multinational corporations (MNCs) conceived as big U.S. companies with large budgets, global financial power, large staff outlays, extensive networks and long-running and established track records on the continent. The equal and second category is small and mid-sized businesses (SMBs) that have graduated from start-up status, with staff complements running into hundreds of employers, and already generating substantial revenues, building appreciable continental or regional networks, and impacting African economies. These are middle market entrepreneurships that are neither too small in terms of contribution to African economies nor too big to, for instance, have an extensive footprint throughout Africa. Thus, every year, each of the five African geographical regions will produce 5 excelling MNCs and 5 excelling SMBs.

By recognizing and publicizing companies directly investing in African economies, the project will ignite a practice in which American companies embrace the culture of sharing information on the impact of their investments and their *modus operandi* in Africa. At the same time, showcasing the companies helps fill information and knowledge gaps in Africa-U.S. business discourses thereby deepening the understanding of the role of corporate America in Africa. The project will produce and disseminate knowledge all-year-round on lessons learned from the winning companies. This approach merges celebration of high-impact performance with heightened publicity and knowledge production making it well-positioned to benefit American and African businesses, policymakers, universities and knowledge communities and general publics.

The project is an industry-academia-public-development agency partnership. It is led byorganizing committee comprising accomplished U.S. and African representatives of industry and academia. The administrative work is undertaken by the African Centre for the Study of the US (ACSUS), the first Centre of its kind focused on Africa-US relations and based at the University of the Witwatersrand, a leading research-intensive institution in Africa with a global footprint. The grand total budget for 2022-2024 is USD 3 002 800 (R42 357 300). The total budget for the period 2021 to 2022 is USD897 188 or R12 655 283. ACSUS has made an initial investment ofR270 000 (approximately USD18 500) in 2021 towards the launch of the initiative.

**Context**

Since the turn of the millennium, Africa’s attractiveness as an emerging market and investment opportunity has grown, providing many opportunities for U.S. businesses as well as their African counterparts. For instance, many studies show that Africa is home to the fastest growing economies in the world inspiring the *Africa Rising* and *Africa Open for Business* narratives. This has been spurred by factors such an upward trajectory in demographic shifts and the related youthful and expanding middle class with increased purchasing power, economic diversification beyond primary and extractive economies towards value addition, beneficiation and service industries, increased uptake of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), an improving environment for doing business and rapid urbanization. Challenges and bottlenecks such as poor infrastructure, tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade, poor governance and large financial deficits remain. However, Africa is a frontier and untapped region for economics and trade globally. The desire for African countries to favour trade over aid can be seen in the continent’s policies, particularly the Agenda 2063 aspirations from which the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which became operational in early 2021, is derived. The AfCFTA lays the groundwork for greater competitiveness, trade diversification, and economic growth. American policymakers are currently working with their African counterparts based on its framework. Moreover, at the global level, Agenda 2063 plans are being implemented in conjunction with the United Nation’s Agenda 2030 on sustainable development with economics and trade a key avenue. Whether in the U.S., Africa, or elsewhere, this initiative will, directly and or indirectly, inform policy and public debate on US-Africa commercial and developmental relations.

Over the past decade, foreign companies have poured into the continent to take advantage of the opportunities that the continent offers, with Chinese companies particularly visible. Established and emerging U.S. companies have also increased their presence. Over the past couple of years, the U.S. generally and U.S. companies more specifically are seen to have lost significant ground to Chinese and other established and emerging geopolitical competitors on the continent. This initiative is therefore situated in the broader context of redefining U.S. engagement in Africa in terms of trade, investments, and private sector financing, vis-à-vis the traditional focus on aid, peacekeeping, and other efforts in the development finance sector.

An opportunity arises for U.S. companies to showcase their presence on the continent via this initiative. Casual observations show that there are thousands of U.S. companies operating in diverse productive sectors. Some of these companies are large multinationals with global footprints while others are small and mid-sized businesses expressly focused on the continent or in specific African countries. Evidence of corporate America in Africa can be seen in manufacturing and hospitality infrastructure in African cities; in the mining and agricultural hinterlands, along land, aviation, and maritime transport corridors; in the digital creative economies; in the stock markets and in various service industries. Some of these companies are members of business management organizations and associations such as the American Chambers of Commerce, the Corporate Council on Africa, and the World Trade Centers Association among others. Others are linked to U.S. Government policies and entities such as the African Growth and Opportunity Act, the BUILD Act 2018 which established the International Development Finance Corporation (IDFC), Millennium Challenge Corporation, Power Africa, Prosper Africa, The [U.S. African Development Foundation](https://www.usadf.gov/), and Trade and Investment Hubs funded by the United States Agency for International Development, the United States Trade and Development Agency through its Access Africa initiative, among others.

Indeed, some of the American companies operating in Africa could be promoting American and African economic and trade policies. There is a compelling case for the growing importance of Africa as a huge commercial opportunity for the U.S. To diversify successfully, MNCs and SMBs require a nuanced understanding of where the opportunities lie and how to successfully break into sub-regional value chains in Africa. Currently, certain Africa-specific U.S. economics and trade policies are inconsistent, and sometimes, confusing. How can U.S. companies become relevant in the discourse on U.S.-Africa economic and trade policies? This initiative will contribute to reducing existing information asymmetries by providing a pragmatic, evidence-based platform for excelling American businesses to showcase their success factors thereby encouraging their peers on sustainably doing business on the continent.

Collectively, these U.S. businesses are making contributions to African economies by engaging in trade and investments in goods and services. Questions however arise: What is the estimate of American companies doing business in Africa? Where are they doing business geographically and in which productive sectors? How do the companies contribute to African economies? Why are the companies apparently shy about coming out to share the extent of their investments on the continent? What are some of the case studies of excelling U.S. companies? Information and knowledge on these and other questions is scattered on online sources and in the companies’ and government databases. What is needed is motivation to encourage the companies and partner organizations to share information and knowledge that will begin to fill these gaps and serve an inspirational role. By initiating a recognition scheme combined with sustained publicity and communications, this initiative responds to the building of knowledge to answer these questions. This approach, blending excellence recognition with research and knowledge production, will help to map the various elements of American firms’ engagements on the continent.

**Problem Statement and Response**

The formative stages of the project are traced to the establishment of ACSUS in March 2018. ACSUS mission is to “innovate and sustain new ways of understanding the U.S., relevant to Africa and Africans through research, teaching, outreach, exchanges, public engagements, and publishing”. From inception, the Centre has been seized of the need for a deep, nuanced, and meaningful understanding of the impact of U.S. investments and trade with Africa generally and U.S. businesses on the continent more specifically. The project was conceived in early 2020 after the realization that there was no initiative celebrating excelling American businesses dedicated and committed to positively impactful and socially responsible investments in Africa. By “positively impactful and socially responsible investments”, we do not mean to favor firms involved in environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) or impact investment alone. The initiative is focused on recognizing and awarding companies that make direct economic contributions to African economies while at the same ensuring they do not have negative impacts on communities, the environment and governance. The empirical framework for identification and eventual recognition and awards will not elevate any one form of metrics over others.

The project is justified by the fact that there is currently no African continental initiative for U.S. companies that incorporates recognition of excellence with research, teaching, knowledge production, and public engagement. Similarly, there is no initiative driven collaboratively by the representatives of industry, academia, development agencies, and with the involvement of government or public sector representatives.

The opportunity presented by this initiative is the connection between recognition of excellence and knowledge production all tied together by robust, continuous, and strategic communication through year-long processes. These two key components are connected. The annual recognition and award of outstanding U.S. companies impactfully contributing to African economies through a judging process leads to the generation of knowledge for teaching, research, and public engagement. Over the years, both the recognition and the knowledge production will map and create a large database of role models and case studies that will change the U.S.-Africa corporate engagement landscape.

**The Organizing Committee and the African Centre for the Study of the US**

Organizationally, this initiative is well set up to mount the excellence awards and sustainably produce information and knowledge on U.S. businesses’ contribution to African economies. The overall leadership and oversight of the initiative is provided by the organizing committee comprising accomplished representatives of African and American academia, industry, media, development agencies, and governments. Membership on the organizing committee and the judging mechanism (judging panel) is balanced with regards African and American interests as well as equitable gender and age representation. These are individuals dedicated, knowledgeable and passionate about making meaningful and sustainable contributions to Africa-U.S. engagements. The committee is co-chaired by Prof Bhekinkosi Moyo and Dr. Mima S. Nedelcovych. Prof Moyo is a professor at Wits University’s Business School and founder of the Centre on African Philanthropy and Social Investment (CAPSI), a pioneering entity working to bridge the gap in the study, research, and responsible corporate practices in Africa. Dr Nedelcovych is Chairman of AfricaGlobal Schaffer, a leading Washington DC and Baton Rouge, LA based advisory and project development firm with a long and extensive footprint in Africa and a founder of the Corporate Council on Africa, the leading U.S. business association focused solely on connecting Africa-U.S. business interests.

Committee members based in Africa include Mr. Michael Sudarkasa who is based in South Africa, CEO of Africa Business Group and board chair of the social venture fund firm, Impact@Africa; Prof Bitange Ndemo of University of Nairobi Business School, a prolific media commentator and former permanent secretary at Kenya’s Ministry of Information and Communications; Mr Ezekiel Odiogo, Head Private Sector Investment Operations and African Investment Forum at the African Development Bank based in South Africa and Ms Angela Russel CEO of the American Chamber of Commerce South Africa and Board Member of the Board of Directors of Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) and the U.S.- South Africa Business Council; Dr Alex Awiti, Vice Provost at Aga Khan University in Kenya; Mr Paul Mukoki, a financial manager at Wits University and DrEmmanuel Adu-Danso, Network Manager at the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) which brings together 17 leading African universities. Dr Bob Wekesa, Acting Director of ACSUS a media, geopolitics and diplomacy scholar at Wits University serves as the Secretary to the committee

Committee members based in the U.S. (with close engagements in Africa) include award winning journalist and filmmaker Ms Carol Pineau, whose experience includes covering Africa for CNN, BBC, National Public Radio, VOA and Radio France Internationale; Dr Paul Clyde, President of the William Davidson Institute, a non-profit research organization based at the University of Michigan and dedicated to economic solutions to development in low- and middle-income countries; Ms Amini Kajunju, a multilingual educationist, CEO of International University of the Grand Bassam Foundation and former President and CEO of African American Institute; Prof Fred Olayele, Director, Centre for African Research and Business at Carleton University and Chairman, Board of Directors, Economic Club of Africa in New York, Ms Ndidi Okonkwo Nwuneli, an expert on African agriculture and nutrition, philanthropy, and social innovation and a serial entrepreneur, author, public speaker, and consultant and Mr Emmanuel Aduayi, business development executive with Axxess Technologies, a home-health service provider headquartered in Dallas, Texas.

As committee-member profiles attest, the seventeen individuals serving on the project bring on board the requisite blend of scholarly and practitioner knowledge, experience, networks, and expertise to ensure that both the recognition and knowledge production components of the project are achieved with the highest level of integrity.

The day-to-day management of the project is undertaken by ACSUS which serves as the secretariat. ACSUS is located at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. It serves as an avenue for scholarly and policy exchanges that link scholars, students, policymakers, businesspeople, civil society, and community members interested in Africa-U.S. engagements. ACSUS is the first Centre in Africa dedicated to the study, research, teaching and public engagement on the U.S-Africa relations. Its vision, which informs this project is to be “the leading African research and engagement Centre, shaping intellectual discourse and deepening the understanding of the U.S as a nation, society, and global power”. Its mission is “to innovate and sustain new ways of understanding the U.S, relevant to Africa and Africans”. ACSUS vision and mission form a core source of and inspiration to this initiative.

The ACSUS team is led by Director, Prof Gilbert Khadiagala an international relations scholar and Dr Bob Wekesa, Acting Director (see above). The secretariat includes a project coordinator, a communications manager, an administrator, a stakeholder and fundraising researcher, and two more researchers responsible for other Africa-U.S. programs. The seven-member staff complement operates within the wider Wits University’s management system. The Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Prof Garth Stevens, provides overall oversight over ACSUS’ activities across administration, human resource, finance and monitoring and evaluation. Working under the well-established Wits University system, the Centre has effectively managed donor funding from organizations such as the Ford Foundation, the U.S. Embassy in South Africa, and Hewlett Foundation, among others. In 2021, the Centre established the Economics and Trade Research Group currently constituted by ten Wits University’s Business School doctoral candidates who provide background research as well as residential and non-residential fellows based in universities and research centers in Africa and the U.S. Furthermore, ACSUS has a good working relationship with 17 African universities under the auspices of the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) as well as a growing number of American universities who will be involved in the project at the faculty and student levels.

**Goals**

* Create a culture of celebrating good corporate citizenship and provide positive exposure for U.S. companies’ contribution to Africa’s economic development by operating profitably.
* Change the narrative on doing business in Africa by offering an updated, more accurate picture of Africa, and providing U.S. companies information on the opportunities and accurate levels of risk.

**Objectives**

* Recognize and showcase annually five U.S.MNCs and five U.S. SMBs that are examples of positive, impactful and direct economic contributions to African economies.
* Research, map and build a database of knowledge products on U.S. corporate organizations in Africa via case studies.
* Publicize recognized and awarded companies through digital and traditional media, videos, and documentaries.
* Create and sustain academia-industry-public sector partnerships on Africa-US economic, trade and investment engagements.
* Create teaching and research projects on U.S. corporate organizations in African and U.S. universities.
* Use winning companies as corporate ambassadors through academic and public lectures in Africa and the U.S.

**Approaches, Methods and Processes**

**The Awards**

Through an annual program of activities, the organizing committee oversees all aspects of the initiative. These include decisions on actions to be implemented by the secretariat, researching, designing and devising judging criteria and processes, knowledge production and dissemination, marketing and communication, governance structures and ethics, and fundraising. Each year, the organizing committee sets out a theme around which companies make submissions. Based on the theme the secretariat works with the organizing committee in designing the judging criteria, the knowledge production component particularly the case study design, and the media and marketing activities. To avoid a selection bias when deciding on “celebrating excellence” the call for submissions and the judging criteria and the call for submissions will include the two categories of multinational corporations (MNCs) and small mid-sized businesses (SMBs). This will ensure that winning companies include MNCs with high market power in key economic sectors and SMBs powering emerging markets in various African economic sectors. This dual categorization also ensures that size alone does not determine the definition of corporate excellence for the awards and that diversity is a key metric in determining economic and trade contributions. It ensures that the awards are not skewed in favour of either the MNCs or SMBs with a company from each of these categories potentially emerging as the overall winner.

The research design leading to the call for submissions and judging criteria incorporates a dynamic, index-based framework that transparently shows how firms garner points to emerge as winners every year. The annual index gauges the performance of participating firms on key metrics and indicators calibrated based on, inter alia, pillars of positive and impactful corporate engagement, direct contributions to core economies such as GDP, job creation and integration with African firms and into African economies, among others. Annually, the index-driven judging criteria to be used by the judging panel will be pre-determined based on the organizing committee’s decision on the year’s theme.

A key highlight annually is an open, highly publicised, and competitive call for submissions which serves as the commencement of year-long activities. For the inaugural edition (2022), the focus will be based on the theme chosen by organizing committee across the two categories of MNCs and SMBs. A key highlight annually is an open, highly publicised, and competitive call for submissions which serves as the commencement of year-long activities. After submissions, the next major activity is a free, fair, and unbiased identification and judging process based on a uniform or standardized competitive judging process and criteria for the MNC and SMB categories.

These processes build up to the recognition of U.S. MNCs and SMBs with the highest socially, culturally, and environmentally responsible impact on core economic sectors in Africa. Excelling companies are awarded prizes during an annual gala event cascading from overall winner (platinum), first runner up (gold), second runner up (silver), third runner-up (bronze) and a special category agreed on by the judging panel and the organizing committee. Any American MNC or SMB operating in any of the five regions of the continent, namely, southern, eastern, central, western, and northern, is eligible to participate in the competition. MNCs and SMBs may be from any of the productive economic sectors, namely, energy, retail, digital economy, cultural & creative industries, agriculture & fishing, blue economy, manufacturing, finance, transport, hospitality, health, construction, education, and mining. A standardized metrics will be created to facilitate comparison between MNCs and SMBs to help with the determination of the overall winner and the winners of the other categories.

**Integrity and Judging Criteria**

To ensure integrity and avoid potential conflict of interest, awards will not be considered for non-profit entities, foundations or charities closely associated with American companies, nor will the corporate social responsibility activities of companies. Non-profit organizations that show no conflict may be involved as sponsoring partners. The criterion for evaluating the winners is a critical aspect of the project for three interlinked reasons: it provides an impartial set of principles for the evaluation process, guides companies towards the goals and objectives of the project and serves as the template for the marketing and publicity around the project and provides good content for case studies and other knowledge products. To keep any case studies or publicity material from appearing to be tied to determining who wins, we will only produce the videos after the finalists have been determined and the case study after the winner is determined.

**Communication and Marketing**

The knowledge production and communication components are planned for and implemented in tandem with all the processes leading to the gala event (announcement of the winners) which serves as the apex awards ceremony. At every stage of the process, the organizing committee, the secretariat, and partners will roll out an active and robust communication and marketing strategy, both for promoting finalists and winners and the programmatic aspects of the project. The award program incorporates communications throughout the process, creating continual promotion of the main goals and furthering engagement. The communication is tailor-made and targeted at the following audiences: African and U.S. policymakers, African and U.S. business community writ large, African and U.S. youth and students particularly those seeking entrepreneurial and employment opportunities and African and American scholars and intellectuals. Moreover, an effort will be made to communicate to and involve general populaces across Africa and the U.S.

A crucial point in time for communication and publicity will be the period from September 2021 when plans for a launch in November 2021 will kick in. Ramped up communication will follow in February (2022 and beyond) when a call for entries will be issued. During these periods, the call for entries or submissions will be promoted via social media highlighting the goals and objectives of the initiative and laying out the judging criteria. As the judging process gets underway in March through June annually, companies that stand a chance of being finalists or winners will be promoted on social media, making clear that they are not yet winners. These will be through short, noncommittal messages, that provide further promotional value for the awards and communicate the richness of the African business landscape. In the period immediately before the awards ceremony, short clips on the winner will be produced to be played during the event, highlighting the reasons for which the companies were chosen as winners.

The awards ceremony itself will have an elaborate media event complete with media management practices on the scale of a mini newsroom. Still pictures and videos will be supplied to media outlets around the continent and in the U.S. to ensure the ceremony becomes a major news event. The companies declared winners hold awards for a year-long duration. During this period, the companies work with the organizing committee on a range of insightful knowledge production and public engagement activities. They serve as sources of thematic and organizational case studies and are invited for public and academic lectures, conduct field visits for interested parties, tell their stories through multi-media productions and platforms, serve as corporate ambassadors, and provide advice to governments and development agencies. In using the winning companies as corporate ambassadors for the“U.S. Business in Africa: Celebrating Excellence, Creating Knowledge” initiative, the call for entries and the judging criteria for the awards will make it clear the companies would agree to play this diplomatic role for the one-year period during which they hold the award. All these and more activities are accompanied by an elaborate and sustained dissemination program traversing transformative economic contributions, best practices, innovation and leadership, corporate governance and citizenship, contribution to employment, skills and technology transfer, development of distribution and integration networks and integration with domestic economies. Short videos will be developed for each of the winners in the weeks after the announcements and longer videos and/or documentaries developed for the overall winner well ahead of the subsequent edition.

**Knowledge Production and Case Studies**

A key component of the award event is the production of case studies drawing on the information and data provided by the winning companies. This is a key learning and teaching program component of the initiative. In the month after the announcement of the winner, case studies will be written on the winners and published. The development of the case studies will be done in a collaborative format between U.S. and African universities with institutions on either side approached to contribute technical and financial resources. A continental framework for doing the case studies will be developed based on case study development in the U.S. and linked to the activities of the U.S. business organizations in Africa.

For the inaugural award the William Davidson Institute based at the University of Michigan has offered to develop and publish a case on study on its website and availed on the websites of some of the partner organizations. The organizing committee and the secretariat will approach more universities and think tanks to sponsor case studies for the remaining nine winners. Related research activities will include a mapping exercise based on the data collected from the process leading to the awards. This will be important to understanding where and how the commercial linkages manifest and how this may shape future policy and program endeavors. Some of the by-products of this initiative will constitute major input into analytical frameworks for significant and strategic policy designs, insights on best practices, future events, and collaborations.

An internship and exchange program where African students spend time in/at U.S. universities and companies, and U.S. students spend time in/at African universities and companies will be developed. This will be done through matching programs where some of the resources realised through the initiative go towards supporting the exchange program.

In addition to the comprehensive case studies, we will work with research associates and networks to publish thought leadership articles in the immediate post-gala event period. In the medium-term journal articles will also be published by academics associated with the project and some of the material will be repackaged and used by students working on topics in the subjects of economics, trade, entrepreneurship, and investment. The public engagement aspect of the initiative will be accomplished through public lectures and the production of short videos and documentaries on doing business in Africa all made available through digital platforms and in-person events.

**Schedules and Timelines (2021-2022)**

**January 2021 – September 2021**: Recruit organizing committee members and adopt base documents.

**May 2021- August 2022**: Organising committee meetings held once every month.

**30 August 2021**: Finalization of documents: concept note and budgeted prototype funding proposal.

**1 September 2021**: Commencement of fundraising, partnership outreach and development of targeted funding proposals.

**18 November 2021: Formal/publicized launch.**

**3 December 2021**: Commencement of the methodology for the judging criteria/index, knowledge production plan, and marketing and media plan.

**3 December 2021**: Commencement of formal recruitment of the judging panel.

**1-3 December 2021**: Launch at the African Investment Forum organized by the African Development Bank, Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire.

**1 January to 28 February 2022:** Launches/roadshows in the U.S. (Washington DC, New York, Los Angeles and elsewhere); Addis Ababa (on the side lines of the AU heads of state summit), Nairobi, Lagos, Cairo.

**22 February 2022**: Announcement of judging panel and call of entries.

**30 June 2022**: End of judging process and submission of the results to the organizing committee or appointed audit firm.

**18 July 2022**: Confidential communication to potential winners.

**26 July 2022**: Pre-launch planning meeting.

**25 August 2022**: Awards ceremony.

**Partnerships and Benefits**

The initiative has benefits for various partners including companies, universities, non-profit organizations, and governments. In September 2021, the project has 14 partners by way of the organizing committee representation. Participating U.S. companies and by extension their African counterparts will step up responsible contribution to African economies with the understanding that their investments will be appreciated and inspire others. African and U.S. universities will gain access to knowledge and information that will enhance evidence-based teaching, learning, research, and knowledge production. Non-profit organizations, foundations and international organizations pursuing developmental goals will tap into real-life practices for sustainable development. African governments and the U.S. Government will be able to gauge American companies that make the most contribution to the core of their economies. This will help with in structuring bilateral, multilateral, and regional economic and trade policies to encourage even more socially responsible contributions. General populaces will become aware of American companies and their Africa counterparts that contribute to the bottom lines of economies and therefore develop favourable opinion about them. Media partners will access content on success stories for doing business in Africa.

The current partners are: The U.S. Mission in South Africa, the US Africa Regional Commercial Office, the American Chamber of Commerce (South Africa), the William Davidson Institute, Wits University, and the African Research Universities Alliance.

**Sponsorship and Fundraising (2021-2024)**

In the first three years the project will rely on donor seed funding as it builds capacity to be self-funding and self-sustaining in the post-2024 period. Sponsoring organizations are divided into six categories or levels with prominence of branding and involvement in the project in a cascading order: 1) Platinum – overall sponsorship 2) Gold – media and communications sponsor 3) Silver – venue host 4) Bronze – case study and research sponsor 5) Contributor – supporting sundry and incidental expenses. For each of these sponsorship categories, value propositions will be provided in the specific funding proposals.

The main source of funding to meet budgetary costs will be foundations, developmental and governmental agencies, and institutions. High Net Worth Individuals not associated with for-profit-organizations and who meet the “no conflict” criteria will also be approached.

The second source of funding will by monetization of project activities. These will include:

* Gala Dinner/Awards Event: A fee will be charged for all attendants at the main event and revenue shared in consultation with the host venue.
* Advertising: African companies that are not subsidiaries of American companies and that do not submit entries will have an opportunity to buy advertising space at the venue.
* Publicity materials: A magazine produced in print and digital formats will be sold to participants during the gala night.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

The organizing committee will provide overall oversight for the project with the secretariat reporting to it monthly. This will be done through a monthly report supplemented by the minutes of committee meeting and featuring the financial and programmatic components of the project. The Centre will make use of Wits University’s elaborate financial and ethics mechanisms generally and the Development and Fundraising Office guidelines specifically.

**Project Sustainability**

* Savings: All funds received from the various sources will be subjected to a deduction as determined by the organizing committee and the secretariat and saved in a specialized bank account.
* Monetization: Data from the project will be converted in knowledge products sold to corporate organizations.
* Spin-off projects: Working with partners funded projects will be considered and implemented.

**Budget Summary**

There are two key budgetary components to the project: excellence awards where companies win prizes and knowledge production where case studies and multi-media products are developed and disseminated. The budget for year one (2021-2022) is $ 897 188 (R12 655 283); year two (2022-2023) $952 133 (R13 430 604);year three (2023-2024) $1 153 478 (R16 271 400). The grand total budget for 2021-2024 is $3 002 800 (R42 357 300) (see separate spreadsheet).

**Conclusion**

We believe theU.S. Corporates in Africa: Excellence Recognition Awards (UCAERA) initiative will make a major contribution to Africa-U.S. relations where it matters most, contribution to Africa’s economic growth through showcasing American companies that do well by doing good. We therefore invite African and American foundations and non-profit organizations, international organizations, governments and government agencies, and individuals to partner with us in this ground-breaking, innovative, and sustainable initiative.

We hope potential partners not only see value in this initiative but will help make it a reality through financial, in-kind support. We are keen to provide more detailed proposals. For inquiries, contact the African Centre for the Study of the U.S.: [acsus.research@wits.aca.za](about:blank) and copy Dr Bob Wekesa: [bob.wekesa@wits.ac.za](mailto:bob.wekesa@wits.ac.za).