

Vacancy announcement

Senior Data Consultant

UNU-WIDER Consultant Contract (CTC)

Station: South African Revenue Service, Pretoria, South Africa

Background

United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) is implementing, together with its partners, a programme titled *Southern Africa – Toward Inclusive Economic Development (SA-TIED)* over the period 2017–20, with the aim of enhancing economic research, capacity-building, and policy dialogue.

The recent availability of administrative tax data on enterprises and jobs in South Africa provides a valuable resource for policy-relevant academic research. This allows for a deeper understanding of the functioning of the private sector, the labour market and public revenue. The goal is to create well-documented longitudinal datasets with key variables that can be augmented with research topic-specific variables. This serves as a basis for not only tax research but also for other research strands that require micro-level administrative data. In this programme, researchers from UNU-WIDER, National Treasury (NT) and SARS will build and expand the administrative tax and other microdata available to researchers in South Africa. Policies that promote development need to be built on reliable facts, and administrative data offers an inexpensive way for this.

The Senior Data Consultant will be responsible for development of world-class, cutting-edge systems and processes for data management, including the merging of potential databases, that will facilitate high levels of data integrity, reliability in extractions, and taxpayer-based risk assessment and management at the South African Revenue Service (SARS). The position is under the SA-TIED programme and is based at the premises of SARS in Pretoria, South Africa.

Duties and responsibilities

Under the supervision of a UNU-WIDER Research Associate based in Pretoria, the Senior Data Consultant will perform the following duties:

- Work with colleagues at SARS to design and introduce a world-class systems architecture that will be flexible enough to accommodate changes in the tax environment over the next 20 years.
- Propose changes to the fields used in tax forms and how to optimise effort and accuracy in populating data.
- Direct the work of a team of individuals, including a Junior Data Consultant, to achieve these outcomes.
- Mentor and develop the two SARS employees designated to run the facility at the end of the project.
- Seek, within SARS, answers to data anomalies raised by researchers.



- Subject to the approval of SARS, actively explore new microdata sources of relevance to researchers in SA-TIED that can be matched with the existing firm and individual panel datasets (for example, a dataset of higher education results or wealth tax data).
- Lead data projects that involve the comparison of data from tax records with data from other sources.
- Work with the Junior Data Consultant to develop and implement the SARS secure research data centre.
- Work to create metadata for researchers from multiple sources.

Required qualifications and experience

- Minimum of Master's degree in economics, statistics, data science or equivalent, with at least three years of relevant experience in big data and systems management. PhD degree in the above fields would be an asset
- Advanced knowledge of SQL, SAS, and Stata is required
- Basic knowledge of R and other statistical software packages will be an asset
- Strategic thinking and ability to anticipate future trends or needs
- Experience in leading complex projects
- Ability to work as a team member
- Excellent analytical and drafting skills
- Strong ability to establish priorities, multi-task and work within tight timelines
- Ability to work under minimal supervision and with high level of resilience
- Experience at a world-class revenue institute would be an advantage

Terms

The Senior Data Consultant will be issued a consultant contract with UNU-WIDER for full-time work (18 working days per month of 7.5 hours per day excluding lunch break) at SARS that follows the [UNU Conditions of Service for Consultant Contracts](#).

The successful candidate will not hold international civil service status nor be a 'staff member' as defined in the UN Staff Rules and Regulations. The contract type does not include medical insurance or unemployment insurance and there is no pension fund for CTC holders. There is no entitlement for annual leave or sick leave.

Remuneration for the position will be commensurate with candidate's level of education and experience.

No extra payments for housing or living expenses will be made. Programme-related travel costs will, however, be covered by SA-TIED.

The contract will run as soon as the position is filled until 31 December 2020, when the current SA-TIED programme conclude.

Starting date: As soon as possible.

Application procedure

Interested applicants should submit their applications online using [this form](#) by 17 December 2019 and must upload the following:

- A cover letter setting out how the qualifications and experience match the requirements of the position (max. 1 page)
- An up-to-date CV (max. 3 pages)
- A copy of the highest educational degree obtained

Further competence test is possible for the shortlisted candidates.

Further questions should be addressed to consultancy@wider.unu.edu.