SCIENCE FOR AFRICA
FOUNDATION

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Job Profile

Programme Manager
Mental Health Initiative (BEING)

July 2023

ORGANISATION OVERVIEW

The Science for Africa Foundation (SFA Foundation) is a non-profit, public charity organisation that supports strengthens and promotes science innovation in Africa. The goal of the SFA Foundation is to address the continent's most pressing developmental needs by generating scientific knowledge that solves problems and informs decision-making.

We serve the African research ecosystem by funding excellent research and innovation ideas; enabling interdisciplinary collaboration among researchers, building and reinforcing environments that are conducive for scientists to thrive and produce quality research that generates new, locally relevant knowledge.

The SFA Foundation takes a holistic approach to the development of science. Our programmatic initiatives are crafted to cater to the entire science ecosystem and span across the value chain from early discovery sciences to translation sciences and target cross-cutting gaps.

Our commitment to strengthening the entire research ecosystem is reflected in the creation of major science and innovation programmes implemented through a well-established grant-making scheme, advocacy and promotion of scientific excellence, emphasis on intra-Africa collaboration and evidence-based policy-making mechanisms.

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SFA Foundation's Mental Health Programme Overview

The new mental health research programme is an innovative initiative aimed at revolutionising the African and global mental health sector by building research capacity and creating innovative solutions to improve mental health and wellbeing. The programme is focused on finding innovative, practical, and sustainable solutions to some of the major challenges that individuals and communities face in their mental health journeys.

The programme will engage world-class researchers, innovators, indigenous knowledge experts, young people, and other disenfranchised populations who are impacted and passionate about mental health and have a wealth of cutting-edge experience and lived experiences in the field. These stakeholders are committed to conducting cutting-edge research, designing, implementing, and participating in projects and programmes that will advance our understanding of the underlying causes of mental health disorders and ultimately lead to better prevention and treatment strategies.

One of the key objectives of the mental health programme is to forge new partnerships with stakeholders in the mental health sector, including policymakers, service providers, and patient groups. This approach ensures that research findings are informed by real-world needs and can be translated into practical solutions that address the challenges faced by those affected by mental health issues.

The mental health programme is also committed to developing the next generation of mental health researchers and research leaders by providing training and mentorship opportunities to early-career researchers, and building enabling environments for quality mental health research and interventions. This will serve as a stepping stone for the mental health research field's future leaders on the continent, who will build on the programme's foundations to develop novel solutions to improve mental health and wellbeing.

The mental health programme's ultimate goal is to create a world where mental health is treated with the same importance as physical health, ensuring that everyone can access the resources and support they need to lead happy and fulfilling lives.

Background to the Project

Mental Health Project (christened BEING) is an international mental health initiative working with young people (aged 10 to 24) in low- and middle-income countries to improve their mental well-being through research and innovative youth-focused approaches to create positive, lasting change in local communities and beyond.

The Being initiative, launched in October 2022, aims to influence positive systems-level change for young people's mental health through evidence-based and inclusive approaches. The initiative is based on the recognition that it's vital to support local innovators that are closest to the health challenges being addressed, to leverage the power of diverse partnerships among the public, private and nonprofit sectors, and to engage with young people whose experiences and perspectives can help drive and create the agenda.

A key element of the BEING initiative is to design and implement a research funding call to better understand and estimate the long-term impacts of emerging stressors (e.g., climate change, epidemics/pandemic challenges, urbanization, emergency situations) on young people's mental health and well-being. SFA Foundation will partner with Grand Challenges Canada to lead and manage this funding call. Activities will include, conducting a research prioritisation process, launching an RFP, selecting, negotiating, and managing grants and supporting research teams or consortia based in LMICs with the necessary technical assistance to carry out this work.

Broadly, SFA Foundation will oversee the funding and ongoing management of 3-5 regional, longitudinal, cohort-based research studies with a focus on regions covering the following countries of interest: Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Morocco, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Vietnam. Research projects selected from funding should seek to inform programme implementation and policy.

Broad Role Perspective

The position will manage and oversee the implementation of the Mental Health BEING initiative. He/she will be responsible for designing, managing and implementing the SFA Foundation programmatic work plan to support mental health research and research communication, including strategic management and implementation of capacity development, R&D priorities for mental health/ BEING initiative, and to support research fellows and partner institutions to deliver the milestones outlined in the SFA institutional and programmatic level strategies for optimum delivery.

Principal Duties & Responsibilities

Management

- Manage the day-to-day operations of the programme portfolio assigned by overseeing the planning and implementation of impactful programmes, working closely across teams to ensure set requirements are met.
- Develop and manage programmatic activities for Programme in consultation with CSO and in line with budgetary guidelines to achieve the set mandate.
- Propose long and short-term objectives for the initiative aligned to building human capacity, infrastructure and lasting research networks on the continent.
- Manage the Programme budget in liaison with the Finance team to ensure efficient utilization of funds, smooth operational flow, and, maximizing the scope and magnitude of the short and long-term programme goals.
- Contribute to the overall development of the SFA Foundation mental health programme strategy and initiatives, including actively identifying opportunities for collaboration with other programme areas.
- Work as part of the management team to share ideas and improve operations, recommending, supporting and implementing continuous improvement activities and process and procedure improvements to optimise results and improve the quality of programme delivery.
- Mentor and coach staff to build their capacity to perform their assigned roles. Set performance expectations and conduct performance management evaluations in a timely manner to ensure superior levels of performance are maintained.
- Provide career guidance and avail learning opportunities and assignments to enhance engagement and career progression for programme staff.

Principal Duties & Responsibilities

Grants Management

- Manage programme grants and activities as the point person for the programme, engaging with applicants, grantees and partners including providing guidance and feedback on inquiries.
- Manage operations surrounding the entire process of grant management for the programme in collaboration with the Grants Officer. Ensure adherence to the call standards during the application, review, shortlisting and grant awarding process.
- Oversee the grant scheme development by highlighting key funder requirements at the proposal development stage and aim to improve knowledge and access to this information for grant applicants. This is through webinars, information sessions, workshops etc.
- Conduct due diligence of potential applicants and applicant institutions. This involves desktop reviews and physical site visits to potential applicant institutions and the preparation of reports or recommendations which inform specific grant terms and conditions for successful grant applicants. Manage the grant award processes by providing and monitoring systems, processes and procedures to ensure fairness and openness in awarding grants to applicants.

Monitoring and Reporting

- Manage the performance of the programme team in partnership with the Monitoring and Evaluation Manager by setting measurable performance indicators to ensure projects are executed in line with the contract and within agreed timelines.
- Develop monitoring reports for funders developed by the fundraising and programmes teams. Develop and disseminate monthly programme highlight reports for the management, staff and committees as necessary.
- Communicate with senior management on programme status, risks and issues appropriately and timely.
- Ensure regular and timely communication between project team members.
- Review, implement and update programme records e.g. training matrices, performance reviews, risk assessments.

Advocacy and Relationship Management

- Forge collaborations with science-based communities which share the same vision as the Programme and the SFA Foundation at large within the African continent and globally to build a sustainable programme.
- Engage in discussions with institutions of similar elements which can help promote the vision of the programme through activities that foster added value and future potential initiatives.
- Identify gaps that can be filled by the Foundation's portfolio of activities that will promote the growth and sustainability of the SFA Foundation and the programme and ensure the Foundation's services are made relevant to the continent.
- Provide technical support and expertise to the review panels in other programmes by participating in the review of the grant application process.
- Participate in occasional cross-functional meetings to support other departments in achieving their mandate including representing SFA Foundation in consortium meetings.
- Ensure the values of participation, partnership, sustainability, social responsibility, cost-effectiveness, transparency and accountability are reflected in your work.
- Attend external meetings as a representative of the SFA Foundation as assigned.

Academic Qualifications

- A Master's/PhD degree in the Science research and interventions of mental health field obtained over the past 7 years with a good track record that bridges mental health R&D with clinical practice e.g. Masters/PhD in Psychiatry, Psychology or related fields
- Or a Medical Doctor with proven research leadership qualities in mental health R&D and/or clinical experience in carrying out key research work for priority mental health agendas (Psychiatry, Psychologists, General Practitioner with experience working with mental health patients etc).

Professional Qualifications & Experience

- The person should also demonstrate experience in programme/project level experience and expertise in a large scientific/hospital or related programmes.

- Understanding the mental health challenges that bedevil and debilitate all people in Africa and in global settings - and for Africa.
- Expertise and knowledge of specifically for Africa and other LMICs, an understanding of the mental health infrastructure (status and lack of), that are hindering progress towards addressing comprehensively mental health challenges, and the role of policymakers and communities in delivering this vision.
- Understanding mental health challenges for all people, particularly for young people. These include depression, anxiety, and psychosis including but not limited to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD etc, which can have a significant impact on all aspects of a person's life. This must also include an understanding of both the contextual mental health challenges that can emerge from biological make-up (neurosciences, genetics etc.) and external challenges such as social behaviour, climate impacts on livelihoods, family level conflicts, systemic conflict/humanitarian/refugees' crisis, limited mental health access and care and other related areas.

HOW TO APPLY

SFA Foundation has a commitment to safeguarding people and our environment and this forms part of our background checks.

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