



CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Establishment of the African Open Science Platform (AOSP) Regional Nodes

Closing Date: 25 November 2022

This call for expressions of interest is to solicit applications to host regional nodes for the African Open Science Platform (AOSP) in five African Regional and Economic Communities (RECs) – namely at the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CENSAD).

1. Introduction

Formalised in 2020, the AOSP aims to position African scientists at the cutting edge of data intensive science by stimulating interactivity and creating opportunity through the development of efficiencies of scale, building critical mass through shared capacities, amplifying impact through a commonality of purpose and voice, and to engage in a Global Commons to address continental and global challenges through joint action. The AOSP is conceived as an enabler of collective planning and practice to:

- Drive alignment, collaboration, and cooperation between existing initiatives
- Identify critical gaps and set priorities for action
- Design and deliver activities to respond to those gaps/ priorities
- Mobilise existing and resource new initiatives in pursuit of the Platform's aims
- Enhance communication, outreach, and advocacy.

The operations of the AOSP encompass the following:

- A federated e-infrastructure
- Policies, practices, tools of research data management
- A Data Science and AI Institute
- Programme delivery
- Science programmes
- Education and skills programmes
- Societal engagement, dialogue, and policy.

The AOSP has a diverse and representative membership from Governments, departments and organisations, higher education and research performing institutions, other networks and domain research communities, REC stakeholders, developing partners and funders, private sector, researchers, societal bodies, and NGOs. The AOSP Governing Council and Secretariate oversee the activities and operation of the platform; and eventually with the Regional Nodes.

The secretariat of the AOSP is based at the National Research Foundation (NRF) in Pretoria, South Africa, with additional financial support provided by the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), and the International Science Council (ISC).

Various [programmes and networks](#) are supported by the AOSP.

2. Role of the AOSP regional nodes

The purpose of the AOSP regional nodes is to support and promote efforts aligned with implementation of open science programmes at a regional level, strengthen knowledge networks and infrastructure access, and enhance cooperation between regions and globally in support of the AOSP's vision. Among others, regional nodes will be expected to lead:

a. Programme delivery and implementation

- Support the streamlining of regional, or national open science activities, action plans and programmes
- Promote the development and implementation of regional open science programmes aligned with the [AOSP](#), [SGCI](#), [UNESCO](#) and other networks
- Commission sub-regional studies and programmes to better respond to open science barriers and opportunities
- Develop regional/national inventories on open science
- Lead all facets related to the development and implementation of AOSP strand(s), working in close collaboration with the secretariat.

b. Coordination

- Coordinate a harmonised approach to regional open science discussions and responses
- Act as a channel to engage with RECs and international bodies on open science activities
- Design, implement and monitor open science programmes and activities in response to regional needs
- Coordinate activities that promote and support open science engagements at regional continental or international level
- Provide advice on regional open science priorities and programmes that the AOSP should focus on.

c. Education and skills programmes

- Facilitate the rollout of capacity building initiatives on open science working closely with local or global actors.

d. Societal engagement, dialogue, and policy

- Promote and support effective multi-stakeholder regional networks of relevant actors in response to emerging regional needs
- Facilitate skills and information exchange among relevant actors in their region
- Promote outreach activities on open science at regional and/or national level(s)
- Facilitate diverse representation and engagement of regional actors in open science policy practice interfaces and response frameworks, and discourse around continentally agreed goals aligned with UNESCO recommendations
- Develop and share tailored regional communication materials on open science
- Maintain communication with the AOSP secretariat and provide updates on the work of the regional node
- Provide communication between regions and ensure cross fertilisation and sharing of experiences between AOSP network and broader science and technology ecosystems

- Represent the AOSP at regional/global meetings and platforms.

e. Resource mobilisation

- With support from the AOSP secretariat, lead resource mobilisation activities to support regional, or national open science projects.

3. Budget

The secretariat will endeavour to provide seed funding during the early stages of a node's establishment. An indicative budget for 5 years should be calculated, aligned with the AOSP operation strands presented in the AOSP [Strategy](#).

The successful institution(s) is expected to provide co-investment of approximately 25% of the total budget. Costs related to the adaptation of the hosting site (e.g., costs related to the infrastructure that will host the centre) shall not be covered by the NRF. A regional node may be co-hosted.

4. Eligibility Criteria

The following conditions should be fulfilled by all applicants:

- The applicant hosting entity shall include the facilities to host and operate the regional node, including adequate physical hosting facilities, an efficiently functioning research support ecosystem, and IT infrastructure
- Consortium hosts are encouraged but is not a prerequisite
- The applicant's institution should be a recognised research engaged institution such as a public university, research centre/network/institute or research council
- Applications should include the provision of appropriate supporting documentation proving the commitment of the leadership where the hosting entity is established
- Be based in respective RECs
- Fall under specific organisation categories as defined in [AOSP Membership categories](#).

5. Evaluation Criteria

All expressions of interest, based on the following criteria:

a. Value addition

- Strong potential and capability to host the regional nodes and value addition to the AOSP secretariate
- Adequacy and sufficiency of the provided expertise for supporting and facilitating a regional node
- Comprehensive understanding of open science policies and programmes.

b. Expected impact of open science projects

- Quality and feasibility of the expression of interest
- Adequate potential for uptake of results including quality of the knowledge sharing approach with appropriate stakeholder engagement, capacity development and communication strategy.

c. Quality and efficiency of the implementation:

- Objectives as well as the related work plan
- Adequacy, feasibility, and coherence of the various proposed activities for the AOSP
- Strong science technology and innovation networks, both public and private

- Evidence of resource mobilisation activities.

d. Cost of Hosting:

- Contribution to the cost of hosting.

All applications will be treated confidentially, including any submitted related information, data, and documents.

6. Timelines

The steps and indicative dates for the call are shown in the table below:

Call Milestones	Date
Call Launch for the Expression of Interest Publication	
Opening date	17 October 2022
Closing date	25 November 2022
Evaluation	
Screening & review	30 November 2022
Final Process	
Request for full proposals from shortlisted candidates	12 December 2022

7. Proposal Submission Criteria

Proposals should be submitted electronically by email to NP.Mchunu@nrf.ac.za. Once finally submitted, changes to the proposal will no longer be possible. Delayed proposals and/or proposals submitted outside this deadline will be considered non-eligible. Following submission, proposals will first be screened for the following general eligibility criteria. Each proposal must:

- Be submitted in the correct format (refer to Annexure 1), duly completed, and dated.
- Submitted in electronic format, digitally signed by the person authorised to enter legally binding commitments on behalf of the applicant organisation.
- Be submitted in English.
- Meet the submission deadline.

Completed proposals should be submitted by **Friday, 25 November 2022**.

8. Forms and Attachments

- Completed Application Form
- Indicative budget
- Letter of endorsement by the head of the institution
- Letter(s) of support from partners

- Any other appendices.

9. Contact Details for Queries

AOSP regional nodes will be selected to operate for a period not exceeding five (5) years. A regional node can be reappointed for a maximum of two consecutive terms.

For specific content-related questions please contact:

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