



Economic Research Southern Africa

Working Paper Series Request for Proposals

Background

Urbanization in South Africa is expected to reach 80% by 2050, according to the United Nations. Capturing the potential benefits and mitigating the potential costs of rising urbanization raises many questions for South Africa. Of principal interest to ERSA are questions relating to the role of cities as drivers of growth and employment, while also being rewarding places to live. Research on these questions is necessary to shape debate and inform policy design.

Economic Research Southern Africa (ERSA) along with the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) recently commissioned a series of discussion documents around city economies. Please, see Discussion Documents 9-13, which can be accessed from the ERSA webpage.¹ Those papers offer a number of observations about cities and forms a backdrop for prospective research into cities.

Key points arising from these discussion documents include:

- There is limited data (or other information) available at the appropriate level of aggregation for empirical research into cities.
- There is little research into the impact of crime/policing (public/private) on economic outcomes.
- There is limited research into the impact of social, public and private capital (broadly defined) on economic outcomes.
- There is a need to think carefully about regional policy, leveraging comparative advantage, and overcoming historical regional growth "traps".

As implied by these discussion documents, there is a general need for more research into and across cities.

Call for Working Papers

¹ <https://econrsa.org/research/research-projects/publications/discussion-document/>

ERSA seeks up to 10 working papers offering deeper insight into the workings and contribution of cities.

We are currently requesting working paper proposals. Proposals need to be relevant to ERSA's research themes, while specifically dealing with issues related to cities/urbanisation:

- Macroeconomic policy and coordination;
- Growth, development and structural constraints;
- Macroeconomic models and data;
- Public finance, and
- Policy implications of climate change.

Proposals should either be submitted by academics employed full-time by South African academic institutions or include South African academics/students as partners in the research. It is hoped that the proposals will be underscored by collaborations, and, if possible, contain a training opportunity, most likely focused on PhD or postdoctoral researchers.

Process

Proposals should be submitted by 15 October 2023. ERSA is planning a session at the ESSA conference in mid-September related to the aforementioned discussion documents that might also help authors clarify their research ideas.

Proposals will be evaluated by ERSA's Research Committee, which might seek feedback from other researchers in the field, while committee participants are not allowed to comment on proposals from their own colleagues. Decisions and feedback will be provided by 15 December 2023.

Authors of accepted proposals will become ERSA Research Fellows. Completed working papers should be submitted to the Economic Research Southern Africa Working Paper Series by 31 October 2024. It is further expected that at least one policy brief related to the research will be submitted by the same date. Authors are encouraged to present their findings, either completed or as work in progress.

The research, itself, is to be owned by the researcher, although ERSA reserves the right to market and communicate results from the research to the broader academic and policy community. ERSA, through the research committee reserves the right to request brief progress reports during this period.

Funding up to R150 000, to be paid for an accepted working paper and policy brief, is available for each approved project.

Rubric

The scientific component of the proposals should contain a brief introduction describing what is to be done in the project (the research question), and how it fits within the call. Proposals should offer a clear review of the state of the art that places the research into context and highlights the potential academic contribution of the project. It should also highlight the research methodology and expected academic outputs (e.g. papers, data etc) arising from the research. Proposals should also offer a clear and concise discussion related to the potential policy relevance (direct and or indirect) of the research. Proposals should briefly describe the collaboration arising from the proposal, and/or the training that will occur during the research process. Finally, proposals should not exceed four double-spaced pages, including references (single-spaced).

- 70% - Academic contribution
- 20% - Policy potential
- 10% - Collaboration/training component