

NIGERIA ICT FORUM OF PARTNERSHIP INSTITUTIONS

RESOURCE AND STRATEGY SEMINAR

ON

***“ADVANCED COMPUTING FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
RESEARCH AND COLLABORATION”***

A REPORT

24TH JULY, 2007

1.00 PREAMBLE

At the instance of the Nigeria ICT Forum of partnership Institutions, a Resource and Strategy Seminar on “Advanced Computing for Science and Technology Research and Collaboration” was convened. The seminar took place on Tuesday, 24 July, 2007 at the Digital Bridge Institute, Abuja. It featured presentations on an update by the Coordinator of the Science and Technology Education Post Basic Project (STEPB) on the funding opportunities for collaborative activities, and by the Hewlett Packard Company on the UNESCO/Hewlett Packard Company Brain-Grain project in Eastern Europe.

The seminar was declared open at 10.42 am. This was followed by introduction of the Forum officials, the Resource Persons, namely Prof. Mike Adikwu and Dr. Barbara Waugh of HP. Other participants also introduced themselves. The presentations were moderated by Prof. Lawrence Kehinde of OAU Ife.

The seminar was attended by 84 delegates from Universities (26), Colleges (7), Research Institutes (5), the Public Service (15), Development Agencies and Non-Governmental Institutions (9), and the Private Sector (22).

1.01 Objectives of the Seminar

The seminar has the following as its objectives.

- i) To enable member Institutions of Nigeria ICT Forum of Partnership Institutions to explore their interests individually, in group and/or in partnership with others in applying for similar Brain-Grain grants under the STEPB programme;
- ii) To coordinate individual campus grants proposals together with training proposals in a Comprehensive Strategic proposal termed ***“Advanced Computing for Science and Technology Research Collaboration”***.

2.00 Presentation No.1: “Highlights on STEPB Project”

Making the presentation, the STEPB Project Coordinator informed participants that STEPB was developed to encourage seed activities related to Science and Technology within the post-basic education sector, with the ultimate aim of supporting demand-driven economic growth. He noted that phase 1 of the project entailed the carrying out of six (6) studies by teams drawn from within Nigeria and internationally. The main purpose of the studies was to identify areas of weakness in post basic science and technology education and elucidate mechanisms to address them. The reports and the recommendations therein were developed through a consultative process that included key stakeholders in the Public and Private sectors and the civil society. The studies combined in a single synthesis report are available on the STEPB website.

2.01 Project Development Objectives

The Project Development Objective is for Federal Post Basic education and research sub-sector to produce more and better qualified science and technology graduates, and higher quality and more relevant research.

2.02 Project Components

The STEPB project consists of three (3) main components as follows:

Component 1: Quality Enhancement and Innovation Fund (QEIP) in STEPB (45% \$81m)

This consists of two sub-components 1A and 1B.

Sub-component 1A covers competitive grants for research and technology development (30% i.e. \$54 million).

Sub-component 1B covers competitive awards for STEPB teaching and learning in PBEI's 15% i.e. \$27 million.

Component 2: Supporting the emergence of Centres of Excellence (30% \$54 million)

This component covers competitive awards for emerging Centres of Excellence. Post basic educational institutions can apply to become centres of excellence in science and technology areas. Applicants will be required to establish (or should have established) links with internationally recognized institutions in their specific science and technology area.

Component 3: Supporting Sector wide initiatives and Project Management (15% \$27 million)

This component consists of two (2) sub-components, namely:

- i) Sub-component 3A. This covers activities towards supporting national policy and planning and institutional strengthening. The sum of \$18 million being 10% of the 15% allocated to the whole component is allocated to this sub-component;
- ii) Sub-component 3B: This covers expenses towards supporting STEPB project Management and administration; *10% i.e. \$18m of the total project sum left unallocated.*

2.03 Implementation Arrangements:

On the implementation arrangements, participants noted that the Federal Ministry of Education is the main STEPB Project implementing agency in close collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology. However, overall responsibility for project coordination and implementation rests with the Federal Ministry of Education.

A light organizational structure has been established to ensure smooth and effective implementation of the project activities. This consists of:

i) STEPB Project Screening Committee (SPSC)

This is the main policy making body for the STEPB project. It provides guidance during implementation of the STEPB project and facilitates coordination between the different federal ministries and

their affiliated institutions. It also approves annual implementation plans of the STEPB project in addition to monitoring and advising the Federal Government of Nigeria, as well as receiving and considering External Auditors' reports on the project.

The STEPB Project Steering Committee is chaired by the Honourable Minister of Education.

ii) STEPB Technical Review Committee (TRE)

The Technical Review Committee shall be responsible for reviewing all projects proposals submitted for support under the STEPB project. This includes proposals submitted by stakeholder institutions/organization under components 1 and 2 and those initiated by Project Secretariat under component 3. The Technical Review Committee consists of seven distinguished Scientists of international stature. Five of these will be Nigerians while the remaining two (2) will be international experts based outside Nigeria.

iii) STEPB International Advisory Board (SIAB)

This Board will assist the Technical Review Committee in sub-project proposal evaluation activities. All proposals under component 2 will first be evaluated and reviewed by the International Advisory Board after which it forwards its recommendations to the Technical Review Committee for final review. The International Advisory Board shall consist of seven (7) to ten (10) distinguished scientists from different parts of the world. It will serve for the entire duration of the project.

iv) STEPB Project Secretariat at (SPS)

The Project Secretariat will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the project and will serve as the main link between the project management and the beneficiary institutions

on one hand and the STEPB Project Steering Committee and the World Bank on the other. The STEPB Project Secretariat is headed by the National Project Coordinator who shall facilitate the work of the Project Steering Committee, the Technical Review Committee and the International Advisory board.

Other staff of the secretariat includes:

- Procurement Officers;
- Project Auditors; and
- Monitoring and Evaluation Officers.

v) Sub-Project Implementation Units

In addition to the aforementioned structures, each of the participating institutions must have an established Project Implementation Unit to serve as the interface between the institution, the Project Secretariat and other organs of the STEPB project implementation structure.

The sub-projects implementation units shall consist of:

- ✓ A Project Manager
- ✓ Institutional Procurement Officer; and
- ✓ Project Accountant (from the Bursary Department)
- ✓

2.04 Progress So Far

Participants noted that the following accomplishments so far with regards to the STEPB project:

- ✓ Inauguration of the STEPB Project Steering Committee;
- ✓ 1st meeting of the SPSC held on the 21st June, 2007;
- ✓ Approval of the membership of the Technical Review Committee and the International Advisory Panel by the STEPB Project Steering Committee;
- ✓ Commencement of the review and evaluation of some proposals preparatory to submission to the TRC;

- ✓ Advertisement, short listing and interview for various positions in the Project Secretariat. The result of the interview is being awaited.

2.05 Clarifications

In the discussion that followed, participants

- ✓ **Noted** that the analysis of some of the proposals received mainly entails scrutinizing them to see whether they comply with the guidelines; actual technical review will be done by the Technical Review Committee when inaugurated.
- ✓ **Noted** that a defective proposal is not rejected completely; rather, it is referred back to the proposer for necessary corrections, amendments and re-submission for re-consideration;
- ✓ **Noted** the need for timely feedback to stakeholders on the progress of their proposal assessment;
- ✓ **Noted** the importance of carrying the Senior Secondary schools along by way of helping them in the area of grants proposal development, etc;
- ✓ **Noted** that there is no time-line for proposal submission, as it is an ongoing activity for the duration of the project;
- ✓ **Noted** that STEPB Project is still at preparation stage as the Project Agreement document is yet to be signed and, as such, release of the facility is also yet to commence.

2.06 Presentation No.2: Hewlett Packard Brain-gain project

Details on the presentation by Dr Barbara Waugh, Director, University Relations, centred on the profile of HP as a leading IT Company and among the biggest in the world. Participants noted that here in Nigeria HP, has three (3) service centres located in Abuja (North); Lagos (West) and Port-Harcourt (South). HP Company is particularly concerned about the state of education, technology education in Nigeria and how the Diaspora can assist with technology and capacity building in Nigeria.

Other details in the presentation include highlights on the company's citizenship education projects in Africa concerning NEPAD, IT partnership

in Gabon; collaboration with Africa Virtual University; and the University of Ibadan and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

2.07 Clarifications

In the clarification that followed the presentation, participants noted and appreciated the fact that HP does not have the capacity to enable them to order equipment directly instead of going through retail vendors.

3.00 PANEL DISCUSSION SESSION

The session centred on the additional comments, discussion and clarification on the STEPB Projects and the contribution of HP Company. Emanating from the incisive discussions, comments and contributions, participants:

- ✓ **Noted** that the World Bank is only one of the players in the STEPB project and as such does not own the project. Rather, it assist the owner of the project, the Nigerian Government in implementing the project;
- ✓ **Noted** that the rule of the game in project implementation is openness, and that the STEPB Project has no conditional ties attached to it;
- ✓ **Noted** that the credit facility for the STEPB project is a catalytic fund meant to catalyze innovation in science and technology education (teaching, learning and research) to enable higher education institutions to be competitive globally;
- ✓ **Noted** that the whole idea behind the project is to enable post-basic educational institutions to begin to do something new and move forward. As such, a lot of benefits will be derived through establishing relationships and networking with private organizations, NGOs and Fora such as Nigeria ICT Forum of Partnership Institutions;
- ✓ **Appreciated** that for the project to be sustainable, there is the need for effective capacity building and system approach to issues;
- ✓ **Appreciated** the importance of good rapport and cooperation of HEIs with professional associations, Boards and Councils, especially the science-based ones, for the success of the STEPB project, more so that component 3, provide resources for this activity;

- ✓ **Noted** that the Project Development Objective will not be compromised as far as proposal review and approvals are concerned;
- ✓ **Noted** that proposals development under STEPB project should take into cognizance existing collaboration and partnerships with other institutions and what is actually on ground and the progress made so far;
- ✓ **Appreciated** the need to strongly support the Senior Secondary schools to enable them actively participate in the STEPB project. The Federal Ministry of Education should have a structure for preparing heads of SSS on proposals development. Universities can also use their staff senior secondary schools and neighbouring secondary schools for the capacity building activities;
- ✓ **Noted** the need to address the Gender issues by way of balancing up both the students mix and faculty/staff mix;
- ✓ **Noted** that for the emergence of centres of excellence there should be a strategy and should be determined based on their relevance to national needs;
- ✓ **Noted** that the brain gain presentation is essentially concerned with the need for collaboration with the private sector for maximum benefit from the STEPB project. The Brain Gain Projects therefore was showing the participants examples of what they could buy with the STEPB project funds;
- ✓ **Reaffirmed** the issue of power and energy development in terms of utilizing the resources available under STEPB to assist in the development of this important sector of the national economy by way of funding relevant project activities and manpower development to address the dynamic nature of the technology in the sector;
- ✓ **Noted** that state and private high educational institutions can partner with sister federal institutions and forward a joint proposal to benefit in the sector wide component 3 of the STEPB project.

4.00 Closing

The seminar came to a close at 2.13 pm.

Abuja
24th July, 2007