

AESA Platform Review

17th – 19th November 2015

WT: Anna Curson, Benjy Smith & Sean Hussain
DFID: Stephen Porter
BMGF: Joe Torres

Review Aims

- To assess progress in setting up the AESA platform against agreed milestones and deliverables
- To inform the future AESA work plan and funders' decisions on when to transfer existing and new funding schemes

AESA Milestones

Start of Funding

- ☒ MoUs Signed
- ☒ Funding agreements/awards letters signed
- ☒ Key Staff recruited
- Development of staff training programme plan

Initiation of GM systems and function

- ☒ Recruitment of first batch of programme staff
- ☒ Grants Management and IT procurement process initiated and staff plans developed
- ☒ Ability to run calls for proposals (RFP) developed
- ☐ Grant-making policies agreed

Think-tank established

- ☐ Think tank and first draft of scientific strategy developed
- ☒ Formal & informal agreements made with network of pan-African stakeholders

Grant-awarding Capability

- ☒ Peer review pool established
- ☒ Independent grant decision-making committee established

GM – Track Record

- ☐ Grants awarded through transparent decision-making
- ☐ Timely due diligence checks of grantees conducted
- ☐ Performance metrics on time from grant award to contracting
- ☐ Grant activity is monitored and actively mentored and managed
- ☐ Audits of grantees
- ☐ Mid- and full-term evaluation of funding schemes is undertaken

Management Structures Established

- ☒ Partners Group Established
- ☒ ISAB Established

AESA Launch

- ☒ Launch meeting scheduled
- ☒ Attendance and engagement key stakeholders arranged

January

April

May

June

October

November

2016 -

Core Operational & Financial Management Capability

- ☐ Business plan developed
- ☐ Annual budget and 5-year forecast approved by the funders
- ☒ Financial & operational controls, policies & procedures implemented
- ☒ Recruitment & training of finance staff
- ☒ Grants management & IT systems established and staff training completed

Funders Review

- ☒ Funders' review
- ☒ Funders' audit
- ☒ Review of status for transfer of existing or new grants programmes

M&E Capacity

- ☒ Grant monitoring processes established
- ☐ Business plan is fully implemented and funding is leveraged



Review criteria

- Is AESA being set-up appropriately?
- Is AESA appropriately resourced?
- Lessons learned from the first year of set up
- Monitoring and evaluation set up
- Recommendations of key milestones for 2016
- Value for money and financial performance
- Key risks and changes to risk

Is AESA being set up appropriately?

- Good progress in setting up as a function in AAS
- Vision of AESA is clear and is understood by staff
- Recruitment has been strong
- Organisational infrastructure is sound
- Significant work remaining ahead of set up of AESA being considered complete
- Consideration of management structure and governance arrangements once fully operational

Is AESA appropriately resourced?

- Organisation size, staffing and structure appropriate to anticipated need
- Recruitment has been timely and has resulted in a competent, capable staff group
- Office space is sensible for function and reasonably equipped
- Future business models and independent sustainability are not fully thought through

Lessons learned from 1st year

- The need to balance maturing capability of organisation with developing partnership opportunities
- The importance of effective planning and project management
- The value of NEPAD in political influence
- Being pro-active in interactions with funders
- Solid IT infrastructure is essential to effective working

Grants Management -

1. Gates Grand Challenges

- Gates GC Programme Manager is a capable individual, is aware of issues with respect to managing Grand Challenges Africa calls and is working closely with BMGF
- There is a good understanding of generic grants management issues (peer review, committee management, conflicts of interest etc.)
- AESA grants policies have been drafted, these should be ratified by Funders and formally adopted by AAS
- GM training was pending at review point
- An effective, operational Grants IT system will be crucial



Grants Management -

2. DELTAs

- Programme staff are capable individuals, aware of issues and are working with support from Trust staff
- There are good working relationships between Grants & Finance teams at the Trust and AESA
- There is understanding of generic grants management issues
- AESA staff have experienced key grant-making processes
- Funders' expectations for ongoing management have not been articulated
- Processes for handing grant management scenarios (e.g. supplements) are not articulated
- Grant system and interface to Finance system not in place yet
- March date not feasible for handover, June recommended but detailed handover process needs to be agreed

Grants Management -

3. Monitoring and Evaluation set up

- M&E approach was considered to be appropriate to the current anticipated needs and capabilities of AESA
- Model has been developed with input from the existing DELTA grant-holders
- A need to prioritise site visits and provide regional training
- Encouraged to seek advice and support to develop M&E approach further

Financial performance

- Financial personnel, processes and reporting used by AAS/AESA are sound
- Reports were accurate and appropriate for decision-making; however currently required significant manual intervention
- Successful implementation of new Finance system will be crucial to addressing this
- Identification and presentation of core and direct costs in budget could have been clearer
- Segregation of duty for financial control was evidenced; however as programmes grow this should be reviewed to ensure it remains appropriate
- AESA should develop their own risk framework for the financial management of grants

Recommendations for key milestones

- Operational
 - Finalisation of policies, seek ratification from AAS
 - Agree governance arrangements with Funders
 - Implement Finance system
 - Agreement of funding model and ongoing financial reporting with Funders
- Grants
 - Finalisation of policies, seek ratification from Funders
 - Design and implement Grants (Ishango) system
 - Ensure Funders' expectations with respect to managing their awards are articulated, understood and processes in place to deliver
 - Agree detailed handover process for DELTAs, including final timeline and ongoing management arrangements

AESA DELTAS Handover Plan					
Milestone	Tasks	Lead	Support	Deadline	Status
Agree handover arrangements	Agree internally on tasks and leads for all steps of the handover process	NJ	All	19.02.16	RED/AMBER/GREEN
	Agree handover milestones with WT	NJ	All	04.03.16	
	First draft of key post-handover principles developed with WT. To include:- (i) Remit, mechanisms and tenure of WT/DfID governance of DELTAS (ii) AAS governance and oversight obligations over DELTAS portfolio (iii) AAS/AESA programmatic reporting requirements on DELTAS to WT/DfID (iv) How supplementary funds of DELTAS will be managed (ie OA publication, maternity leave, costed extensions, other supplementary funds) (v) Agree which data will be integrated in communication with WT and CCT	NJ	All	31.03.16	
Finalise pending DELTA awards	Be on copy for award letters for Afrique One, MARCAD, CARTA+, and THRIVE 2 from WT	ER	All	31.03.16	
	AESA/WT joint assessments for all four pending awards	HN/AN	All	31.03.16	
Draft award letter from WT to AESA	Identify areas for bespoke grant conditions and seek specialist advice	AK	HN, AN, NJ	11.03.16	
	Contribute to drafting of AESA award letter including bespoke conditions	NJ	AN, HN, AK	29.04.16	
	Final draft award letter	ER	All	06.05.16	
Actualize AESA's capabilities to	Risk:				
	Updating of risk register	AK	All	15.03.16	
	Completion of Risk Policy	AK	All	25.03.16	
	Approval of Risk Policy SMT Meeting	AK	All	31.03.16	
	Risk Register presented quarterly to SMT meetings	AK	All	31.03.16	
	Business Plan:				
	Marta Tufet in Nairobi to support business plan development	MT	AK, TK, NJ, ENM	02.16-25.02.16	
	Revisions and consultation of Business Plan Draft	KM	All	02.16 - 31.03.16	
	Business Plan submission to Partners Group	TK	BA	31.03.16	
	Policies and Procedures				
	Internal Policy Workshop to revise drafts	AN	All	01.03.16 - 2.03.16	
	Policy Draft Revisions	AN/SG	All	01.03.16 - 21.03.16	
	Review of Final drafts	NJ	All	21.03.16-25.03.16	
	Approval of GM Policies at SMT Meeting	TK	All	31.03.31	

Key risks -AESA

- Failure to articulate and communicate strategy and purpose
- Inability to achieve objectives across entire continent
- Sustainability – ongoing dependency on original funders for core support
- Not achieving correct balance between undertaking new ‘business’ opportunities with initial focus on developing organisational capability
- Organisation (culture, structure and/or staff) does not effectively support regular business activity

Key risks - Funders

- Balancing desire for assurance in cultural setting, with trust to allow AESA to take and develop responsibility
- Lack of clarity in expectations with respect to managing awards
- AESA fails to deliver overall organisational objectives