![The African Academy of Sciences logo]

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR PROVISION OF MIDTERM EVALUATION FOR THE AFRICAN RESEARCH INITIATIVE (ARISE)PROGRAMME (AAS/RFP/01/2026)

1. Background

The African Academy of Sciences (AAS) is committed to advancing research, innovation, and capacity strengthening across the continent. Through its Programmes Department, the Academy implements strategic initiatives designed to nurture the next generation of researchers, strengthen institutional systems, foster collaboration, and ensure that scientific evidence informs policy and practice.

To ensure accountability, learning, and adaptive management, AAS is commissioning a midterm evaluation of the African Research Initiative for Scientific Excellence (ARISE). The evaluation will assess progress towards results, identify challenges and lessons learned, and provide actionable recommendations to improve implementation and enhance long-term impact.

The ARISE is an innovative research and innovation (R&I) support programme of the African Academy of Sciences (AAS), which is implemented in partnership with the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU). The programme was established under the auspices of the AU-EU High-Level Policy Dialogue on STI and provides a vibrant platform and pathway for R&I exchanges in contribution to sustainable and inclusive development, economic growth, and job creation.

ARISE is mainly funded by the European Union with additional contributions by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Launched in December 2020, the current pilot phase of ARISE supports nearly 600 early to mid-career researchers across Africa, led by 47 principal investigators, who are hosted in 38 African countries. ARISE is an offshoot and successor of the AESA-RISE Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme – a $2 million seed grant awarded to the AAS in 2017 by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, through its Higher Education and Research in Africa programme. The aim of the AESA-RISE fellowship was to pilot a programme for supporting postdoctoral fellows in Africa.

2. Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this midterm evaluation is to:

a) Assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and emerging impact of the programme.
b) Review the extent to which the programme is achieving its stated objectives and outcomes.
c) Identify challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned for adaptive programming.
d) Provide recommendations to strengthen implementation and guide future phases of the programme.

3. Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation will cover the period of three months and will focus on the following dimensions:

a) Relevance: Alignment with African research priorities including the priorities set out by the AU EU Innovation agenda, stakeholder needs, and AAS strategic objectives.
b) Effectiveness: Achievement of outputs and outcomes as outlined in the Theory of Change and logframe.
c) Efficiency: Use of resources in relation to results achieved.
d) Sustainability: Likelihood of benefits continuing beyond the project.
e) Impact: Contribution towards strengthening Africa's science, technology, and innovation ecosystem.

4. Evaluation Questions

The evaluation will be guided by the Theory of Change (Annex 1) and the Logical Framework (Annex 2). The key evaluation questions include:

- How relevant is the programme to the needs of researchers, institutions, and policymakers?
- To what extent have the intended outputs and outcomes been achieved?
- What factors have contributed to or hindered progress?
- How efficiently have financial and human resources been used?
- What evidence is there of sustainability and potential long-term impact?
- What lessons and best practices can inform future programming at AAS?

President: Prof. Liza Korsten | Secretary General: Prof. Friday Okonofua | Treasurer: Prof. Stephen Agong
Acting Executive Director: Prof. Catherine Ngila
The African Academy of Sciences | P.O. Box 24916 – 00502, Nairobi, Kenya | 8 Miotoni Lane, Karen, Nairobi
Tel: + 254 (20) 806 0674 | Mobile: +254 709 158 000 | www.aasciences.africa

- What challenges confront the research teams at the various institutions and countries in administering their research grants.?

5. Methodology

The evaluation is expected to use a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data. Suggested methods include:

- Document review (programme reports, monitoring data, financial reports, policy documents).
- Key informant interviews (KIIs) with fellows, mentors, institutional leaders, policymakers, and funders.
- Surveys to capture wider stakeholder perspectives.
- Case studies of selected fellows or institutions.
- Comparative analysis against baseline indicators and targets.

The evaluator will develop an inception report with a detailed methodology, sampling strategy, data collection tools, and analysis framework, to be approved by AAS before fieldwork begins.

6. Deliverables

The evaluator/consultant will provide the following deliverables:

i.   Inception Report: Detailing the methodology, tools, and work plan.
ii. Draft Evaluation Report: Providing preliminary findings, lessons, and recommendations.
iii. Validation Workshop: To present findings to the AAS and stakeholders.
iv. Final Evaluation Report: Incorporating feedback from the AAS and stakeholders.

7. Timeline

The evaluation is expected to take place over 12 weeks between 2nd March – 22nd May, 2026. A detailed timeline will be agreed upon in the inception phase.

8. Team Composition and Required Expertise

The evaluation may be conducted by an individual consultant or a firm with the following qualifications:

- Advanced degree (PhD) in monitoring and evaluation, development studies, social sciences, education, or a related field.
- Proven experience (at least 7–10 years) in designing and conducting evaluations, preferably in research and capacity strengthening programmes.
- Strong knowledge of science, technology, and innovation (STI) systems in Africa.
- Demonstrated expertise in mixed-methods research and participatory evaluation approaches.
- Excellent analytical, writing, and facilitation skills.

9. Management and Oversight

The Consultant will work closely with the AAS's knowledge management team and report to the Programmes Manager.

10. Budget and Payment

The AAS will provide a budget for the evaluation covering consultancy fees, travel, and other related costs. Payment will be made in tranches upon submission and approval of deliverables:

- 20% upon submission of the inception report.
- 40% upon submission of the draft report.
- 40% upon submission of the final evaluation report.

11. Evaluation Criteria
- Technical approach and understanding of ToR – 30%
- Relevant experience with donor- funded projects – 30%
- Qualifications and experience of key staff – 20%
- Financial proposal (cost competitiveness) – 10%
- References and capacity of the firm – 10%

Note: The firm/individual that scores the highest overall marks shall be recommended for award.

12. Ethical Considerations

The evaluation must adhere to ethical principles of independence, transparency, confidentiality, and respect for participants. Informed consent must be obtained from all interviewees and survey respondents.

13.Submission Instructions

Proposals must be submitted electronically to: procurement@aasciences.africa

Subject line: RFP – ARISE PP Midterm Evaluation(AAS/RFP/01/2026)

Deadline for submission: Monday 23rd February 2026 at 9:00 AM EAT.

Late submissions will not be considered.

Clarifications

All requests for clarification should be sent by email to procurement@aasciences.africa. Before deadline.

14. Annexes

Annex 1: Theory of Change – (ARISE PROGRAMME)

The midterm evaluation is guided by the ARISE Theory of Change, which provides the conceptual framework for linking programme activities to outputs, outcomes, and long-term impacts. The ToC serves as the foundation for formulating evaluation questions and aligns the assessment with AAS's strategic objectives. The annex below presents both a diagrammatic and narrative illustration of this ToC structured around four key pillars.

Figure 1: ARISE ToC

This diagram illustrates the four interlinked pillars—Training & Mentorship, Stakeholder Engagement, Institutional Capacity Strengthening, and Collaborations & Networking—that drive the Academy's contribution to building a resilient, innovative, and knowledge-driven Africa.

The ToC provides a visual and narrative framework that guides how the AAS translates its resources and activities into measurable outcomes and long-term impact.

Pillar 1: Training & Mentorship

Training and mentorship are central to capacity building. Key activities include workshops, mentorship schemes, leadership development, and peer learning.

Pillar 2: Stakeholder Engagement

Effective stakeholder engagement ensures relevance and sustainability. Activities include consultations, policy dialogues, and dissemination workshops.

Pillar 3: Institutional Capacity Strengthening

Strengthening governance, systems, and resource mobilisation ensures resilient African research institutions.

Pillar 4: Collaborations & Networking

Regional and global collaborations accelerate knowledge sharing, innovation, and resource mobilisation. The four pillars are interconnected pathways that drive AAS towards a resilient, innovative, and knowledge-driven Africa

Annex 2: Indicative Logical Framework Matrix

The indicative logical framework matrix provides a structured basis for monitoring, reporting, and evaluating the intervention. It links activities to outputs, outcomes, and impact, thereby ensuring accountability and alignment with AAS's strategic objectives. While indicative targets are outlined, these will be refined during the inception phase of the evaluation and updated throughout implementation. Progress reports should provide an updated logframe with current values for each indicator, and the final report will present the logframe with achieved results.

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Intervention Logic	Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVIs)	Targets	Means of Verification	Assumptions
Overall Impact	Strengthened African research and innovation ecosystem; evidence-based policy uptake; Africa positioned as a global STI player	• Increased African-led research outputs in global forums • Stronger policy integration of AAS research	Progress reports, bibliometric data, policy briefs, evaluations	Political stability; donor and stakeholder commitment
Outcomes	• Improved research leadership and skills • Sustainable institutional capacity • Effective partnerships and networks	• % of fellows in leadership roles • # of institutions adopting new governance systems • # of long-term collaborations sustained	Fellow surveys, institutional reports, partnership MoUs	Retention of trained fellows; enabling institutional environment
Outputs	• Training and mentorship delivered • Stakeholder dialogues held • Capacity-building sessions completed • Collaborative research projects initiated	• # of fellows trained/mentored • # of stakeholder meetings • # of institutions supported • # of research collaborations	Programme monitoring data, event reports, training attendance lists	Timely disbursement of funds; active stakeholder participation
Activities	• Organise mentorship and leadership workshops • Conduct stakeholder engagement forums • Strengthen institutional governance and financial systems • Facilitate regional/global networking and collaborations	N/A	Activity reports, meeting minutes, training materials	Stakeholders remain engaged; institutional willingness to adapt

Annex 3: Proposed Deliverables and Indicative Timeline
Evaluation Period: 2 March 2026 – 22 May 2026 (12 weeks)

Deliverable	Description	Indicative Timeline	Tentative Submission Date
Inception Report	Detailed evaluation design including refined methodology, evaluation questions, sampling strategy, data collection tools, analytical framework, and detailed work plan. Subject to AAS approval prior to fieldwork.	Weeks 1–2	**13 March 2026**
Data Collection & Analysis (Milestone)	Document review, KIIs, surveys, case studies, and preliminary analysis based on approved inception report. *(Milestone – no formal report submission)*	Weeks 3–7	—
Draft Evaluation Report	Presentation of preliminary findings, analysis, lessons learned, conclusions, and draft recommendations aligned to the ToR, Theory of Change, and logframe.	Weeks 8–9	**24 April 2026**
Validation Workshop	Presentation and discussion of draft findings with AAS management and key stakeholders to validate results and refine recommendations.	Week 10	**1 May 2026**
Final Evaluation Report	Revised report incorporating feedback from AAS and validation workshop, including executive summary and final recommendations.	Weeks 11–12	**22 May 2026**

NOTE:

- The proposed timeline is indicative and may be refined during the inception phase in consultation with the African Academy of Sciences. Any adjustments will remain within the overall evaluation period of 12 weeks.
- The firm/individual that scores the highest overall marks shall be recommended for award.