Framework Document:

Communities of Practice

South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI)

January 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. CONTEXT

The country's ability to tackle social challenges is contingent upon the extent to which science and technology play a pivotal role in that process. This sentiment is also echoed by the National Development Plan, stating that, "the extent to which developing economics emerge as economic powerhouses depends on the ability to grasp and apply insights from science and technology and use them creatively", (NDP, 2011; 71). It is then to the advantage of a country to involve established researchers from a range of disciplines in the challenge of responding to development issues such as, *inter alia*, poverty, health and education. South Africa, as a developing country, is at an advantage of having expertise from a broad range of research fields, in the form of the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) and Centres of Excellence (CoEs) programmes. This wealth of expertise is seen as an opportunity to translate high level expertise and knowledge into tangible action plans and actionable policies through the Community of Practice (CoP) forums. Ultimately, the intent is to provide evidence based solutions to societal challenges facing South Africa.

The South African government is focused on the implementation of the National Development Plan in order to tackle societal challenges facing the country today. Economic inequality, still visibly along racial lines, continues to manifest itself in South Africa. Despite vigorous interventions in various forms, structural poverty has continued to increase. In addition, despite a plethora of state-driven corrective policies and programmes – social spending on welfare, education and health; integrated development plans at all tiers of government; land reform and housing provision – social cohesion remains elusive, undergirded by the spatial segregation of the apartheid past. The impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the increase in the number of people living with HIV/AIDS and the resurgence of tuberculosis are some of the features of ' a strained system' at various levels. Poor schooling and education and inadequate teacher training, especially in rural South Africa, are of concern. Environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and effects of climate change, both natural and human-induced, are huge challenges to be urgently faced within the next

years, if an effective turnaround is to be seen. Food security, water, sanitation, energy, telecommunications, and advanced manufacturing all require sustained, innovative, knowledge-based interventions to bolster the knowledge economy in a growth-driven emergent market such as South Africa. Nothwithstanding the significant progress made by the South government in areas such as access to education, research infrasructure and health care; much more can still be done. There is an urgent need for societal engagement at various levels.

Communities of Practice thus, provide a vehicle to enable the implementation of integrated trans-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary solutions to address the above-mentioned challenges and to ultimately bring change to the lives of South Africans through evidence based research findings. The envisaged aim of communities of practice is to provide research driven innovative solutions that will inform and guide policy development as well as translate research outputs into tangible outcomes with social and/or economic impact.

1.2.   DEFINITION OF COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

The need for knowledge based approaches to South Africa's societal challenges, building robust systems of innovation and entrepreneurial capacity call for a coordinated and focused approach that promote knowledge creation, that can help underpin policies and practices supporting human development in key areas for South Africa. It is in particular important to organize these approaches to tackle South Africa's challenges in a practical manner. Communities of practice are the means to which these collective measures will be achieved. Communities of Practice are defined as research-led alliances, in which established researchers collaborate to produce solution-oriented research findings with an intention to translate research outputs into tangible outcomes and influence policy development and implementation through communication of the necessary research findings.

Importantly, CoPs must be strategically aligned to government policies by focusing research on, but not limited to the following themes:

1. Poverty alleviation, inequality and development
2. Inclusive rural economy, employment and building a capable state
3. Energy, Climate change, environment, biodiversity and Transitioning to a low carbon economy
4. Education and training
5. Knowledge economy and innovation
6. Health management and Health Innovation
7. Accountability and fighting corruption
8. Social cohesion and transformation
9. Municipality governance and management
10. Telecommunication and Data Management and Innovation
11. Mining, Beneficiation and Safety
12. Engineering and Technology
13. Social inclusion of people with disability and elders.

2. MISSION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Mission statement of CoPs

To establish and nurture Research Chair-led alliances of stake-holders within the National System of Innovation in order to produce solution orientated research findings and to promote evidence-based analysis and inform policy. In addition to contribute to human capital development through training of next generation researchers and postgraduate students that can   contribute to sustainable knowledge economy.

Aim of Community of Practices

The overall aim of CoPs is for Research Chair-led alliances to communicate their solution-orientated research findings in given forums to various stakeholders; government officials, practitioners, policy makers, academics and civil society, with an intent to provide solutions that can mitigate social and economic challenges faced by the South Africa.

This aim has the following subsidiary objectives:

1. To form strategic partnerships within the local and international research community, with the aim of producing solution oriented scientific research findings.

2. To make research meaningful to society by translating research findings into actionable policy activities. It is envisaged that this new knowledge will afford South Africa a competitive edge internationally and contribute towards growing the economy of the country and improving the quality of life of South Africans.

3. To conduct evidenced-based research with an intent of influencing policy implementation.

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Below is a description of the scope, focus and outcomes of the network.

1. Research Chairs must voluntarily group themselves to align accordingly into research-led themed alliances and must produce a joint proposal to bid for funding to the National Research Foundation (NRF).
2. Each CoP must be led by an incumbent of the SARChI programme and can include other established researchers. It is envisaged that over time, each CoP will comprise of at least two research chairs, at least two CoE director/principal researchers and at least two researchers from previously disadvantaged institutions including universities of technology.
3. Funds will be awarded to CoPs willing to conduct multidisciplinary research that seek to find solutions to social and economic issues focussed in at least one of the themes mentioned above.
4. Funded CoPs are expected to present solution focused findings in a biannual forum to various stakeholders; government officials, practitioners, policy makers, academics and civil society
5. Access to other intra- and inter - organizational CoP networks.

6. Each CoP is expected to have an information portal which will store and manage all the intellectual capital and research activities of the network. The long-term objective is to establish an Information Portal as the premiere online knowledge Portal of information, resources, discussion, and interaction about strategically allied research on social matters in South Africa

7. Each CoP is expected to fully fund two students, Honours and Masters level and/ or top-up two PhD students.

3.1 SPECIFIC OUTCOMES OF THE COP

The expected outcomes of the network:

1. Each CoP must ensure provision of customised solutions and/or tools to specific challenges in society in order to make policy recommendations

2. Promote collaborative research by increasing the number of co-published articles in high impact journals, and by sharing of best practices in various fora with other intra- and inter - organizational CoP networks

3. Make available the expertise of the network to stakeholders for specific consultancy assignments

4. A comprehensive report of the CoP workshop detailing recommended development trajectories for the government from the discussions of the proceedings of the two day workshops. It is envisaged that the report can be turned into a discussion document or a policy brief.

5. CoP members must meet at least once per year to have group discussions on their research. The purpose of these meetings is to have peer-to-peer reflective discussions on the various research taken up by the chairs.

6. Building research capacity by increasing the number of post-graduates by supervising and supporting students.

4. OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

4.1. FUNDING MODELS AND FUNDING SOURCES

Seed funding for each CoP will be provided by the DST through the NRF. CoPs must submit a budget with a breakdown of each member's proposed budget. This will inform the NRF how much will be awarded to each CoP. The NRF will fund up to seven (7) million Rands in seed funding over a period of two years. Each funding cycle is two years, where funds will be dispersed equally over 2 years. That is, half of the funds will be transferred in the first year. The rest of the funds will be given in the second year of the cycle. The NRF will fund CoPs for a maximum of two cycles of up to a total of 4 years depending on satisfactory performance and on availability of funds. CoPs are expected to leverage funding for sustainability. Possible sources of funding include:

1. Governmental funding
2. Foundations
3. Private sector funding
4. Development funding
5. International funds

4.1.2. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The CoP will submit an Annual Performance Report (APR) and will be evaluated on an annual basis. Key performance indicators are aligned to the expected outcomes of the CoP, including

1. To what degree has the CoP provided customised solutions to development challenges in a given research area.
2. To what degree the exchanges between the network institutions have contributed to increasing the quality of post-graduate students in knowledge production.
3. To what extent the network have promoted collaborative research that has resulted in co-published articles in high impact journals

4. To what degree the network has assisted stakeholders to access policy expertise in higher education, science, technology and innovation

5. To what extent has the CoP promoted opportunities to share best practices in policy and professional development in higher education, science, and technology and innovation policy

6. To what degree has the CoP been able to leverage funds to sustain itself

4.2. ACTION PLAN

1. Formation of CoPs which must be aligned to the above-mentioned themes.
2. Establishment of coordinating secretariat who has to be a current Research Chair holder.
3. Development of a sustainable funding mechanism of the CoP network.
4. Defining the immediate activities:
   a. Defining the scope of the solution-orientated research
   b. Identify lead researchers
   c. Budget

5. APPLICATION, REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

The applicant(s) must register (if not already registered) and complete/update their *curriculum vitae (*CV) on the NRF Online Submission System (https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/nrfmkii/) and complete the application.

A CoP will be awarded in an open and competitive process. The application must include, (i) Proposal's alignment to the National Development Plan; (ii) Multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary of the CoP; (iii) Leverage funding pipeline; (iv) Anticipated outputs and; (v) Anticipated impact. Each CoP must have Research Chair(s) and, or include other established researchers in the level of Research Chair such as Centres of Excellence Directors.

This assessment will focus on CoP's meeting the following criteria:

1. The relevance of the CoP's research focus to the NDP and the CoP's ability to motivate how its research focus will benefit society.
2. The extent to which the CoP is multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary.
3. Each CoP is expected to outline anticipated impact, i.e. the gap which the CoP research will fill and a plan to encourage solution orientated findings.

Each CoP is expected to fully fund two students at Honours and Masters level.

6. ACCOUNTABILITY FOR COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

A CoP must be led by a SARChI Research Chair. The CoP will fit into the normal research structures of the host university. Accountability for the CoP will reside with the SARChI Research Chair of the host University.

7. PAYMENTS OF GRANTS AND CALL TIMELINES

Payment of Grants

The operational value of the grant for year 1 of 2 for the awarded CoP will be released to the host institution upon receipt of the signed copy of the NRF *'Conditions of Grant'* and paid upon the claim of expenses by the university. Student funding will be made available to successful nominated postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows. Grants will thereafter be disbursed to the universities on an annual basis, for the approved funding period, subject to the CoP meeting the *'Conditions of Grant'* and submitting an APR.

Call Timelines

The key activities and timelines, to ensure effective implementation by the NRF and the universities, are outlined below.

Activities	Timelines
1. Call opens for applications	25th January 2017
2. Call closes for applications	7th March 2017
3. Panel review meetings	April 2017
4. Review outcome letters sent to host universities	April 2017
5. Award letters sent to host universities	April 2017
6. CoGs sent to successful candidates	April 2017

REFERENCES

Hsu, Po-Hsuan, Shyu, Joseph Z., Yu, Hsiao-Chen, Yuo, Chao-Chen and Lo, Ta-Hsien (2003), "Exploring the Interaction between Incubators and Industrial Clusters: The Case of the ITRI Incubator in Taiwan", R&D Management, 33(1), pp. 79–90.

Lincoln Daniel, Kearny Mary-Louise (Eds), *Studies in Higher Education* (Vol 39, no, 8 2014).

National Planning Commission. (2013). National Development Plan Vision 2030.

McKinsey Global Institute, *Urban world: The shifting global business landscape,* 2013.

Olsson, Åsa and Meek, Lynn V. (eds.) (2013), Effectiveness of Research and Innovation Management at Policy and Institutional Levels in Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam, OECD, Paris.

Preston, Benjamin et al, C*limate Change in the Asia/Pacific Region*, CSIRO Marine & Atmospheric Research, 11 October 2006.

UNESCO Office for Statistics, Higher Education in Asia: Expanding Out, Expanding Up, The rise of graduate education and university research, 2014.

NRF CONTACT PERSONS

Dr Makobetsa Khati, Executive Director: Research Chairs and Centres of Excellence (Tel: 012 481 4022; e-mail: makobetsa.khati@nrf.ac.za)

Dr Thabile Sokupa, Director: Research Chairs and Centres of Excellence (Tel: 012 481 4397; e-mail: thabile.sokupa@nrf.ac.za)

Ms Andisiwe Jukuda, Professional Officer: Research Chairs and Centres of Excellence (Tel: 012 481 4113; e-mail: andisiwe.jukuda@nrf.ac.za)

Mr Selelo Matimolane, Professional Officer: Research Chairs and Centres of Excellence (Tel: 012 481 4397; e-mail: selelo.matimolane@nrf.ac.za)

Ms Angeline Khunou, Professional Officer: Research Chairs and Centres of Excellence (Tel: 012 481 4013; e-mail: angeline@nrf.ac.za)

Ms Marinky Tshephe, Professional Officer: Grants Management and Systems Administration (Tel: 012 481 4060; e-mail: maria@nrf.ac.za)