

Job Description

Theme Manager – Technology & Innovations

1. Background

The Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa is an Inter-Governmental Organization that was established by National Agricultural Research Institutes (NARIs) from 10 countries in Eastern and Central Africa in 1994. Since then, its membership has reached 15 Member States, namely: Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Kenya, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. ASARECA's core mandate is to undertake Agricultural Research of Development (AR4D) on behalf of its Member States in partnership with NARIs. It aims to contribute to increased productivity, commercialization and competitiveness of the agricultural sector in Eastern and Central Africa (ECA) so as to ensure sustained economic growth and development.

ASARECA's interventions are guided by its 10-year Strategy and Results Framework (ASRF: 2019-2029) as well as its second Medium-Term Operational Plan (MTOP II: 2024-2028). The Strategy identifies four key intervention areas that significantly impact the sub-region, namely: (i) transformative capacity strengthening and integration; (ii) agricultural transformation technologies and innovations; (iii) enabling policy, functional markets, market access and institutional arrangements; and (iv) knowledge and information management.

The mandate of the rebranded, refreshed and repositioned ASARECA is to: (i) identify regional research priorities and opportunities through credible, authentic and participatory strategic visioning; (ii) commission, broker and manage strategic research partnerships to address identified regional priorities in the most effective, efficient and synergetic ways; (iii) nurture pathways for on-time delivery, spill over and scaling up of regional agricultural research results to deliver agricultural outcomes and impact; (iv) mobilize, allocate and manage regional AR4D investments to support generation of regional agricultural research public goods and services; and (v) monitor and evaluate returns on AR4D investment and repackage lessons and best practices for informed decision-making.

ASARECA works closely with Member States on priority activities such as: (i) coordinating generation, dissemination and uptake of technologies, innovations and management practices of priority commodities along selected value chains; (ii) enhancing capacity strengthening and partnerships development at systemic, organizational and individual level; (iii) coordinating policy analysis, advocacy and reforms; (iv) enhancing access to national and regional markets; (v) mitigating effects of climate change by supporting member countries to mitigate and adapt where necessary; (vi) enhancing market linkages and trade at the national and regional level; and (vii) facilitating communication, information and knowledge management.

2. Overall Purpose

The Theme Manager – Technology & Innovations is responsible for leading and coordinating the Thematic Area that focuses on Agricultural Transformation Technologies and Innovations. He/she will work very closely with other Theme Leaders and Programme Officers. This role aims to enhance regional collaboration in the development of agricultural technologies, innovations, and management practices (TIMPs) for selected commodities and active engagement with the private sector to facilitate exchange, dissemination and commercialization of the priority national and regional TIMPs within and across the borders.

The incumbent must possess analytical, organisational and problem-solving skills which support and enable sound decision making coupled with successful track record in setting priorities and delivering concrete results. Additionally, they should have deep knowledge and understanding of the external environment, particularly in terms of priorities, program and expectations from the various stakeholders including policymakers, regional and international institutions, and donors.

3. Key Roles and Responsibilities

Leadership and managerial roles and responsibilities

- Provide leadership to and coordinate day-to-day management of the Thematic Area, including managing regional programmes, projects and initiatives.
- Manage and supervise all the delegated Programme Officers, including monitoring their performance.
- Provide effective guidance and coaching of other Theme Managers and Program Officers, and assist them in developing their skills and abilities to ensure optimal performance.
- Undertake budgetary planning and authorisation of funds under this Thematic Area.
- Strengthen the capacity of the national and regional teams on technology generation, scaling, commercialization, and delivery systems to increase adoption of new and old TIMPs.
- Champion effective involvement of the public-private sector partnerships in the formal cross-border transfer of plant and animal genetic material and other priority TIMPs.
- Provide technical support to assorted Communities of Practice and regional steering committees (e.g. ASARECA CSA Alliance)
- Strengthen capacity of selected staff, centres and countries to enhance development and exchange of TIMPs and transfer of scientific knowledge across the region.

Resource Mobilisation

- Lead and contribute to the development of strategic initiatives for resource mobilisation efforts, and participate in specific resource mobilisation activities, including developing investor relations.
- Direct the preparation of proposals for resource mobilisation efforts and review proposals for relevance, quality and scope in contributing to ASARECA's goals and objectives.
- Convene experts from member countries to respond to relevant Calls for Proposals.

Programme Management

- Contribute to the overall development of the annual programme of work and budget for the priority research and development activities.
- Provide leadership in planning and coordinating research development activities within and across the programmes. This entails encouraging and ensuring the coordination and alignment of goals, strategies and activities amongst the programmes and projects.
- Contribute to the development and update of the Association's policies, manuals and protocols with regard to programmes (e.g. M&E System, Knowledge & Information Hub, etc.).
- Lead regular programme reviews and evaluation at the project level and programme level.
- Develop and drive the implementation of scientific standards and processes to assure high-quality outputs and achievement of targeted impacts.
- Contribute to the implementation of impact assessments for the ASARECA portfolio, including supporting the development of relevant Terms of Reference for consultancies.

Reporting

- Coordinate the preparation of semi- and annual programme Progress/Performance reports.
- Ensure the preparation of high quality and timely reports to donors. This involves reviewing, editing and monitoring reports prepared by programme managers in consultation with the Head of Finance.
- Prepare ASARECA's Annual Report and other Technical Reports for review by the ED.

Liaison Role

- Proactively contribute to the establishment and maintenance of strategic alliances and partnerships, which involves preparing and delivering presentations and/or chairing sessions in regional and international fora.
- Represent ASARECA in a range of regional, continental and global fora of strategic concern to the achievement of ASARECA's vision, goals and strategies.
- Coordinate effective operations within the ASARECA-led Private Sector Network to facilitate technology transfer and commercialization.

4. Education requirement and job experience/qualifications

- PhD in any of these fields: Agriculture, Biophysical Sciences, Agricultural Economics, Biotechnology, Natural Resources Management, or any other agricultural related field.
- At least ten (10) years, technical agricultural research experience, six (6) of which should be in a senior management and coordination role in national and regional research systems in Africa.
- Proven experience in resource mobilization, including clear understanding of compliance mechanisms and management cycles of major development partners that fund AR4D in ECA sub-region;
- High level of adaptation, creativity and innovation in providing leadership in implementation of programs and projects leading to tangible regional and national public goods.

- Deep knowledge of the external environment, particularly in terms of priorities, program and expectations from the various stakeholders including policymakers, regional and international institutions, and donors.
- Analytical, organisational and problem-solving skills which support and enable sound decision making coupled with successful track record in setting priorities and delivering concrete results;
- Excellent communication and relationship building skills with an ability to negotiate and work with a variety of internal and external stakeholders;
- Experience in working in a rapidly changing environment as well as leading multi-disciplinary teams of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds;
- Personal qualities of integrity, credibility and dedication to the mission of ASARECA and agricultural development in the ECA sub-region;
- Track record of human and financial resource management in a regional setting.
- Knowledge of French language is an added advantage.

5. Duration of Services

The period of the services will be three (3) years, renewable upon satisfactory performance and availability of funds.

6. Duty Station

The staff will work full time in the project office located at the ASARECA Secretariat, Entebbe, Uganda.

7. Supervision

Reports to the Director of Research and Innovation.

8. Contacts

Internal contacts:

- Executive Director –leadership and strategic direction (regular)
- Director of Research and Innovation –progress reports on on-going initiatives (frequent);
- Theme Managers – programme development and implementation; budget monitoring (frequent);
- Head of Finance – Financial issues relating to programmes and projects (frequent)
- Procurement Officer – Contracts, ToR for consultancy services and supply of goods (frequent)
- Head of Human Resources and Administration – staff issues (regularly).

External contacts:

- Development partners – supply funding; report reviews (frequent);
- National Agricultural Research Systems in member States (frequent);
- One CGIAR system and regional and international technical partners – collaboration (frequent).

9. Work Environment/Additional Information

This job involves frequent travel for projects development, monitoring and participation in various fora exposing the job holder to a significant level of hazard and security risk. While in the office, the working environment is safe. The job involves frequent work beyond normal working hours at headquarters and travel over weekends.