Request for Proposals
To host a hub for think tank peer exchanges

Concept
The Think Tank Initiative (TTI) and Think Tank Fund (TTF) are partnering to support peer exchanges between think tanks in regions where TTI and TTF are active (Africa, Latin America and South Asia; and Central and Eastern Europe/former Soviet Union, respectively)\(^1\). The purpose of this support is to reduce the barriers of cooperation amongst researchers and other think tank staff members in order to stimulate collaboration and learning. Bilateral cooperation should be focused in either comparative policy research, organizational development, or a combination of the two:

1. **Comparative Policy Research**\(^2\)
   The proposed collaborative research needs to be relevant to the social and economic policy issues in the countries of the bilateral exchange. Proposals must also demonstrate the value behind comparing their specific countries, as well as the contribution to new knowledge in that policy domain.

2. **Organizational Development**\(^3\)
   Bilateral exchanges designed to examine specific operational dimensions around core think tank processes – e.g. research quality, communication, financial management, public engagement, advocacy – with the goal of learning about good practice and innovative operational models.

While the exchanges are intended to support think tank collaboration in both comparative research and organizational development, the peer exchanges program should seek to incentivise a balanced distribution between these two kinds of collaboration, and encourage proposals that include both dimensions where possible.

TTI and TTF will channel funds through an intermediary organization, or “hub”, which will be responsible for the management of this process, including the application and selection process; logistical arrangements; program monitoring and evaluation; and final reporting. Between August 2013 and June 2014, approximately eight exchanges are envisioned during this pilot project as think tanks supported by both programs have expressed interest in such bilateral peer exchange.

Design Guidelines

Identifying appropriate and fruitful matches between participating think tanks will be of the utmost importance for this initiative. Think tanks must be clear about their intentions and interests for engaging in the partnership, and have common expectations for what results they wish to see emerge. There are two main options available to ensure productive matches:

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\(^1\) The opportunity for bilateral exchange is open for think tanks in all countries. TTI and TTF would, however, like to encourage interregional exchanges, spread out evenly across regions.

\(^2\) TTI/TTF will provide a list of suggested focus areas to encourage research with relevance to its community of think tanks and their respective countries.

\(^3\) Organizations will be expected to demonstrate the value added of long-distance sharing as opposed to learning from neighboring countries / countries in their respective regions.
1. **Participating think tanks self-select into partnerships for peer exchanges**

Think tanks in Africa/Latin America/South Asia and Eastern Europe/former Soviet Union would work together to submit a joint proposal for peer exchange. TTI/TTF and the intermediary may wish to set up an online platform that would allow eligible think tanks to connect and discover common interests/activities before submitting a proposal.

2. **Participating think tanks submit individual proposals and are matched by the intermediary depending on the needs/activities to be undertaken**

TTI, TTF, and the intermediary organization or hub may assist think tanks in the identification of appropriate partners where those matches are not easily detectable by the participating think tanks. In this instance, it would be permissible for think tanks to submit individual proposals outlining their interest in engaging in a peer exchange, and the specific issue that they wish to address. Individual proposals may then also be circulated to other think tanks by the hub, or posted on in an online forum that would allow for additional exposure and the identification of appropriate matches.

Alternatively, a mix of these two options may be envisioned.

In all cases, successful applicants will clearly identify the validity and impact of cooperation in addressing a particular issue through the peer exchange mechanism. In some cases, the hub could also advise the participating organizations on the best possible format of the exchanges. If necessary, the hub will also assist the design of the exchanges to maximize the benefits for all parties involved.

Even though the management of this program will be channelled through a hub, TTI and TTF need to remain engaged at critical junctures, without intervening in operational functions. This engagement can be structured through a steering or advisory group.

**Hub Requirements**

The bidders will be requested to submit proposals and accompanying budget. Each proposal should contain the following elements:

- Design of the future hub (online and/or offline)
- Strategy for communication, including announcement and promotion of the peer exchanges to think tanks in eligible countries
- Range of exchange methods that the hub will encourage/promote for participating think tanks
- Elaborated criteria for selection of the exchanges
- Plan for managing, monitoring and reporting the exchanges
- Any other elements suggested by the bidder
- A proposed budget, not exceeding USD 300,000 for the pilot period of 10 months

**Criteria for selection of the hub**

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4 TTI and TTF do not prescribe or limit the format of exchanges that can be in person or virtual. Examples include visits of individual researchers or group visits, organization of joint events or conferences, carrying out comparative studies etc.

5 These criteria will be treated as a recommendation. Final criteria will be agreed with TTI and TTF.
• Quality of the design and strategy for communication (40% of total grade)
• Innovation and appropriateness of the exchange methods, overall innovation (30%)
• Suggested criteria for selection (10%)
• Price (20%)

**Deadline for submissions**
TTI and TTF are contacting six potential bidders. We expect all bids to be submitted by August 2. Inquiries are allowed until July 26. The successful bidder will be selected by August 16. All bidders will be duly notified by August 21.

For any questions, please contact Zsofia Revay (zsofia.revay@opensocietyfoundations.org) or Goran Buldioski (goran.buldioski@opensocietyfoundations.org).