"Imagining Africa's Futures" Project

Call for expressions of interest in co-creating of Futures Literacy Laboratories

Innovation and research are the defining attributes of the “Imagining Africa's Futures” (IAF) project, developed in the framework of UNESCO’s Operational Strategy for Priority Africa (2014-2021) and of its Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme.

A pioneer in the field of Futures Literacy since 2012, UNESCO has been running experiments to test the hypothesis that people are able to “use the future” for different reasons, in different ways, in different contexts, and differently across time and space. This skill, called Futures Literacy, can be learned and used through practice and reflection.

The aim of the IAF project is to better understand Futures Literacy – what it is, what it does and how to acquire it – through Futures Literacy Laboratories (FLL), based in Africa and designed specifically to test scientific hypotheses. As such, the design and implementation of the Futures Literacy Laboratories is an integral part of the IAF project.

The UNESCO Africa Department and Social and Human Sciences Sector, as decided by the AIF Steering Committee, hereby launch a call for expressions of interest in the bid to identify African institutions willing to co-create Futures Literacy Laboratories in partnership with UNESCO and key partners, especially other Futures Literacy Centers funded by the IAF project.

As the number of Laboratories to implement remains indefinite, the call for an expression of interest will be open for an indeterminate period, in accordance with the objectives of the project.

1. Description of Futures Literacy Laboratories

Futures Literacy Laboratories are innovative processes to “use the future”. They are workshops that bring together between 30 and 50 people over a period of 2 to 3 days, and that explicitly incorporate anticipatory systems and processes, as well as learning-by-doing and knowledge-creation processes through collective intelligence.

In the framework of the project “Imagining Africa's Futures”, the objective of these Laboratories is primarily scientific. Their design and implementation requires the testing of prototypes, that is, UNESCO's tools and endogenous techniques for the “use of the future”, as well the dissemination of the findings of the Laboratories.

However, as early as the test phase of prototypes, the Laboratories will not only make it possible to understand and disseminate Futures Literacy, but also to highlight new issues in local communities. Laboratory results can contribute to addressing national,
sub-regional and continental challenges, in line with UNESCO’s Operational Strategy for Priority Africa, which places particular emphasis on foresight as a tool that can serve development policies.

According to the co-creation process that will emerge from the partnerships established under this call for expressions of interest, the Laboratories will address themes aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and adapted to the local context and community.

2. Role of partner institution

The local co-creator of a Laboratory will play a key role in launching, designing, developing, implementing and financing the entire process, as well as in its local anchoring.

In this respect, the partner institution will have to assume substantive as well as logistical responsibilities:
- availability and commitment several months before the establishment of the Laboratory;
- joint design of the Laboratory by the local organization and project teams, in accordance with the research protocols of prototypes developed within the project;
- financial and in-kind support for the co-creation of the Laboratory;
- financial and in-kind support for the management of the Laboratory;
- contribution to follow-up activities in terms of expected research and deliverables of the Laboratory;
- contribution to communication on the Laboratory, in accordance with the communication strategy of the IAF project; and,
- identification and mobilization of relevant participants of the Laboratory, in line with its theme.

3. Selection criteria

In this context, UNESCO is inviting expressions of interest from institutions (think tanks, universities, research centres, NGOs, private entities, government entities) that are willing to design and co-create an innovative process of reflection about futures and meet the following criteria:
- consistency with UNESCO’s objectives, particularly with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- availability of the necessary human and material resources to facilitate the work required within the Laboratory; and,
- availability of and ability to mobilize communities of interest and relevant networks for the Laboratory.

4. Selection process

   ▪ Submission of applications
All applications must be submitted using the attached form, with documents supporting the technical and financial proposals and the CVs of people involved in the implementation of the Laboratory (including publications and academic titles) annexed to the application.

Submissions should be made to Mr Abdoulaye Ibrahim and Mr Riel Miller in the following manner
- By post: UNESCO, Africa Department, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75007 Paris, France
- By e-mail: a.ibrahim@unesco.org and r.miller@unesco.org

Selection of applications

The selection of partner institutions will rely on a selection methodology validated by the IAF Steering Committee in accordance with the research agenda developed within the framework of the project.

Following the selection, the project team will be responsible for developing a timetable for the implementation of the activities, jointly with the selected candidates.

NB: For further information on the IAF project, institutions expressing of interest are invited to visit the IAF project webpage.
Subject: Letter of Expression of Interest “Co-creation of Futures Literacy Laboratories”

Dear Mr Ibrahim,

I, the undersigned [First Name, Last Name, function], express the interest of [name of the institution / organisation] in participating actively, together with UNESCO, in the co-creation of a Futures Literacy Laboratory within the project “Imagining Africa’s Futures”.

[Name of the institution / organisation] is committed to participating in the realization of the initiatives described in the call for expressions of interest.

[Name of the institution / organisation] also undertakes to take all necessary steps to mobilize the financial resources necessary for this participation, up to USD [0000].

Last name, first name
Signature:
Stamp
Application form

1. How did you learn about Futures Literacy Laboratories?

2. Why do you want to get involved in such a research project?

3. Have you already done work related or based on a reflection on future?

4. What issues would you like to address in a prototype of the Futures Literacy Laboratory?

5. Are you ready to engage in the process of co-creating a Futures Literacy Laboratory?

6. What results do you want to attain through involvement in this project?

7. What participants would you consider in the process of co-creating a Futures Literacy Laboratory, and how would you like to mobilize them?

8. What institutional partnerships do you think you will be able to mobilize for this project? Please indicate which public institutions you have already mobilized.

9. Where and when would you like to run this prototype of the Futures Literacy Laboratory?

10. What resources do you have to undertake this type of project?