SGCI THEME 1 Newsletter

December 2018

The Science Granting Councils Initiative

The Science Granting Council Initiative (SGCI) is an initiative funded jointly by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and South Africa's National Research Foundation (NRF) that aims to strengthen the capacities of 15 science granting councils in Sub-Saharan Africa in order to support research and evidence-based policies that will contribute to economic and social development.

SARIMA is a is a stakeholder organisation that operates at an institutional, national and international level, as well as across the value chain, from research through to successful innovation (commercialization). It provides a platform for the promotion and facilitation of best practice in research and innovation management and aims to strengthen the research and innovation system to ensure the social and economic development of the Southern African region and the African continent at large.

SARIMA, together with its partners and in collaboration with the other CTAs, commenced with the implementation of Theme 1 of the SGCI two years ago This newsletter serves to share some of the highlights with our stakeholders.

SGCI Themes and Leading Collaborating Technical Agencies (CTAs)

1 Strengthen research management practices (Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association - SARIMA)

2 Designing and monitoring research programmes based on the use of robust STI indicators (New Partnership for Africa's Development, Planning and Coordination Agency - NEPAD-NPCA)

3 Strengthen the ability to support knowledge exchange with the private sector (African Centre for Technology Studies - ACTS)

SARIMAs partners in Theme 1

Learning Visits to the South African National Research Foundation

Learning Visits to the NRF
17-21 September 2018

The National Research Foundation (NRF) hosted the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) learning visits on the 17th September to 21st September. This was a first-of-its-kind event, where twenty-nine (29) delegates from twelve (12) Science Granting Councils attended the event. The delegates, and their respective SCG's were representative from the continent of Africa. Some of the countries that attended included Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

The learning visits programme had the intention of bringing together colleagues representing the various SCGs on the continent and more so to promote the overall goal of the SGCI.

The NRF together with SARIMA put together the 5 days long programme. The focus of the visits was on sharing knowledge and ideas on research and grants management systems and processes using experiences from the NRF and all participating councils. The programme started off with an open session which was planned to set the scene and pitched at a strategic level of Research Management. This session attracted over 80 participants from various organisations such as government departments; government agencies; institutions of higher education; research performing organisations and NRF staff members.

The programme included the following focus with the respective activities:

Day 1: 17th of September – The SGCI Experience, the research agenda, and funding instruments

Day 2: 18th September –Grants, and Legislative Environment and Compliance

Day 3: 19th September – Reviews and evaluation, grant making process and systems

Day 4: 20th September – Managing Intellectual Property (IP) and Tech Transfer, Utilising Data in A Science Granting Council Environment, and Institutional Engagement for Grants Management

Day 5: 21st September – Science Engagement

The presentations made during the Learning Visits can be found in the SGCI Virtual Hub.

Strengthening sustainable research management capacity through professional development and training

Training workshops

To meet the objective to strengthen sustainable research management capacity of SGCs through professional development and training, SARIMA conducted 4 onsite training sessions for 4 councils between February and December 2018 specifically on practical aspects of grants management.The details of the topics covered under this theme was co-developed with the relevant SGC and aligned with needs as identified in the needs and capacity assessment. Each training intervention commenced with a briefing session between the facilitators and the SGCI Senior Coordinator to further ensure that the content and discussions are context specific. Facilitators are sourced from the SARIMA network and are highly experienced research managers. Discussions during the training interventions culminated in specific actions points identified by the SGC. Other project initiatives aim to support the SGC to address these action points.

Additionally, SARIMA also conducted a joint training session in Botswana with NEPAD and ACTS for the Department of Research, Science and Technology in November 2018. All planned onsite trainings were completed in this period and action points were developed by each council which will be subsequently used in the planning for ongoing technical support to the SGCs planned for the next reporting period. Different stakeholders were included in the training such as university staff and researchers, affording the councils the opportunity to engage with their stakeholders and clients. A pre-meeting workshop was also conducted in Ghana with MESTI and ATPS focusing on the SARIMA Professional Competency Framework (PCF) and grants operations manual.

[1]Zambia NCST, Malawi NSTC, Botswana Department of Research Science and Technology and Mozambique FNI

SARIMA launch of online short courses

The short courses kicked off in 2018 with six fully online university accredited short courses offered to SGC staff under Theme 1. The principles of quality, accessibility, relevance and sustainability are guided the development and delivery of the courses.

The course topics are aligned with the knowledge areas identified in the needs and capacity assessment and will include the following:

· Fundamentals of Research Management

· Research Grants and Contracts Management

· Programme Evaluation

· Research Ethics and Integrity

· Intellectual Property, Technology Transfer and Commercialisation

· Gender in Science, Technology and Innovation

The content have been designed to provide a balance between theoretical inputs and practical application. The Practical application is specifically supported through case studies, work-based assignments and facilitated online discussions.

Great interest has been shown by the SGCs with a total of 142 enrolments in all the six courses and an average of 23 learners enrolling per course Currently the first two courses have been completed (Fundamentals of Research Management and Grants and Contracts Management). Vibrant discussions amongst the learners were observed increasing greater knowledge sharing among the SGCs.

Training event	Topic and participants
12-16 February 2018 *Maputo, Mozambique* *FNI*	Research and grants management **15 participants** **6** Male **9** Female (Incl. University representatives Science Council Researchers)
04 July 2018 *Accra, Ghana* *MESTI & ATPS (Pre-meeting workshop)*	Relevance of PCF in SGC context Developing a generic operational manual **42 participants** **28** Male **14** Female
23 – 27 July 2018 Lusaka, Zambia NSTC	Research and Grants Management **26 participants** **15** Male **11** Female 12 Zambia SGC staff; 14 external stakeholders
27 – 31 August 2018 Lilongwe, Malawi (Onsite Training) NCST	Research and Grants Management **12 participants** **8** Male **4** Female 9 Malawi SGC staff; 3 University representatives

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Strengthening sustainable research management capacity through collaborative platforms

SGCI Annual Learning forum in Abidjan

The Science Granting Councils Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa Annual Forum and the Global Research Council Africa Regional Meeting 2018 kicked off on 5 November at the Azalaï Hotel in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. The event was co-hosted by the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) and by Programme d'appui stratégique à la recherche scientifique (PASRES), the science granting council from Côte d'Ivoire. The event was attended by the participating science granting councils in Africa, the four collaborative technical agencies, and various stakeholders including the funders of the initiative.

On 5 November the programme kicked off with two whole-day sessions, the one focusing on partnership for impact dialogue which had emphasised on the importance of investing in research and innovation in Africa; the other parallel session a workshop hosted by SARIMA providing training on research and grants management. The sessions were very informative

and valuable feedback were provided by the various attending science granting councils. During the evening the Honourable Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Côte d'Ivoire officiated the joint Opening Ceremony of both Forums. During the ceremony SIDA, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, was welcomed to the SGCI partner consortium.

On Tuesday 6 November there was one whole-day session, the SGCI Annual Forum: New approaches to funding Research and Innovation in Africa. The session held a comprehensive discussion on new approaches to funding Research and Innovation in Africa and valuable comments, inputs, as well as suggestions were provided by those in attendance.

Wednesday, 7 November proceeded with the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) workshop in the morning where most notably stories of change were provided by some of the

science granting councils on the impact that the initiative has had on their respective science granting councils to date. During the afternoon, four different sessions were hosted with the following focal points: discussions on proposed SGCI 2 activities, SGCI Councils Committee (CC) meeting, meeting of SGCI Panel of Advisors, and a meeting of the SGCI CTAs.
On Thursday the GRC Africa region meeting were held and had attendance from Heads of Councils as well as other invited guests. During the same time the PASRES Academic Symposium On Solar Photovoltaic kicked off and continued the next day, 9 November.

The participating science granting councils (SGC's) and collaborative technical agencies (CTA's) will soon be able to view presentations and other related documentation regarding the event on the SGCI Virtual Hub.

SARIMA Pre-Forum Meeting Event on 5th November 2018

SARIMA held a one (1) day pre-forum workshop to engage the Science Granting Councils on two broad areas within research and grants management at the ALF. The workshop focused on Research Dissemination Strategies, Research Evaluation, Benchmarking and Online Dissemination. The objectives of the workshop were
· To present and discuss research dissemination strategies relevant to the SGC context
· To build an understanding of Research Evaluation
· To increase awareness and use of the annual benchmarking tool
· To build a heightened awareness of the SGCI website and Virtual Hub functionality

The meeting was attended by discussions during the sessions were viewed as informative and SGCs would continue reflecting on how to embed research evaluation in their programmes.

Technical assistance visits

SARIMA will continue with in depth consultation with the SGCs to offer mentorship and ensure that the technical assistance visits yield required results. The overall objective of the technical assistance visits is to support the SGCs to address one or more of the action points that were identified during the on-site training workshop through technical assistance. While the other interventions also support the SGCs to address specific action points some may be best supported through a technical assistance visit that will provide the SGC with the opportunity to host a technical expert who will work with the SGC to develop/improve/review systems/processes/procedures/infrastructure/capacity that will result in the strengthening of the council's research and grants management practices. The technical assistance visits will be implemented during 2018/19.

Online benchmarking

Under the leadership of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), Theme 1 is conducted the annual online benchmarking exercises with the SGCs.
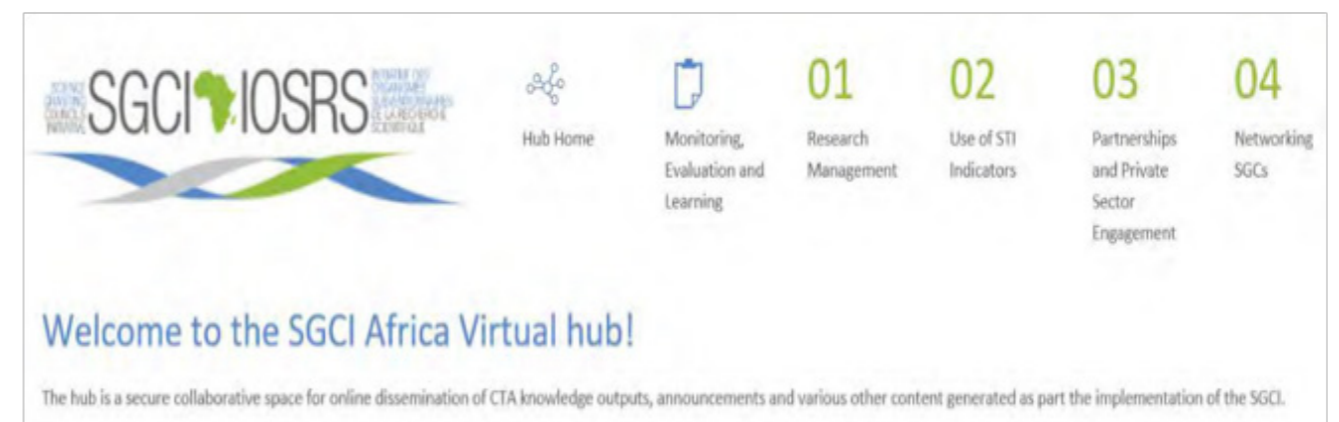
The purpose of these exercises were to:

· Provide a mechanism for the SGCs to assess their performance and progress
· Provide a platform for the SGCs to consider their own performance in relation to their peers
· Provide a platform for the SGCs to consider what areas of data collection could be harmonised with other SGCs and how.

Every year, the SGCs will be invited to complete the survey. Over the course of the project changes in specific areas could be measured over time. The next set of benchmarking will start in 2019, the results from 2018 can be accessed via the Virtual Hub.

The Virtual Hub

If you are part of the Science Granting Councils Initiative please remember to visit the Virtual Hub often for the latest content and updates, if you do not have access yet please send an email to Armand at: armand@sarima.co.za

Welcome to the SGCI Africa Virtual hub!

The hub is a secure collaborative space for online dissemination of CTA knowledge outputs, announcements and various other content generated as part the implementation of the SGCI.

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