

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE

Fellowship and Scholarship Fund

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Submit questions to:	support@smokefreeworld.org
Submit proposals to:	support@smokefreeworld.org
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Financing duration(initial):	3 years

“Growing tobacco has never lifted smallholder farmers out of poverty. High-quality data and rigorous analysis can shape and inform effective, evidence-based policy creation and resource deployment to diversify economies and lessen country dependence on tobacco—better preparing farmers for the future while strengthening their countries’ economies.”

***Jim Lutzweiler, Vice President, Agriculture and Livelihoods
Foundation for a Smoke-Free World***

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Foundation for a Smoke-Free World (“the Foundation”) invites institutions of higher learning to submit proposals to establish, manage, administer, and control an Agricultural Transformative Initiative (ATI) Fellowship and Scholarship Fund (“the Fund”). The fellowship component of the Fund will support a variety of activities, including postdoctoral research exchanges between the institution managing the Fund (“the host institution”) and an institution of higher learning in a qualified developing country. The scholarship component will support MSc and PhD students from qualified developing countries to attend the institution managing the Fund or through other innovative partnership arrangements¹.

Qualified developing countries will be those in which the Foundation’s ATI is heavily invested. For example, in its inception year, the Fund will be expected to solely focus on Malawi as the ATI’s first country of engagement. In time, other major tobacco-producing countries in the region, such as Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, may also qualify for both fellowships and scholarships. For more advanced Asian countries, such as China and India, the awards will most likely be limited to fellowships.

The fellowship part of the Fund is intended to provide, in a gender-balanced manner, scholars from developing countries the opportunity to learn and apply new research methods and tools early in their careers, either at the host institution or through innovative exchanges between the host and developing country institutions. Additionally, the Fund will also consider recent PhD graduates at the host institution who wish to serve as a visiting lecturer (in addition to undertaking research) in the developing country institution if such a partnership exists between the two institutions. The scholarship part of the Fund is intended to enable diverse students in qualified developing countries the chance to study at a leading global university. Both the fellowship and scholarship parts will advance gender equality in the agricultural sciences and help the host institution foster a long-term relationship with both the qualified developing countries and institutions involved.

¹ For example, this could be a combination of online and concentrated in-person lectures with students based in their home country institution part of the time and the rest at the host institution.

OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

The Foundation for a Smoke-Free World was launched in September 2017 as an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to accelerating global efforts to reduce deaths and harm from smoking, with the ultimate goal of eliminating smoking worldwide. Since the adoption of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2003, countries that comprise 90% of the world's population have resolved to achieve significant reductions in smoking rates by 2025.

The Foundation's mandate and global efforts in this field promise many positive health impacts. These efforts will invariably entail a reduction in tobacco products and, thus, a reduction in the incomes of tobacco-producing farmers and tobacco-reliant economies. This economic disruption will not be felt uniformly and will disproportionately affect socially and economically vulnerable populations such as women because they represent the majority of the rural poor and the agricultural labor force globally. This creates a unique opportunity to (a) support smallholder tobacco farmers as they transition to alternative crops and livelihoods and (b) catalyze a sustainable and inclusive transition.

Through the [Agricultural Transformation Initiative \(ATI\) in Malawi](#), the Foundation is working to prepare smallholder tobacco farmers for an era of reduced demand for tobacco. The ATI will use this opportunity to facilitate the establishment of more secure, equitable income strategies for farmers and will seek to partner with a diverse set of stakeholders to ensure the success and sustainability of this strategy. Some of the activities of ATI will target the following outcomes:

- Higher, gender-equitable, and more secure income streams for smallholder farmers
- Increased non-tobacco export earnings for Malawi
- Application of technologies that enhance productivity, reduce costs, enable data-driven production decisions, and facilitate access to profitable and reliable markets
- Improved food security and nutrition for target populations in Malawi

In facilitating the achievement of these outcomes, the Foundation through the ATI is taking a systems approach and providing several interventions, including grant funding to strengthen the parts of the agricultural economy that would ensure that farmers who choose to continue in the agricultural production sector do so in a more profitable manner.

THE FELLOWSHIP AND SCHOLARSHIP FUND

A key theme underlying all Foundation activities of the ATI is the need for capacity building to ensure local involvement and ownership in seeking solutions for agricultural transformation, growth, gender equality, and development. The Foundation can only achieve its goals if it actively engages local policy processes and knowledge systems across government, private sector, nongovernmental organizations, academic and research institutions, civil society organizations, and other groups who possess and use the requisite technical skills required to guide and implement development programs.

The Fund is intended to support postdoctoral fellowships and graduate studies within a discipline that is pertinent to the Foundation's ATI goals and in the context of each qualified developing country. Qualifying disciplines for research and study will include the agricultural sciences, applied economics and natural resources, business and entrepreneurship,

technology and engineering, provided they fill local knowledge and capacity gaps and contribute to overall economic development, growth, and transformation in the qualified developing country involved. Because the Foundation is initially launching its ATI work in Malawi, the host institution will be expected to coordinate directly with the designated lead implementing partner of the ATI's Malawi Center of Agricultural Transformation (CAT) in identifying key disciplinary areas.ⁱⁱ A few examples of broad research themes that would be considered important to the Foundation are illustrated in Box 1.

Box 1: Illustrative broad research themes relevant to the Foundation

- Innovative science and technology solutions for smallholder productivity growth, agroprocessing and/or agro-industrial productivity growth
- Transformative business models for linking smallholder farmers with markets, modern farming, and/or agro-industrial growth to improve income and income security
- Rural economic transformation for youth employment and gender-inclusive income growth
- Dynamics of technological change and gender/youth inclusive income growth
- Science & technology solutions for increasing resilience of smallholder agriculture to climate change
- Innovative science and technology solutions for improved food and nutrition security and/or resilience to climate change

By engaging with diverse scholars and institutions of higher learning in a developing-country setting through the Fund, the Foundation believes it can have a longer-term impact in realizing its goals. Institutions of higher learning serve a critical role as engines of economic development and growth by ensuring strong local research capacities and technology innovation capabilities.ⁱⁱⁱ This can happen when both male and female scholars from developing countries are able to gain access to cutting-edge research tools and emerging knowledge from some of the world's leading institutions of higher learning.

A slow growth in the number of new agricultural scientists entering National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) since the 1980s has resulted in a skewed age distribution of the current makeup of local researchers in many African countries like Malawi, such that research expertise has generally been declining as the older generation retires. Of those new agricultural scientists, the share of female researchers has remained low, at about 22% of researchers in a 37-country sample. Female researchers are essential in providing unique insights, perspectives, and skills relevant for analyzing challenges for female farmers.^{iv} Although African universities continue to churn out agricultural science and economics graduates, most universities have remained inadequate in terms of quality of research methods and in addressing knowledge constraints. Any long-term strategy for science and technology change to drive growth in Africa must come from greater investments in African universities and a purposeful focus on gender parity in education and professional opportunities. Today's global advances in life sciences, engineering, materials, and energy, for example, offer a great

ⁱⁱ The CAT aims to identify and scale agricultural technologies and innovations to millions of smallholder farms by combining agricultural science, innovation, entrepreneurship, and commercialization activities in a single facility.

ⁱⁱⁱ Mowery DC, Oxley JE. Inward technology transfer and competitiveness: the role of national innovation systems. Cambridge Journal of Economics. 1995;19(1):67-93.

^{iv} Lynam J, Beintema NM, Roseboom J, Badiane, O, eds. Agricultural Research in Africa: Investing in Future Harvests. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI); 2016. <https://doi.org/10.2499/9780896292123>.

potential for Africa to leap-frog the technology frontier by accessing this wealth of knowledge at levels that did not exist during the last industrial revolution.^v Similarly, African entrepreneurs need to drive innovations and technological solutions that address the unique needs of men and women and emphasize how this helps ensure market-led research and development to grow the economy.^{vi}

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Successful candidates will be those that can show a commitment and strength in the following:

I. Willingness to co-finance or match the Fund

Applicants are encouraged to propose sources of matching funds, whether from university endowments, alumni donors, other institutional donors, governments, or the private sector. The contributions can be in-kind as well as monetary. As with other Foundation programs, the aim is to leverage our funds with others to allow for greater impact.

II. Willingness to leverage a local partner institution

Although applicants who wish to submit a stand-alone proposal are welcome to do so, we encourage applicants to consider possible partnerships with a local institution of higher learning or research in the qualified developing country. Of particular relevance is the fellowship component of the Fund, which may include activities such as faculty exchanges, research collaboration, and/or postdoctoral placements.

III. A demonstrated commitment to international development by fellows and scholars

A stated expression of interest in furthering international development and gender equality, particularly as it relates to the agricultural and economic transformation of the qualified developing country, is part of the evaluation criteria for prospective fellows and scholars.

IV. Service commitments of fellows and scholars to qualified developing country

The global market for the highly skilled labor is increasingly competitive. “Brain drain” has plagued many developing countries because not all students who study abroad return home. To help guard against this, proposals should consider innovative ways to ensure that the benefits of the Scholarship Fund will accrue directly to the people of the qualified developing country or region. For scholarship graduates, for example, one way would be to require Fund recipients to commit to taking on work that directly benefits the qualified developing country on graduation and for a period equivalent to the duration of their study program, either through employment in their home country or work that directly impacts their home country. Other innovative solutions are welcome (see footnote No. 1).

V. For Malawi and Southern Africa: Willingness to coordinate with Malawi CAT

One of the Foundation’s paramount programs is the ongoing establishment of a Center for Agricultural Transformation (CAT) in Malawi. The CAT aims to identify and scale agricultural technologies and innovations to millions of smallholder farms by combining agricultural science, innovation, entrepreneurship, and commercialization activities in a single facility. In Malawi, the host institution will be expected to coordinate with the lead implementing partner of the CAT in terms of identifying key research disciplines (or fields of study) for the fellowships and scholarships to be awarded in Malawi and

^v Calestous J. *The New Harvest: Agricultural Innovation in Africa*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 2011).

^{vi} Nelson RR. What enables rapid economic progress: what are the needed institutions? *Research Policy*. 2008;37: 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2007.10.008>.

other qualified developing countries in the region (Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

PROCESS AND IMPORTANT DATES:

Entities are encouraged to ask questions for clarification before the submission date. Proposals received by the submission deadline will be evaluated by the core Foundation team and one external reviewer. Results will be communicated to applicants by the stated date.

The proposals should include:

- Overall Concept Note 3 pages max
- Internal host/entity to manage, administer, and control the Fund
 - o Matched funds proposal
 - o Proposed local partner (if relevant)
 - o Separate fellowship and scholarship eligibility criteria
 - o Selection and award process
 - o Criteria for service commitments of fellows and scholars
 - o A basic plan for program evaluation
- Preliminary work plan and timeline for launching the Fund 2 pages max
- Preliminary high-level budget 1 page max