



SA-TIED

Southern Africa – Towards Inclusive Economic Development

Request for research proposals

Southern Africa – Towards Inclusive Economic Development (SA-TIED)

Enterprise development for job creation Public revenue mobilization Structural transformation and inequality

Background

The United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER), together with the National Treasury of South Africa (NT), is requesting research proposals under the second phase of the Southern Africa – Towards Inclusive Economic Development (SA-TIED) programme. Proposals for original research that speak to the topics of the workstreams and offer strong empirical or theoretical contributions will be considered.

This call invites South Africa-based and international researchers to submit proposals to conduct research primarily, but **not exclusively**, using the South African tax administrative data.

Papers generated under this Request for Research Proposals (RfRP) will be published as part of the workstreams on enterprise development for job creation, public revenue mobilization, or structural transformation and inequality (referred to as workstreams 1, 2 and 3, respectively).

The workstream on **enterprise development for job creation (WS1)** focuses on understanding the drivers of changes in South Africa's productivity growth, declining competitiveness as well as opportunities and constraints to private sector development and job creation. Of particular interest are topics addressing issues of relevance to Industrial Policy in South Africa.

Research topics in this area may include, but are not limited to:

- Analysing the impact of industrial policy on firm performance
- Analysing local supply chains and the integration of South African firms into global value chains



- Analysing the drivers of firm-level innovation and economic complexity
- Analysing market power and its relationship with firm productivity for different sectors of the economy

The workstream on **revenue mobilization** (WS2) sheds light on the determinants of revenue collection in South Africa and on the effects of the tax structure on economic growth and inequality. A particular focus is on understanding how people and firms respond to tax policy design and tax administration processes. The workstream engages in both ex-ante policy analysis and ex-post evaluations of tax policy and tax administrative reforms. Areas of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Analysing the impacts of the tax system on individual and firm behaviour
- Developing revenue-forecasting tools for different tax types and time periods, based on macroeconomic forecasts
- (Microsimulation) analysis of suitable redistributive tax-benefit combinations, possibly also accounting for behavioural reactions to policy changes

The workstream on **structural transformation, labour markets and inequality dynamics** (WS3) sheds light on the lack of inclusivity of South Africa's growth path and current and potential policy options to promote inclusive growth.

Our areas of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Contemporary labour market dynamics, changing skills demand and the match with changing skills supply
- Viable social and labour market policy options for lowering vulnerability and facilitating employment, including support for NEETs (Individuals Not in Education, Employment, or Training)
- Sustainable income and wealth tax policy changes in the light of top-end inequality dynamics
- The just transition in South Africa, with a focus on labour market dynamics
- Inequality of opportunity and social mobility
- Spatial analysis using the administrative tax data, of structural transformation, labour market and inequality dynamics in South Africa.
- Understanding key demographic transitions in contemporary South Africa: migration, household composition and aging.
- Evaluations of active labour market interventions (except the ETI which has been extensively studied, including within SA-TIED).
- National minimum wage impacts

Against this backdrop, UNU-WIDER together with NT announce a Request for Research Proposals on topics within the above research areas.

Offer and expectations

UNU-WIDER and NT invite proposals from qualified researchers for high-quality economic research papers examining the topics outlined above. Papers that pass initial screening will be considered for publication under UNU-WIDER copyright as an SA-TIED research paper and possibly also in the WIDER Working Paper Series. The working papers need to be written in English and limited to 10,000 words or less (inclusive of text, tables, figures, footnotes, references, etc. — further information is found [here](#)). Papers may use either theoretical or empirical approaches.

Proposals from individuals, groups of individuals, and non-profit organizations are welcome. Applications from women and South African researchers are particularly encouraged. Special consideration will be given to research teams that include junior and early-career researchers as well as scholars from the Global South. Proposals may address one or more of the research questions.

A total research honorarium in the range of US\$4,000–10,000 will be paid upon delivery of a working paper, depending on the qualifications of the lead researcher and assessment of the proposal.

The deliverable must be deemed acceptable by UNU-WIDER before payment will be made. The honorarium is expected to cover all expenses associated with the conduct of the proposed research (including data collection, research assistance, etc.). A small travel stipend is available for researchers

using the South African tax administrative data living outside of Gauteng. It is not required to submit a budget.

Payment of the honorarium will be made upon delivery of the working paper and one-page summary discussed above.

After payment has been made, researchers may be asked to:

- Participate in at least one knowledge-sharing activity.
- Engage with the SA-TIED communications team to develop the one-pager further into a knowledge mobilization output (e.g. video, social media products, infographics, brief, blog, op-ed).

Researchers with successful proposals that require access to tax administrative datasets at NT will be subject to agreed restrictions to preserve confidentiality. Please note that the tax administrative data may only be accessed on site, at the secure data facility in Pretoria.

What is expected of researchers?

All successful research grant applicants will be expected to:

1. Produce a relevant research paper of sufficient quality to merit publication in the SA-TIED Working Paper series.
2. (For research requiring access to tax administrative datasets at NT) Sign agreements and abide by all restrictions imposed by NT and other government agencies with respect to disclosure of confidential firm- and individual-specific information.
3. To present work in progress at an appropriate venue (TBD) and to listen to and to comment upon work in progress of other researchers (1–1.5 days of time commitment). One author of each successful proposal is expected to attend a work in progress workshop in 2025 (exact date and venue TBD). Costs of attending the workshop will be borne by UNU-WIDER in accordance with the United Nations University travel policy.
4. Prepare a research brief that brings together the key findings from the research paper and the key policy lessons. A key focus will be on specific, policy-relevant recommendations that can be taken forward through a further phase of work.
5. Participate in a workshop/policy dialogue after completion of the final paper to communicate the policy implications and lessons from the research.

Dates

18 October 2024:	deadline for requests for administrative and academic support
25 October 2024:	deadline on questions on the proposal process
15 November 2024:	proposal submission deadline
30 November 2024:	target date for informing on funding decisions
30 June 2025:	target date for submission of first drafts of papers
July 2025:	target date for work-in-progress workshop
30 September 2025:	target date for submission of final draft papers

Knowledge-sharing events will be planned subsequently.

Evaluation process and criteria

Each proposal will be reviewed for scientific merit and feasibility. Proposals will be selected on the basis of three criteria: (i) relevance to the research project, (ii) strength of empirical and policy contributions, and (iii) experience and capability of the researcher(s). Preference will be given to applications from early-career and female scholars, as well as researchers from South Africa. Only the final decision on whether the proposal is accepted or not will be communicated to applying researchers. Applicants must not expect feedback on their proposals.

UNU-WIDER seeks to include researchers from a broad range of South African institutions, particularly Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs). Researchers are encouraged to create partnerships across South African institutions and maximise opportunities for capacity building within research teams.

For successful proposals

Researchers or their institutions (non-profit) will sign a consultant contract or an institutional contractual agreement with UNU-WIDER that follows the UNU conditions of service for Consultant Contracts (CTC), or Institutional Contractual Agreements (ICA).

Researchers/institutions will transfer copyright of research produced under the contract to UNU-WIDER. The purpose of this copyright transfer is to allow UNU-WIDER to effectively negotiate with top academic publishers in order to seek the most desirable possible publication outlet for a related set of papers/studies, and to allow UNU-WIDER to license the planned book on full open access. If no (further) publication is expected by UNU-WIDER, the copyright can be transferred to the author(s). Any material published externally thereafter resulting from this body of work should carry due acknowledgement of UNU-WIDER as the original commissioning institute.

Proposal submission procedure

Proposals should be a maximum of 5 pages, excluding cover page and references, and should specifically outline 1) the main research question; 2) the relevance to the South African context 3) relation to existing academic "state-of-the-art" literature on the topic, and how the proposed research will contribute to this literature, and 4) the specific methodology intended to be used to answer the question(s).

Please use 12-point font, 1.5 line spacing, and standard margins. The proposal should clearly state the research objectives, study design and methods, data sources, and policy relevance. The cover page should contain the complete contact information of researcher(s) and a 120–150-word abstract which should summarize the research question, main method, data, and expected contribution to policy debate.

Submission of proposals is done electronically by using the online form on the RfRP announcement page. There are three forms to select from: one for individuals, another for groups of individuals, and a third for non-profit organizations. Details (such as address, gender, nationality, date of birth) of all researchers involved needs to be entered onto the form, and the cover page, the proposal, and short CVs (five pages or less) of researcher/s uploaded. Please familiarize yourself with the form in advance.

Submission of a budget is not required for the proposal.

Any questions on the proposal process should be sent to researchproposal2@wider.unu.edu by 18 October 2024. All queries and responses will be published on the RfRP announcement page. Selected answers will be updated on a rolling basis.

Administrative and academic support is available for researchers requiring additional support to submit a proposal for this RfRP. Requests for this support should be sent to researchproposal2@wider.unu.edu by 10 October 2024.