

Sustainable Mekong Research Network (SUMERNET) SUMERNET 4 All Call for Concept Notes

Collaborative Research for Policy and Practice grants for Mekong Region researchers

SUMERNET announces a call for concept notes for its research grants for 2019. Total fund available in this round is 12,000,000 SEK for 12 research projects with the budget not more than **1,000,000 SEK per project** (approximately **US\$ 107,000 per project**).

Submission deadline: 23:59, 15th May 2019 (Bangkok local time)

Accepting only online submission only at <https://sei.submittable.com/submit/137732/sumernet-4-all-call-for-collaborative-research-for-policy-and-practice>

Be part of research for policy and practice that makes a difference to all

SUMERNET 4 All is a knowledge-based policy research programme. The programme wants to support research projects that focus on **reducing water insecurity for all in particular for the poor, marginalized and socially vulnerable groups of women and men in the Mekong Region**. Within this focus are three themes:

- 1. water access, rights and allocation in times of water insecurity;**
- 2. governance and management of water-related disaster risks;**
- 3. transboundary interactions with water systems.**

SUMERNET provides financial support and technical assistance to consortia of researchers and practitioners from the Mekong Region together with the possible involvement of other Southeast Asian country partners. Consortia will carry out policy-relevant research over 2.0-2.5 years (24-30 months) in one of the above research themes.

SUMERNET will fund collaborative research and other innovative approaches that directly address policy settings and issues to meet programme goals. SUMERNET 4 All has a mission to “improve the policies and practices in reducing water insecurity by conducting collaborative research, engaging in the policy process, and promoting scientifically sound research and innovation while considering gender and social equality, human rights, conflict sensitivity, environmental integrity and poverty reduction in the Mekong Region.”

Further information on SUMERNET 4 All mission, themes, strategies and activities can be found on the [SEI website](#) and [SUMERNET website](#).

Research granting process

There are two stages to proposal submission:

- 1. Concept note:** Applicants must first submit a concept note (see below for details). The concept notes will be reviewed by SUMERNET advisors, SUMERNET Secretariat and other concerned regional experts and approved by the SUMERNET Steering Committee. **Applicants need to submit concept notes online at this link:** <https://sei.submittable.com/submit/137732/sumernet-4-all-call-for-collaborative-research-for-policy-and-practice> (registration required).

- 2. Full proposal:** Those consortia (about 12 teams) whose concept notes have been shortlisted will be invited to submit draft full proposals. Full proposals will be developed at the proposal development workshop (tentatively planned during August 2019 in Bangkok) to ensure they meet SUMERNET standards, such as ethics, academic freedom, equity etc. All full proposals will be reviewed by full proposal reviewing committees consisting of the SUMERNET advisors, Secretariat and other regional experts in relevant files. The full proposals that meet the expectations of the reviewing committees will be funded after an approval by the SUMERNET Steering Committee. SUMERNET team reserves a right to decline to any full proposal(s) that does not meet the minimum requirements set by the reviewing committee.

Concept note selection criteria

The following criteria, both required and desirable, will be used to evaluate research concept notes.

Required criteria

1. *Original research*

Research outputs must be compelling for both policy and academic audiences, so concept notes must explain how **the project will lead to original and significant scholarly results that address the issue of water insecurity**. The research outputs should specifically identify which of the three themes the research will contribute knowledge towards.

2. *Research topic of regional significance*

Concept notes should **clearly indicate where links to regional priorities exist**, and how the project will build on them. **Each project is expected to align clearly with one theme** as well as address at least one of the following: **gender and social equality, human rights, conflict sensitivity, governance and poverty reduction**.

In addition, the proposal must explicitly identify the core **Sustainable Development Goals as found in Agenda 2030** that the research seeks to address.

3. *Collaborative project design*

SUMERNET considers collaborative project design a critical success factor. Collaborative design is, engagement and sharing of decision making with stakeholders; potential beneficiaries and boundary partners¹. Grant recipients are expected to **engage stakeholders throughout the project cycle, including project identification and preparation stages and include a policy champion in the project team to create meaningful dialogue with end user groups throughout the project**.

Each project must include **a minimum of two organizations, agencies, institutions, with lead applicant being a member of the SUMERNET network**. If the lead applicant hasn't yet become the member of SUMERNET, please register at [this link](#).

¹ Boundary partners are those individuals, groups, or organizations with whom the project interacts directly and with whom the programme can anticipate opportunities for influence.

The geographic spread of every project should cover **two or more countries, of which at least two are from the Mekong Region with at least two study areas in two Mekong countries**. Organizations from Southeast Asian countries outside the Mekong Region can join a consortium if they contribute to capacity building of organizations in the Mekong Region and if project activities focus on the Mekong Region.

4. Inclusive multi-disciplinary approach

The multi-disciplinary research approach is one that directly takes multiple disciplines into its design and addresses issues of gender and social equality, social justice, conflict sensitivity, governance and poverty reduction. Projects should have at least **1-2 research questions dedicated to gender and social equality dimensions and policy action/ practice²** as well as **specifically engaging with women's organizations and key regional stakeholders**. In addition, the multi-disciplinary team needs to include young researchers and women researchers. Marginalised or vulnerable groups are target beneficiaries of the project.

5. Policy impact

Each project application should clearly identify a policy champion – this organization or institution will be involved in the research process and will have the capacity to implement outcomes from the research. Each grant application will **state what policy and planning outcomes will be achieved or how the research will positively impact policy and planning processes at local, subnational, national or regional levels**. Applicants should consult policy makers or planners when writing the concept note, while full proposals must contain an analysis of the policy and planning process that the research is intended to contribute to.

6. Research management capabilities

Each consortium will have **an administrative lead institution with whom the contract will be signed** and that will be responsible for the administration of the project and budget. This institution will be expected to have a proven capability to manage research projects, including ones involving more than one organization.

7. Financial leverage and cost-effectiveness

It is expected that research **grant recipients will leverage co-funding, either cash or in-kind**, from national or regional level sources or other related projects. While co-funding is not a precondition for the submission of a concept note, the evaluation process will consider cost-effectiveness through leveraging funds. Applicants should state tentative co-funding amounts, sources, whether secured or unsecured, and how co-funding will make the research cost-effective.

8. Capacity building

Each project should include at least:

- 1 female researcher with leadership capacity and project authority;
- 1-2 graduate students or post-doctoral researchers;
- gender and social equity advisor;

² A useful source is the post on the Funds for NGOs site: <http://www.fundsforngos.org/writing-gender-into-proposals/writing-gender-into-proposals/>. Integrating a gender perspective, however, should not preclude applications that position gender as a central focus in investigating any of the three research themes above.

- have a clear plan to help bridge knowledge and fill in capacity gaps among the project members from different organizations and countries, as well as from different levels of experience.

9. Project outputs

Apart from various reports to update on the progress and achievements, the project should produce at least two peer-reviewed papers in reputable publications, one policy brief (in English for later translation to local languages), and any one of the below media outreach product that shows dissemination of the research to the wider public: press release, article for newspapers, blogs, vlogs, podcast, TV news interview of one of the researchers, or a short film (2-3 mins.).

Desirable criteria

The following criteria are strongly encouraged but are not required.

10. Private sector engagement

Projects that integrate a private sector perspective or partner will be considered favourably. Especially if this is linked to on-going impact in the region.

11. Inclusion of partners from China

SUMERNET is unable to fund organizations from China directly due to conditions of the financial supporter, but would strongly encourage the project to collaborate with China by seeking additional funding from China or other sources.

Concept note short-listing and proposal selection process

The key dates (based on Bangkok local time) in the process are:

1. Call for concept notes – **1 April 2019**
2. Concept note submission deadline – 23:59, **15 May 2019**. Online submission link: <https://sei.submittable.com/submit/137732/sumernet-4-all-call-for-collaborative-research-for-policy-and-practice> (registration required).
3. Notification of short-listed concept notes and invitation for full proposals – **17 June 2019**
4. Final draft full proposal submission – **12 July 2019**
5. Workshops for capacity building, full proposal development and performance assessment framework for short-listed consortia – **August 2019** (The project leader and another representative of shortlisted teams must participate in these activities in these workshops).
6. Completed full proposal submission – **13 September 2019**
7. Evaluation and selection of full proposals and grantee contract completion – **September 2019**

Note: For full proposals, a separate guidelines and selection criteria will be made available to the short-listed consortia when they are notified of successful selection.

Concept note format

Concept notes should not exceed **2,500 words**, excluding the title section, budget, and appendices.

⚠ **Please use the template for your concept note submission keeping all headings.** Kindly use font Times New Roman, size 12 to fill in the sections. The template (in word docx format) is available for download at this link: <https://www.sei.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/02-template-for-concept-notes-sumernet-4all.docx>

⚠ **Please also fill in the selection criteria checklist** to ensure that you've addressed all criteria. The link to the checklist is <https://www.sei.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/03-selection-criteria-checklist-sumernet-4all.docx>

⚠ All submissions are to be sent online **by the deadline of 23:59, 15th May 2019 (Bangkok local time)** to **online submission link:** <https://sei.submittable.com/submit/137732/sumernet-4-all-call-for-collaborative-research-for-policy-and-practice> (registration required). **Only online submission will be accepted, email entries will not be accepted.**

For further information or any clarifications, kindly contact SUMERNET Secretariat, Mr. Agus Nugroho (agus.nugroho@sei.org) and Ms. Unchulee Lualon (unchulee.lualon@sei.org).