



UNITED NATIONS
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Request for research proposals

Enterprise development for job creation and growth

Background

United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) is implementing over the period 2017–20 a research programme entitled [Southern Africa – Toward Inclusive Economic Development](#) (SA-TIED). The aim of the programme is to enhance economic research, capacity-building, and policy dialogue in South Africa and the Southern African region.

This request is for research proposals that will advance the SA-TIED programme’s work on enterprise development for job creation and growth. The recent availability of [South African tax administrative datasets](#) for research purposes creates new opportunities for policy-relevant, evidence-based research on questions about private sector development, firm behaviour, job creation, and productivity.

Internationally, research using tax administrative data has been key to informing well-designed tax and labour market policies, industrial policy, appropriate redistributive social expenditure programmes, and broader strategies to promote private sector development and inclusive growth.

Until recently, researchers working on South Africa have lacked the requisite data to truly support good policy-making in this arena. This request for proposals invites the research community to join UNU-WIDER and its partners in the important process of generating evidence based on this newly available data.

Offer

UNU-WIDER, the National Treasury of the Republic of South Africa (NT), and the South African Revenue Service (SARS) invite proposals from qualified researchers for detailed economic analysis and research of topics in [enterprise development for job creation and growth](#). Researchers are encouraged to use the new administrative datasets in their research, but applied work based on other data will also be considered. Special emphasis will be given to research teams that include junior and early-career researchers.

In addition to generating policy-relevant research, one of the objectives of this request is to facilitate policy dialogue by engaging with researchers on policy-relevant issues. Special efforts are undertaken to ensure that the findings from this research are communicated effectively to all stakeholders — including the academic community, policy makers, and civil society via

policy summaries and dialogue.

Proposals from individuals, groups of individuals, and non-profit organizations are welcome.

Researchers can be based in South Africa or internationally, and can combine researchers from different countries and institutions. Researcher(s) with successful proposals will gain access to generally inaccessible tax administrative datasets at NT, subject to agreed restrictions to preserve confidentiality.

Important note on access to datasets:

Access to these datasets is only available physically at the National Treasury Secure Data Lab in Pretoria, South Africa. Data analysis may only be conducted in this facility and no datasets can be removed from the facility. A data orientation session will be organised for researchers at the start of the contract.

The South African administrative tax data available includes:

- 1 company income tax (CIT) data from CIT-registered firms who submit CIT forms
- 2 employee data from employee income tax certificates submitted by employers (i.e., IRP5/IT3a and ITR12)
- 3 value-added tax (VAT) data from VAT registered firms
- 4 customs records from traders
- 5 matched employer-employee panel (SARS-NT Panel)
- 6 individual panel (matched IRP5/IT3a and ITR12)

All the data has been anonymised in line with global best practice. More information about the firm-level data and the individual-level data can be found [here](#).

What is expected of researchers?

All successful applicants will be expected to:

- Produce a relevant research paper of sufficient quality to merit publication in [the WIDER Working Paper Series](#). Previous papers using the tax data and topics previously explored can be found [here](#). Ongoing research using the tax data can be found [here](#). Please review these studies to avoid duplication of research.
- Include in the research paper a data appendix of datasets and variables used.
- Sign agreements and abide by all restrictions imposed by SARS, NT, and other government agencies with respect to disclosure of confidential firm and individual-specific information.
- Attend a 1–1.5-day workshop in South Africa (venue TBA) where work in progress will be presented to other contracted researchers and to select international experts.
- Be flexible in research approach, particularly for those researchers planning on exploiting datasets that have been lightly analysed to date.
- Please note: UNU-WIDER only commissions original research which has not been published elsewhere. To ensure the quality and originality of research, all submitted studies are analysed with the iThenticate software at the first deliverable stage and prior to publication.

Proposal submission details

- 1 Submission of proposals is done electronically using a form on [the RFRP announcement page](#).

- 2 There are three forms to select from; one for individuals, another for groups of individuals, and a third one for non-profit institutions.
- 3 Details (such as address, gender, nationality, date of birth) of all researchers involved are required to complete the form. Upload the proposal and brief CVs (two pages or less) for each researcher. Please familiarize yourself with the form in advance of applying.
- 4 The technical proposal should be no more than five pages (A4) in length, excluding cover page and references, using 12-point font, 1.5 line spacing, and standard margins. The cover page should contain the complete contact information of each researcher and a 200-word proposal abstract which should summarize the research question, main methods, data, and expected contribution to the policy debate.
- 5 Submission of a budget is not required for the proposal.
- 6 Any questions on the proposal process should be sent to researchproposal6@wider.unu.edu by 30 June 2019. All queries and responses will be published on the RFRP announcement page after this date.

Dates

30 June 2019	Final opportunity for questions on the request for research proposals
15 July 2019	Proposals due
15 August 2019	Target date for informing on final decisions
30 September 2019	Target date for completion of necessary administrative procedures
30 October 2019	Target date for workplan due
30 November 2019	Target window for submission of first drafts of papers
December 2019	Work-in-progress workshop
August 2020	Target window for submission of final papers

Evaluation process and criteria

Proposal evaluation will follow the process described below:

Technical panel

A panel from NT and UNU-WIDER will score proposals along four criteria.

Criteria	Description	Point allocation
Academic quality	This refers to (1) the technical merit and the technical capabilities of the research team; and (2) originality of the proposal.	40
Feasibility	To ensure that the proposed paper and outputs can be published without contravening confidentiality issues and that proposed use of data is in line with best-practice requirements.	20
Capacity building	This refers to the capacity building of South African researchers, junior researchers, and female researchers.	20
Policy relevance	This refers to the degree of policy relevance to the South African and regional context.	20
Total		100

Researchers should take note of the research already published using the tax data:

- A previous research collaboration between NT and UNU-WIDER has already produced a series of studies utilizing [tax administrative data](#).
- Some independent research studies have also been undertaken by staff at the NT - an overview of this research can be accessed [here](#).
- Recently completed and ongoing studies can be found [here](#).

UNU-WIDER will make final decisions on research to be commissioned based on input provided by the panel.

A maximum number of two (2) proposals per researcher may be received, and only one (1) contract per individual researcher may be awarded.

Only the final decisions will be communicated to applicants.

Other considerations

For successful proposals:

- 1 Researchers or their institutions (non-profit) will sign a consultant contract or institutional contractual agreement with UNU-WIDER that follows the UNU conditions of service for [Consultant Contracts \(CTC\)](#), or [Institutional Contractual Agreements \(ICA\)](#).
- 2 UN procedures require researchers/institutions to transfer copyright of research produced under the contract to UNU-WIDER. An important purpose of this copyright transfer is to allow UNU-WIDER to effectively negotiate with book publishers and editors of journals in order to seek the most desirable possible publication outlet for a related set of papers. In specific cases where this requirement may inhibit the ability of the researcher or institution to participate, the issue will be addressed before the contract is issued. If no (further) publication is to be expected by UNU-WIDER, the copyright can be transferred to the author(s).