

# YOUTH ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION INITIATIVE

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## REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

In collaboration with The MasterCard Foundation, the Talloires Network is pleased to announce a request for Expressions of Interest for the new Youth Economic Participation Initiative (YEPI). This \$5.9 million initiative aims to address the global crisis in youth unemployment by supporting the efforts of universities in developing countries to develop and test innovative university-led models that enable upper-year university students and recent alumni to accelerate their transition to the work force.

The application process will be conducted in two stages. Interested applicants are invited to submit short Expressions of Interest outlining their proposed program on or before **December 10, 2012**.

In January 2013, the Talloires Network will invite 16 to 20 finalists to submit full proposals for a Demonstration Grant. Full proposals will be due in March 2013. The Talloires Network will announce awards in June 2013. Demonstration Grant Program implementation is expected to begin in July 2013. Prospective applicants that are not yet members of the Talloires Network may apply simultaneously for membership in the network. A full description of how to apply for membership can be found at <http://talloiresnetwork.tufts.edu/benefits-of-membership/how-to-join>. There is no financial obligation required to join.

**Talloires Network and The MasterCard Foundation**

**Youth Economic Participation Initiative  
Demonstration Grant Awards**

Number of Grants: 6 – 8

Size of Awards: \$350,000 to \$465,000 USD

Duration of Grant Award: 3 years (July 2013 – June 2016)

**Deadline for submitting Expressions of Interest: **December 10, 2012****

## **The Talloires Network**

The Talloires Network is a coalition of universities – 250 institutions in 62 countries enrolling over 6 million students – that are moving beyond the ivory tower to tackle pressing societal problems. The Network is the primary global alliance committed to strengthening the civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education. It mobilizes its members to improve community conditions and, in the process, to educate students to be leaders for change. Our vision is that a decisive majority of universities worldwide collaborate actively with the communities where they are located; that institutions of higher education become dramatically more effective engines of social and economic development; that they systematically partner with NGOs, government agencies and private businesses; and that the gold standard in higher education is the “engaged university,” one that achieves both positive community impacts and academic excellence. Please visit <http://talloiresnetwork.tufts.edu/> for more information.

## **The Youth Economic Participation Initiative**

The Youth Economic Participation Initiative (YEPI) aims to elevate the role of higher education institutions in increasing economic participation among educated youth in economically developing countries. The Talloires Network will award six to eight Demonstration Grants of \$350,000 to \$465,000 each to universities in the following regions: West Africa, Southern Africa, Eastern Africa, North Africa, South Asia, South East Asia, Central Asia, Latin America.

Competitive programs will be innovative, effective and collaborative efforts that draw on the expertise of universities in the above regions to prepare upper year university students to become successful employees and entrepreneurs in their communities.

YEPI will enable the most exemplary of these programs to document and share learning, strengthen their work, and expand the scope of their efforts to engage a greater number of students and employers. We expect that this will result in higher, more sustainable youth participation in the economy and greater ties between universities and the private sector. Demonstration Grant recipient universities will participate in a global community of practice, engaging with the Talloires Network, other demonstration grant recipients, and universities around the globe to share experiences, exchange best practices, and disseminate learning.

## **Universities and the Youth Employment Crisis**

Across the world, generations of educated young people are unable to obtain employment that matches their skills, or to create new economic enterprises that match the number of job opportunities that are needed. Youth in developing economies have faced particularly high and persistent levels of unemployment, underemployment or working poverty. Moreover, a recent rise in access to higher education in many of these countries has too often failed to translate into greater access to professional employment opportunities. The consequences of this exclusion from the economy are severe and long lasting.

At the same time, the barriers to entrepreneurship remain extraordinarily high and companies in many developing economies continue to report difficulties recruiting young employees that meet their human resources needs. Not only are high numbers of educated youth unemployed, they are frequently unable to access the positions that are available. It is this disconnect between higher education and the human resource needs of the economy that the Youth Economic Participation Initiative aims to address.

The Talloires Network believes that universities hold an important responsibility to address this great youth employment challenge. **Strategically changing how institutions of higher education educate and engage their students can improve the ability of educated young people to participate in their economies through employment or entrepreneurship.**

Prior to developing the Youth Economic Participation Initiative, the Talloires Network conducted an outreach effort to better understand the strengths and gaps in the ways universities are currently preparing their students for employment. Across the world several themes emerged:

- 1) Employers noted a pervasive lack of ‘soft’ skills among university-educated youth. Even where technically proficient, too many students lack the day-to-day skills necessary to thrive in a globalized workplace. Skills such as communication, team work, leadership, critical thinking, public speaking, and negotiation are highly sought-after.
- 2) Students frequently lack the financial means and social connections necessary to access the opportunities that will allow them to begin or advance their careers.
- 3) In many areas, there is a significant disjuncture between the university curriculum and the knowledge and skills needs of the market.
- 4) Young entrepreneurs face significant, complex and highly context-specific obstacles to starting their own businesses.
- 5) Extensive collaboration with local community groups is a major ingredient in many successful university efforts to strengthen youth economic participation.
- 6) The community engagement experiences that prepare students to become responsible, active members of their community also confer many of the skills and resources required to become successful participants in the economy.

The Youth Economic Participation Initiative will prioritize demonstration projects that address the above themes. The strongest applications are expected to address multiple themes in an integrated way, although programs that make a compelling, evidence-based case for addressing other aspects of the youth economic participation crisis will also be considered.

## **Eligibility:**

The Talloires Network will award Demonstration Grants to programs run by universities or groups of universities (such as regional networks) in the following regions: West Africa, Southern Africa, Eastern Africa, North Africa, South Asia, South East Asia, Central Asia, Latin America. Programs should target university-educated youth who are currently studying in their third or fourth years of university or who have left the university (through graduation or attrition) within the past two years.

Programs must be housed administratively within Talloires Network member institutions or affiliated networks of universities located in the above regions. Programs at universities that are not yet members of the Talloires Network may apply simultaneously for membership in the network. See <http://talloiresnetwork.tufts.edu/benefits-of-membership/how-to-join>.

Universities are highly encouraged to apply collaboratively with local community, private sector or government partners. The Youth Economic Participation Initiative seeks to fund dynamic, effective partnerships between universities and communities. All applicant programs should be able to demonstrate strong, sustained, and mutually beneficial working ties with the communities in which they are located.

When applying with partner organizations, a single university should act as the main administrative seat for the proposed program and lead the application process. When applying as a group of universities, a single university or network secretariat should take primary responsibility for the program administration and application.

YEPI will exclusively fund established programs that can demonstrate at least one year of experience implementing the proposed program, documented learning and programmatic innovation, and evidence of success. The full proposal will require applicants to provide evidence of methods of defining, monitoring and evaluating program success.

Pilot programs, or any program less than one year old, will not be considered for demonstration grant funding.

## **Application Process**

The application process will be conducted in two stages.

- 1) Expressions of Interest. Due December 10, 2012.

Applicants are invited to submit short Expressions of Interest outlining their proposed program. Please follow the guidelines outlined in the attached application.

- 2) Request for Proposals. Due March 2013.

In January 2013, 16 – 20 finalists will be invited to submit full proposals.

The Talloires Network will announce awards in June 2013. Demonstration Grant Program implementation is expected to begin in July 2013.

## **Selection Criteria**

### *Strength of Program Design*

Competitive programs will draw on the full resources of the university (including strong interdepartmental collaboration) to design programs that are based on a thorough and nuanced understanding of the local labor market and the reasons for youth unemployment. The scoring will prioritize *demand-driven* programs that clearly connect proposed programmatic objectives and activities with a well-researched analysis of the skill requirements of the economy and the wider socio-economic context.

Expressions of Interest will be further evaluated according to the clarity and specificity of program goals, objectives and activities; the clarity and persuasiveness of the theory of change; the adequacy and quality of the budget; the thoroughness of gender analysis; and the strength of attention to ensuring gender equity in program planning and activities.

### *Institutional Commitment and Capabilities:*

Competitive programs will have the full institutional support of university leadership, including the president, vice chancellor or CEO of their university. Applicants must further be able to demonstrate a sufficient level of institutional capacity to make any institutional changes that will be required in order to successfully implement the proposed program. Finalist applicants must submit a letter of support from their university president or equivalent with the full proposal.

Host institutions are expected to make a tangible commitment to the program, as evidenced by monetary support or the contribution of significant in-kind resources, equal to roughly 5 – 10% of the total proposed program cost. Examples of in-kind resources include staff time, office space, institutional administrative support, and faculty advising. Proposed programs will be evaluated according to both the volume and potential efficacy of the donated resources in relation to the needs of the program.

Implementing departments or teams should have a demonstrated track record of success in developing and managing programs. Expressions of Interest will additionally be evaluated according to the capabilities of project leaders; reasonably equitable representation of gender among project leaders and staff; and strength of the university's mechanisms for implementing the proposed programs.

### *Partnerships, Collaboration with the Community*

Universities are highly encouraged to apply collaboratively with local community, private sector or government partners in the implementation of their programs. Expressions of Interest will be evaluated according to the centrality of community-university collaboration to the strategies and activities of the proposed program; the strength of working relationships with employers, community organizations, NGOs and government agencies; the clear and efficient delineation of roles and responsibilities between partners; and the involvement of partner organizations in program planning.

### *Youth Participation*

Applicant universities must involve youth in the process of planning, implementing and evaluating the proposed programs. Program designs should include substantial inclusion of youth in both program implementation and decision-making roles. Expressions of interest will be evaluated according to the accuracy and depth of analysis of the realities of young people's lives, experience and potential; the degree and range of involvement of youth in decision-making; and the creativity and innovativeness of strategies to involve youth.

### **Resources and Contact Information**

Please see <http://talloiresnetwork.tufts.edu/yepi> for information about the Youth Economic Participation Initiative and additional resources. We look forward to receiving your comments and questions at [yepi@tufts.edu](mailto:yepi@tufts.edu).

### **How to submit:**

Please send your completed EOI Application and associated documents as attachments (in Word, PDF, or Excel format, as applicable) to [yepi@tufts.edu](mailto:yepi@tufts.edu).