



Bioresources Innovations Network for
Eastern Africa Development (BioInnovate)

**Bio-resources Innovations Network for Eastern Africa Development (*BioInnovate*)
Program**

***Second Call for Concept Notes
on***

***Innovation Incubation and Promotion of Targeted Value Chains
and
Bio-resources Innovation Policy and Sustainability Analysis in Eastern Africa***

Instructions for Peer-Reviewers of Concept Notes and Full Proposals

February 2011

Instructions for peer-reviewers

1. Introduction

This document provides guidance for peer-reviewers who will evaluate concept notes and full proposals submitted in response to the Bio-Innovate ***Second Call for Concept Notes on Innovation Incubation and Promotion of Targeted Value Chains and Bio-resources Innovation Policy and Sustainability Analysis in Eastern Africa***.

The concept notes will be evaluated by independent external experts and the final selection of eligible concept notes to be developed into full proposals by successful applicants will be made by the Bio-Innovate Program Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). This guideline is therefore prepared to guide the reviewing process of concept notes as well as full proposals by independent external reviewers.

The detailed information about the second call content and the call procedures for the preparation of concept notes is available on the Bio-Innovate website in the call applicant's guide (http://bioinnovate-africa.org/calls/applicant_guide.pdf)

The reviewers for the concept notes and full proposals are individuals from the fields of biosciences and development, who are internationally recognized in the area of agricultural and environmental biosciences. All independent experts must have a high level (at least 10 years) of professional experience in the public or private sector in research and/or practice in bioresources innovation systems with extensive experience in the Eastern Africa. They should also have experience in one or more of the following areas:

- Evaluation of projects;
- Use of the results of research and technological development projects to solve development challenges in agriculture and the environment;
- Up-and-out scaling of innovations;
- Biosciences Innovation systems and policy analysis in agriculture and the environment; and
- Innovation systems and value chain analysis targeting climate change

2. Nomination of peer-reviewers

The Bio-Innovate Program Management Team identifies potential reviewers through recommendations by the TAC members on the basis of their experiences and appropriate range of competencies in the Bio-Innovate thematic areas of “Second Call for Concept Notes on Innovation Incubation and Promotion of Targeted Value Chains and Bio-resources Innovation Policy and Sustainability Analysis in Eastern Africa” (Thematic Areas 3 and 4). These areas are described in more detail below.

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Thematic Area 3: *Innovation incubation and promotion of targeted value chains:*

This theme will focus on taking near market products and technologies/processes generated from high quality and strategic research that has outputs of potential commercial value. R4D institutions will apply for support to cover small and large scale pilot level testing for economic feasibility, marketability and acceptability; scaling up the production of the product and setting up demonstration plots/pilot plant, etc. Bio-Innovate will seek opportunities for innovations that will have wide applications in the Eastern Africa. The theme will also seek opportunities to leverage additional funds from other partners for venture capital and pilot testing activities.

Thematic Area 4: *Bio-resource innovation policy and sustainability analysis:*

This theme will address issues needed to provide a supportive policy environment for the ultimate development and promotion and uptake of bio-resource innovations. It will include policy analysis, national and regional policy support, as well as socio-economic and environmental analysis. The theme will address issues of sustainability analysis, done in combination with Themes 1, 2 and 3 above, including:

- Analysis of and addressing gaps in the technology dissemination chains within current and future projects. This would include analysis and exploration of roles and responsibilities along the value chain.
- Market analysis and potential of addressing regional markets.
- Exploring technology transfer models with a view to maximize the impact of new technologies, by achieving balance between making the technology as widely available as possible, while providing sufficient incentives to the innovators and investors for early adoption.
- Exploring and analysing models of funding of technology dissemination processes.

Other policy analyses on cost effectiveness, socio-economic and environmental soundness as well as competitiveness will be done under this theme. A key question for the policy studies in Bio-Innovate Program is to analyse how applications of biosciences in Eastern Africa could lead to a more sustainable agricultural and agro-processing sector, able to promote economic growth and effectively alleviate poverty.

In all cases, the relationship between the Bio-Innovate Management Office and the reviewers is defined by a written and signed agreement. Signature of this agreement by the reviewer indicates acceptance of the conditions regarding confidentiality, conflict of interest and use of personal data by Bio-Innovate. Bio-Innovate cannot make available Concept notes and or proposals to a reviewer who has not been signed this agreement (Annex 1).

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3. Evaluation process and evaluation criteria

3.1 Evaluation process

The Bio-Innovate Program Management Team will conduct a formality and eligibility check for all the concept notes and later on for full proposals. Only eligible concept notes/ full proposals are fed into the peer-review evaluation process.

Concept notes that meet the initial selection criteria will be assessed by at least two independent external peer reviewers. The pool of evaluators will be formed from biosciences and policy experts nominated by the TAC. The TAC shall ensure that the reviewers are independent experts with the skills and knowledge appropriate to the tasks assigned to them, and are not faced with conflict of interests on the matter on which they are asked to give opinion.

The reviewers will be required to sign a declaration of confidentiality and 'no conflict of interest' at the time of their assignment. Reviewers will be chosen from the pool based on their specific knowledge of the topic areas covered by the applications, and may represent both the scientific, policy and user community.

It is expected that each external reviewer will evaluate 2-3 concept notes. The length of concept notes will be limited to maximum of 10 pages, and reviewers are expected to conduct the evaluation of the concept notes from **15 February- 7, March, 2011**. Peer-reviewers must send the filled **Standard Evaluation Forms** to the Bio-Innovate Program Management Office **latest by 07 March 2011**. Bio-Innovate will pay a modest remuneration for the reviewers. The remuneration will be USD 100 and 200 per evaluated concept note and full proposal, respectively, payable upon satisfactory completion of the review process and upon receipt of a valid invoice request.

The Bio-Innovate Management Office will compile the evaluation results in a matrix, indicating the score for each criterion from each peer-reviewer, the total score of the proposal from each peer-reviewer, the average criterion score and the average total score. Together with the textual reports, this information will be the basis for the selection by the Technical Advisory Committee.

3.2 Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will work remotely and deliver their individual reviews by electronic means. They will use a predefined evaluation format based on 10 given criteria and a specified scoring table. Each of the criteria will be subject to

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evaluation on a scale of 1 to 10, where a score of 1 indicates a very poor response and 10 an excellent one. The threshold score is set to 7 (fair) for each criterion. Concept notes meeting or exceeding the threshold score in each criterion will be considered as “eligible” and will go to the next full proposal development upon selection by the Bio-Innovate Program Technical Advisory Committee. Proposals failing to achieve the threshold score in one or more of the criteria (average criterion score over the two peer-reviewers) will be considered as “not eligible”.

In addition to scores, each peer reviewer will produce a short textual report for each of the evaluation criteria, a score for each criterion, and a total score for each concept note. Textual reports and comments should take the form of a statement and explanation of key strength and key weaknesses of the concept note, in the light of the criteria provided. The textual report should be concise, longer reviews are not necessarily better. **Criteria scores below 7 points should be explained in detail and related to specific key weaknesses.** The textual report should be impeccably polite, as it forms the basis of the feedback to applicants. Peer-reviewers will provide their scoring and textual report by using the predefined Standard Evaluation Form (see Annex 2).

The technical selection criteria and the maximum points that may be awarded for each selection criterion are given below. The maximum possible points per selection criterion are 5 points. The maximum possible total points for all selection criteria combined are 100 points. Thus each concept note will be given a ranking score of points out of 100.

Peer review will be carried out remotely to ensure that independent views are anonymously obtained. Reviewers will be provided with guidance and will use an evaluation model based on given criteria and a specified scoring matrix (see Table 1 below). Each peer reviewer will produce a textual report for each of the evaluation criteria, a score for each criterion, and a total score for each proposal.

If the evaluation of the independent evaluators differs significantly, the final ranking decision is at the discretion of the Technical Advisory Committee. The review process will be conducted following the criteria given in Table 1 below.

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Table 1. Bio-Innovate Second Call Concept Note Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criterion	Assessment based upon	Scoring
Criteria 1. Regional approach	Rationale that a regional approach is more effective than individual, national projects; size and degree of involvement of partners from the Bio-Innovate Program network countries.	(1-10)
Criteria 2. Project objectives and design	Description of the project by giving the completed research work and results, the innovation emanating from the research, the goal, objective, scope and methodology of work, anticipated outputs;	(1-10)
Criteria 3. potential for economic and social impact	Potential to stimulate economic growth and sustainable development in the region and evidence of demand for innovation in target sector; assessment of costs of development and dissemination of the proposed innovations; What is the development goal to be addressed?.	(1-10)
Criteria 4. Adding value to existing efforts	Robust review of prior information and value addition of the proposed project; quality and relevance of the approach with demonstrated relevance to technology incubation centers and innovation policy and sustainability analysis.	(1-10)
Criteria 5. Pathway to impact (applicability of the results in practice, and potential impact)	clarity on how the innovation pathway demonstrates the necessary linkages along the innovation chain to ensure delivery to identified end users	(1-10)
Criteria 6. Team composition	Clear demonstration of the quality of the consortium, inter-disciplinarity including diversity of disciplines and the synergies between the partners bringing added value by working together to collectively address all stages leading to and including product delivery and towards achieving the regional priorities;	(1-10)
Criteria 7.	skills and experiences of project coordination and management	(1-10)

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Competence and skill track record of principal Investigator	capacities of the Principal Investigator and track record of previous research grant management experiences of the PI and his Institution which will be designated as lead institution for consortium.	
Criteria 8. Matching funds and commitment from host institution	Matching funds identified from the partners and/or other investors, including governments and/or development agencies. Demonstration of strong institutional support from partners, including in kind support (e.g. staff time),	(1-10)
Criteria 9. Monitoring and Evaluation	To what extent internal monitoring and evaluation plan; including annual indicators of success, for monitoring progress of the proposed project towards results has been included;	(1-10)
Criteria 10. Outputs dissemination, intellectual property and related policy issues as well as communications plans,	The extent to which the major outputs expected from the innovation and policy projects, and the project findings to be disseminated or implemented are defined; Identification of any IP and other related policy issues that are connected to the delivery and impact of the specific innovation; Coherency of the plans for communicating the project outputs and results to the public, policy makers and potential end users	(1-10)

4. Conflict of interest

Peer- reviewers should not be put in a situation in which their impartiality might be in question, or where the suspicion could arise that recommendations are affected by elements that lie outside the scope of the review. To that effect, Bio-Innovate have formulated a clear set of rules pertaining to conflict of interest (see Annex 3). These rules are incorporated in the appointment letter, in the form of the need for disclosure by the reviewer of any actual or potential conflict of interest regarding the concept notes/proposals. Conflict of interest arises when an applicant and an evaluator have a significant research collaborative, conflictual or institutional linkage; have close family ties or a personal relationship; have direct financial or administrative dependencies; or are close colleagues in the same institution.

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In the potential case, the Bio-Innovate Management Team and the TAC will make a decision whether the situation in question constitutes an actual conflict of interest – or whether no conflict of interest exists.

5. Confidentiality

In every stage of the evaluation, confidentiality is of the utmost importance. All reviewers must respect confidentiality with respect to the applications. If you believe that additional scientific and technical expertise is needed to review an application, contact the Program Management Office who can obtain an appropriate outside opinion. Respect for the privacy of the applicants' ideas is also important. Misappropriation of intellectual property, including the unauthorized use of ideas or unique methods obtained from a privileged communication, such as a grant or manuscript review, is considered plagiarism and falls under the definition of scientific misconduct.

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Annex 1

Confirmation of interest and availability for peer review

Bio-Innovate Second Call for Concept Notes on Innovation Incubation and Promotion of Targeted Value Chains and Bio-resources Innovation Policy and Sustainability Analysis in Eastern Africa

Bio-Innovate Program	Date-----
International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)	Name of the expert-----
P.O.Box Nairobi 00100, Kenya	Full mailing address-----

I hereby confirm my interest and availability to undertake peer review which is part of the evaluation process of the **Bio-Innovate Second Call for Concept Notes on Innovation Incubation and Promotion of Targeted Value Chains and Bio-resources Innovation Policy and Sustainability Analysis in Eastern Africa**.

I am available to carry out the evaluation of concept notes in the period of **15 February – 07, March 2011**. I confirm that I have read, understood and will comply with the “Bio-Innovate Terms of Reference and Guidelines for Peer Reviewers”. I attach the required brief 1-2 page CV.

Name: -----Signature-----Date-----

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Annex 2

Bio-Innovate Second Call Concept Note Evaluation Form

Proposal No:
Proposal Title:
Name of the Reviewer:

Criteria	Score
Criteria 1: Regional approach Explanatory note:	
Criteria 2: Project objectives and design Explanatory note:	
Criteria 3: potential for economic and social impact Explanatory note:	
Criteria 4: Adding value to existing efforts Explanatory note:	
Criteria 5: Pathway to impact (applicability of the results in practice, and potential impact) Explanatory note:	
Criteria 6: Team composition; Competence and skill track record of principal investigator Explanatory note	
Criteria 8: Matching funds and commitment from host institution Explanatory note	
Criteria 9: Internal Monitoring and Evaluation Plans Explanatory note	
Criteria 10. Outputs dissemination; intellectual property and other related policy issues as well as communications plans Explanatory note	
Total Score	

General comments and or suggestions
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Annex 3

Conflict of Interest in the Bio-Innovate concept note and full proposal peer review evaluation

Disqualifying conflict of interest

A disqualifying conflict of interest for a specific proposal exists if the reviewer:

- Was involved in the preparation of the proposal
- Stands to benefit directly should the proposal be accepted

The Principal Investigator submits the proposal on behalf of his/her host organization designated lead institution and the partner organizations. These organizations are the *applicant legal entities*. A disqualifying conflict of interest for a specific proposal therefore arises if the reviewer:

- Has a close family relationship with any person representing an *applicant legal entity* in the proposal
- Is a director, trustee or partner of an *applicant legal entity*
- Is employed by one of the *applicant legal entities* in the proposal
- Was employed by one of the *applicant legal entities* in the proposal within the previous three years

Furthermore a disqualifying conflict of interest for a specific proposal exists if the reviewer is in any other situation that could compromise his or her ability to evaluate the proposal impartially, such as the reviewer:

- Has close family ties or a personal relationship with the principal investigator or partner investigators of the proposal
- Is a former supervisor of the principal investigator or partner investigators of the proposal
- Is a close collaborator of the principal investigator or partner investigators of the proposal (up to five years previously)

Potential conflict of interest

A potential conflict of interest may exist for a specific proposal, even in cases not covered by the clear disqualifying conflicts indicated above, if the reviewer:

- Is already involved in a contract or research collaboration with an *applicant legal entity* or had been so in the previous three years
- Is in any other situation that could cast doubt on his or her ability to evaluate the proposal impartially, or that could reasonably appear to do so in the eyes of an external third party