CALL FOR PROPOSALS – [R-EOI/ICT/09/01]

Terms of Reference for a Consultancy Service to Conduct a Situation Analysis of ICT Capacity and Utilization in RUFORUM Universities

1. Background

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is a consortium of 25 universities in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (ESA) established in 2004. It is registered as an International Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) with the mandate to oversee graduate training and networks in the region. RUFORUM recognizes the important and largely unfulfilled role that universities play in contributing to the well-being of small-scale farmers and economic development of countries throughout the sub-Saharan Africa region. This contribution is made through quality training of graduates entering the rural development workforce and the production and dissemination of demand-driven, development-oriented research that is defined and applied through participatory processes linking researchers, farmers, policy-makers, and business.

RUFORUM sees a vibrant agricultural sector linked to African universities which can produce high-performing graduates and high-quality research responsive to the demands of Africa's farmers for innovations and able to generate sustainable livelihoods and national economic development. Its mission is to strengthen the capacities of universities to foster innovations responsive to needs of small-holder farmers through the training of high quality researchers, ensuring that graduates will have the skills and know-how to be attractive to potential employers, and the output of impact-oriented research that will result in agricultural policy and practice reform. To achieve this mission, RUFORUM aims to develop a vibrant knowledge management system and fully use Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) in its operations. RUFORUM's strategy for knowledge management and ICT has three operationally interlinked components:

- Establishment of baseline data on ICT capacity and utilization at the Secretariat and among partner universities;
- Design and implementation of initiatives to use ICT for teaching, learning, research, outreach and networking; and
- Strengthening the ICT capacity of the RUFORUM Secretariat to meet its overall objectives.

To inform the strategies for improved knowledge management and ICT integration, RUFORUM intends to hire a service provider to conduct a situation analysis on the ICT capacity and utilization in RUFORUM universities in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa. In addition, the firm or team of consultants is expected contribute to the process of setting priorities for the ICT integration by providing the necessary baseline information on ICT infrastructural development, status of ICT integration in university teaching, programme management, research and out reach as well as capacity at the RUFORUM Secretariat. The consultants' input will be 30 man days. It is expected that the teams showing interest in undertaking this service will identify the team leader with whom RUFORUM will sign a service provision contract.

2. Rationale

In improving the visibility and role of African universities in supporting agriculture and rural development, ICT innovations can amplify the impact of university level teaching, research and outreach. Without deliberate effort and plans to build capacity of African universities to do research and outreach by employing ICT this role remains a pipe dream. ICT presents a historic opportunity for the development of rural Africa for quality information and communication models to make information available widely and inexpensively. Universities as basic information and education institutions generate, store and distribute knowledge in ways that offer opportunities for ICT utilization. Appropriate use of ICT will be crucial to the accomplishment of RUFORUM's objectives since, if used properly, ICT will help build research capacity, improve teaching and learning; facilitate communication with stakeholders at all levels; and enhance quality, effectiveness and efficiency at the Secretariat.

The assignment is expected to back up the ICT integration goals of RUFORUM and institutionalization of ICT-based innovations for research, teaching, outreach, programme management and delivery. The assignment is expected to reveal the level of ICT readiness among RUFORUM universities to implement the use of ICT in teaching, learning, outreach, research and university management operations while also informing RUFORUM knowledge management and ICT utilization strategies. With this situation analysis, RUFORUM Secretariat will be able to offer guidance on a range of ICT planning and implementation issues and use the findings to track ICT capacity and utilization at the member universities through an integrated monitoring and evaluation system.

3. Overall Objective of the Consultancy

The overall objective of this consultancy is to conduct a situation analysis of ICT capacity and utilization at RUFORUM partner universities in order to ascertain whether faculties and departments have the necessary ICT capacity to participate fully in RUFORUM activities.

4. Specific Objectives

The consultant will work closely with the RUFORUM ICT Unit in order to achieve the following specific objectives for the consultancy service:
   a) Establish the status and opportunities for use of ICT innovations in teaching, research, outreach and networking at RUFORUM universities
   b) Establish the status and opportunities for institutional ICT policy strengthening.
   c) Benchmark the ICT human resource and infrastructural capacity in the RUFORUM network
   d) Establish the status and opportunities in relation to the various regional initiatives to improve connectivity in Eastern and Southern Africa

5. Specific Tasks

The specific tasks needed to accomplish this assignment are:
   (a) Development of the framework, methodology and instruments to be used in the ICT situation analysis;
   (b) Conduct desk reviews of relevant documents on the ICT infrastructural capacity, ICT utilization and ICT human resource capacity in RUFORUM universities; ongoing regional internet connectivity initiatives,
   (c) Conduct university level situation analysis through visits, questionnaires administration and e-platforms to establish the gaps and knowledge management needs;

(d) Conduct a comparative review of RUFORUM members universities and potential collaborators ICT capacity strengths and weaknesses in order to design strategies for partnership building and ICT capacity and utilization resource rationalization;

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The following are tentative indicative roles of the consultant and RUFORUM. The final scope of the roles and responsibilities will be stipulated in the contract agreement after discussion between the consultant and RUFORUM secretariat

Consultant

1. Develop a work plan and approach to the situation analysis in consultation with the RUFORUM ICT Unit for undertaking the assignment;
2. Do a literature review of RUFORUM ICT related documents and current ICT strategy;
3. Develop a methodology and instruments for implementing the situation analysis including data collection and analysis;
4. Design and administer the instruments for data collection;
5. Conduct the ICT situation analysis through visits, consultation with RUFORUM Secretariat, Universities and other relevant partners in the RUFORUM network;
6. Use their network in the region to obtain relevant information and data from the RUFORUM network and other relevant institutions on institutional and regional ICT capacity and use in training, research and outreach
7. Develop a draft ICT capacity and utilization situation analysis synthesis report for review by RUFORUM Secretariat;
8. Present the findings of the study to RUFORUM Secretariat to receive comments and suggestions for refinement and incorporate comments and suggestions from RUFORUM staff and stakeholders;
9. Make arrangements for logistics including accommodation, local transport, stationery, computer services and any other as detailed in the contract.

RUFORUM

1. Review and approve the work plan, methodology and baseline survey instruments;
2. Avail all relevant documents (i.e. Provide the consultant with the draft RUFORUM Strategic Plan, business plan, Draft ICT strategy and other relevant documents & reports) to be reviewed and information on RUFORUM member universities and key partner institutions;
3. Meet the relevant costs related to this consultancy, i.e., per diem, consultancy fee, and airfare and other consumables as shall be agreed and stipulated in the contract;
4. Review and approve the synthesis draft and final report and other outputs as stipulated in the deliverables section and contract.

7. Deliverables

1. Work plan with time line (*after 1 week of signing of the contract*)
2. ICT capacity and utilization situation analysis instruments (questionnaires, document analysis guides, interview schedule, systems analysis profomas, etc)- *after 1 week of signing of contract*
3. Synthesis of ICT literature review and proposed methodology (*at the end of 2 weeks of initiation*);
4. Draft report of the ICT situation analysis (*at the end of 8 weeks*);
5. Compilation of the priority ICT capacity enhancement issues and the strategies for strengthening them within the RUFORUM network; and

6. Final report (*at the end of consultancy within 1 week of the draft report presentation to RUFORUM*)

8. Plan of Work / Duration

It is anticipated that this consultancy will be undertaken within the period 15th June 15th August 2009 with an effective input of 30 labour days. However, the lead consultant in consultation with the Programme Manager, ICT unit will prepare a detailed plan of work that will form part of the contract.

9. Expertise Required and Prequalification

Applicants will be evaluated against the following prequalification criteria:
- ICT experience and competency of the individual(s) in the team as demonstrated by practice and publication;
- Clear articulation of capacity and skill, and innovative approaches to carry out the assignment;
- Demonstrated experience and competency in the conducting of ICT situation analysis baseline studies of a regional magnitude;
- The organizational/individual competency to deliver the services including ability to organize and manage teams;
- Clear work plan and articulation of expected methodologies and outputs

10. Reporting

It is the responsibility of consultant to ensure timely and quality reporting for each phase and deliverable in the assignment. All reports will be submitted to the ICT Programme Manager on dates as may be agreed during the inception meeting and stipulated in the contract. The reports will be reviewed within RUFORUM and also by an external peer team. All draft reports (written in English) will be submitted as soft copies while the final report will be submitted as a soft copy and four (4) hard copies with coloured illustrations where necessary.

11. Guidelines for Concept Note Development

The concept note of not more than 15 A-4 sized pages (Font – Times New Roman; Font Size 12 with margins set at least 2.5cm all round) should include the following
1) Background that includes an interpretation of the terms of reference (Maximum 1 page);
2) Methodology and approach outlining a clear methodology and approach to the proposed task and a time schedule (Maximum 4 pages);
3) Proposed work plan outlining clear timeframe and logical steps in conducting the assignment (Maximum 2 page);
4) Competency statement that provides the organization profile including summary of CVs of the experts to be employed on the assignment and the relevant references/similar assignments conducted earlier (Maximum 7 pages)
5) An itemised budget divided into professional fees and direct cost of activities in United States Dollars (Maximum 2 pages).

The Concept note will be assessed based on the following criteria
1) Background Information (10%);
2) Methodology and approach (40%);
3) Proposed work plan (10%);
4) Competency and experience (30%)

5) Budget (10%).

12. Procedures for Submission of Proposals

Interested firms or teams of consultants should submit their technical and financial proposals electronically (mentioning the call number), curriculum vitae, and statement of capability by close of business **12th June, 2009** to RUFORUM Secretariat at P. O Box 7062, Plot 151 Garden Hill, Makerere University, Kampala – Uganda; E-mail secretariat@ruforum.org; Tel: +256 414535939 with copies to the Programme Manager, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation at E-mail: w.ochola@ruforum.org and babatamara@yahoo.com with copies to the Programme Manager (ICT) at email: n.dhlamini@ruforum.org.

For further information on RUFORUM, its member universities, partners and the programmes, please visit the RUFORUM website: http://www.ruforum.org