



**GUIDEBOOK ON ARIN'S EVIDENCE-
INFORMED FELLOWSHIP MINI-
GRANTS**

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1. About ARIN

The Africa Research and Impact Network is an international think tank comprised of over 200 researchers and policymakers, with a significant portion (30%) being policymakers holding National Focal Points across 36 African countries.

ARIN fosters a dynamic environment where researchers, policymakers, and practitioners working across Africa can exchange knowledge and expertise. The network operates by gathering evidence from diverse African contexts. This rich pool of information is then strategically leveraged to inform policy development, capacity building initiatives, and ultimately, achieve impactful results. ARIN further promotes research excellence by facilitating the sharing of best practices, ensuring that African research is both rigorous and drives positive change.

ARIN leverages its deep well of experience in generating and consolidating evidence on effective interventions across Africa's most critical strategic sectors and themes. Recognizing the continent's wealth of underutilized research, innovation, and best practices, ARIN fosters a unique platform for the science-policy interface. This platform bridges the gap by facilitating the sharing, profiling, and leveraging of the best research and impactful practices from diverse African contexts. Through this peer-to-peer exchange, ARIN empowers stakeholders to inform transformative policy action across the continent. Recruitment of ARIN fellows is conducted every two years.

1.1. Our Vision

Our vision is to be the catalyst for an Africa where research excellence fuels transformative policy and sustainable development.

1.2. Our Mission

The Africa Research and Impact Network (ARIN) is dedicated to promoting research excellence and fostering dialogue on best practices in research and achieving impactful results. ARIN achieves this by building a robust science-policy interface in Africa, grounded in a foundation of evidence-based approaches.

1.3. Our Focus

ARIN's thematic focus aligns strategically with the key development priorities identified by African countries within Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and other relevant frameworks (see **Figure 1**). While these thematic areas may vary slightly in terms of prioritization by country, ARIN remains committed to addressing critical development frontiers across the continent.



Figure 1: Thematic Areas and the Crosscutting Analytical Approaches

1.4. Organization Structure of the ARIN

ARIN comprises an Advisory Committee, the Secretariat, and regional focal points with affiliated researchers and policymakers.

- a) **Advisory Board:** Comprises individuals with enormous experience and expertise as well as networks in the key areas of ARIN focus. The experts are drawn from academia/ think tanks, policy/government, private sector, and donors. The Board will be responsible for providing strategic advice and direction for the network. Members of the Board shall not exceed seven (7) in number and are drawn from both Africa and abroad. Currently, the ARIN Regional Focal Points constitute the Interim Advisory Board.
- b) **The Secretariat:** This is the centre from where activities are coordinated and facilitated. The Secretariat is headed by the Network Convenor. The Secretariat also has a Research Manager in charge of administrative activities including financial management and communication. The Secretariat has four (4) strategic advisors (Thematic Heads) on the various strategic thematic areas. There are also several research associates aligned to the different thematic areas and supporting the delivery of specific projects. The Secretariat also includes a finance and administration officer responsible for supporting administration, communication, and financial management. The Secretariat is currently

based in Nairobi and has just settled in the new office at the ACK Gardens, Upper-Hill, 1st Floor Nairobi.

- c) **ARIN Regional Focal Points:** There are four regional focal points (RFPs) representing the Eastern, Southern, Western, and Central Africa/Francophone and one (1) diaspora link. The RFPs are the links to the continental Secretariat and are expected to lead regional recruitment of competent fellows in addition to convening regional research dialogues that feed into the continental dialogues. The RFPs are also the technical leaders mandated to develop regional research positions and engagements at the continental network. In addition, they will be expected to lead the fundraising and consultancy assignments in relevant countries. The RFPs are provided with framework contracts that enables them to pursue various research activities/projects under the ARIN and also represent ARIN perspectives globally.
- d) **ARIN Country Focal Points (CFPs):** These include key research and/or policy fellows that represent specific countries in the ARIN network and partnerships. The CFPs are responsible for working with the ARIN fellows – in the respective countries to map country positions, best practices, emerging knowledge areas on various topical areas of interest and feeding into the regional and continental perspectives respectively.
- e) **ARIN Fellows:** These include talented ARIN Research Fellows (ARFs) and ARIN Policy Fellows (APFs) recruited from each of the four ARIN focal regions drawn from various countries within a region. The Fellows are experts and technocrats in various thematic areas and will be recruited into the RFPs following a formal competitive process. The fellows built on demonstrated research excellence and evidence-based policy thinking and engages in periodic/regular intellectual discussions and research/policy reviews both within their respective regions. The fellows also engage in fundraising and implementation of research projects under the Network, providing expert base for effective delivery of empirical research.

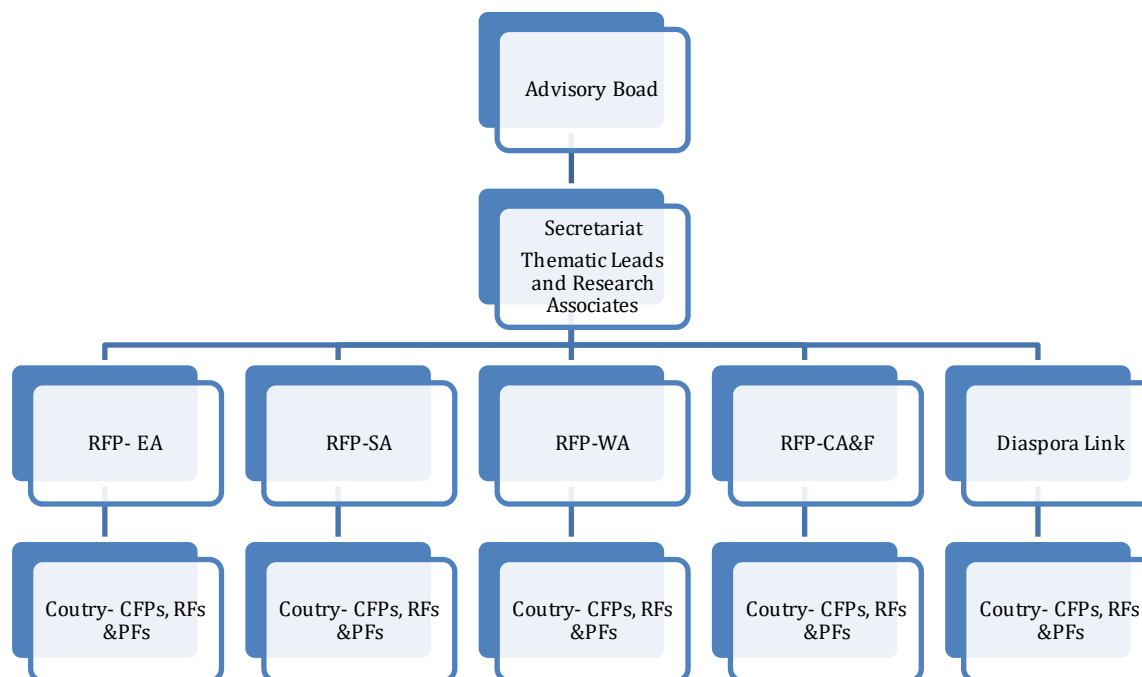


Figure 1: ARIN Organogram

2. About the Mini-grants

2.1. Background and rationale

There is a broad consensus that an evidence-informed development agenda is essential for achieving long-term, inclusive development growth in Africa. This is reflected in both Agenda 2063 and the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) 2024. These frameworks call on African countries to significantly increase their investment in research and development (R&D) by attaining at least 1% of their gross domestic product (GDP). This investment is crucial for building Africa's technical expertise, improving research infrastructure, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, and creating a policy environment that propels "Africa's transition to an innovation-led and evidence-informed knowledge-based economy".

Furthermore, a critical need exists for both evidence-based policymaking and the effective sharing of this evidence across diverse African contexts, overcoming the bilingual divide that can be a barrier. In response to this, recent decades have witnessed a surge in research and policy activities across various sectors, particularly in health, energy, agriculture, science and technology, and more recently, climate change. However, research efforts on the continent remain fragmented, with limited capacity retention, opportunities for in-continent learning, and inadequate networking among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. Additionally, challenges persist in publishing research and developing strong scientific leadership, as evidenced by the limited number of

African-led research outputs. Compounding these issues is that most African researchers struggle to secure sufficient domestic and international funding to generate the empirically grounded evidence necessary for practical policy decisions.

It is within this context that ARIN established the ARIN Africa Evidence-Informed Policy Fellowship program. This program brings together fellows to collaborate on generating evidence and sharing lessons learned across the continent. However, even fellows face challenges in securing opportunities and funding to pursue demand-driven empirical research.

In recognition of the persistent funding constraints faced by many talented African scholars with significant research potential, ARIN has established the ARIN Mini-grant and Mentorship Scheme. This initiative directly addresses the dearth of opportunities and budgetary limitations hindering in-depth contextual analyses across diverse African regions and countries.

2.2. Purpose of the Mini-Grants

ARIN is committed to fostering systematic and coordinated co-generation of evidence within varied African contexts. The ARIN Small Grant and Mentorship Scheme achieves this by providing small grants and facilitating mentorship among its beneficiaries. This program aims to guide researchers in collecting robust data and developing high-quality case studies. Ultimately, the goal is for these research outputs to be included in special issues or book volumes launched at the biennial ARIN Africa Research-Policy Fellows Assembly held towards the end of the year such as the one scheduled for November 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya.

2.3. Specific Objectives

- I. **To strengthen Evidence-Based Policymaking in Africa:** The mini-grants seek to focus on activities that improve the understanding of the science-policy interface, develop national expertise in evidence-based policy, and identify gaps in incorporating evidence into decision-making processes.
- II. **To cultivate a Community of Evidence Leaders:** Through the mini-grants, ARIN aims to build a cohort of African researchers and policymakers who champion evidence-based approaches and possess the skills to identify evidence needs and promote its utilization across the continent.
- III. **To enhance African Knowledge Production:** Through the mini-grants, ARIN emphasizes the program's goal of generating African-led knowledge products like book



volumes and special issues that contribute to knowledge leadership and inform development agendas aligned with Africa's strategic frameworks.

2.4. Value of the Grant

- a) ARIN will provide mini-grants of between USD2000 and USD5000 to the Fellows.
- b) A maximum of 5% of the total mini-grant amounts will be allocated for capacity building of the ARIN Secretariat members.

2.5. Implementation of the Mini-grants

Fellows will be expected to conduct self-initiated case studies focused on their home countries. These case studies should explore topical issues of critical importance and contribute significantly to the understanding of evidence-informed policymaking in Africa. The findings should not only benefit the fellow's home country but also hold broader applicability for other African nations.

3. Selection and Implementation Approach

3.1. Methodology

To gather information for their country case studies, fellows will employ a three-pronged approach, as illustrated in **Figure 1**. This methodology allows flexibility for fellows to adapt their approach based on specific contexts and data availability.

The first step involves a **desk review** of academic literature. This review will provide a foundational understanding of the situation through analysis based on pre-determined variables.

Next, fellows will conduct **exploratory surveys** to gain insights into the state of evidence on the science/research-policy interface within their respective African countries. The information gathered from these surveys will then inform the development of **targeted key informant interviews (KIIs)**. These interviews will delve deeper into the identified variables and gather strategic information.

Finally, fellows may also participate in **panel dialogues** during scheduled ARIN convenings, such as monthly meetings or the fellows' assembly.

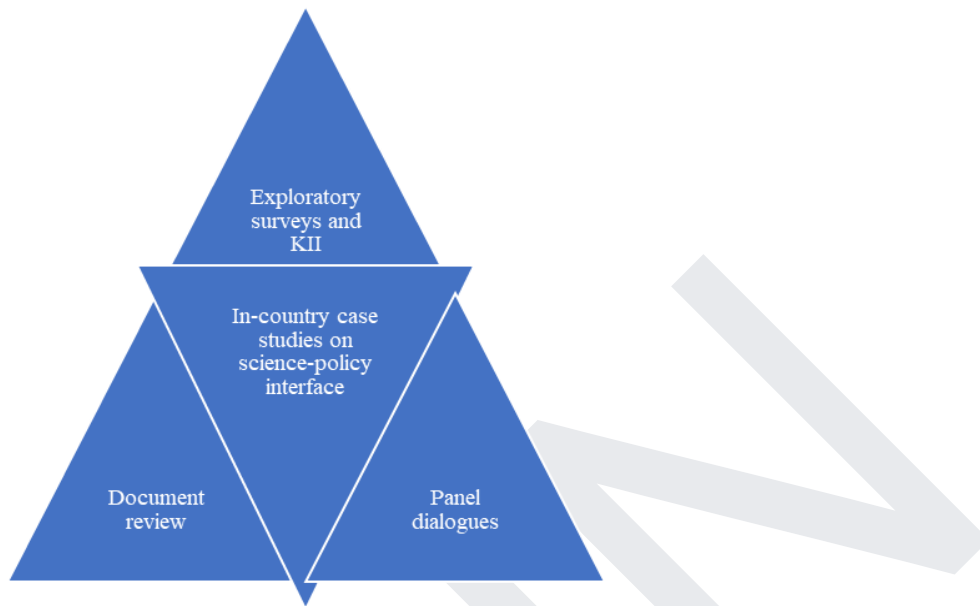


Figure 2: Research Methodology for the Mimi Grant Country Case Studies

3.2. Thematic Focus of the Mini-grants

Recognizing the critical need for evidence-based policymaking across Africa, and the importance of sharing knowledge across contexts and languages, we welcome country case studies in English and/or French. These studies should explore the need for evidence-informed policies within the broad thematic areas outlined in **Figure 1**. We are also open to proposals that address emerging issues of critical importance to Africa.

3.3. Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for an ARIN Mini-grant, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- a) **Current ARIN Fellow:** Applicants must be actively participating in the ARIN Fellowship program.
- b) **Research and/or Policy Experience:** Applicants should demonstrate experience in conducting research or working in a policy-related field.
- c) **Early Career Stage:** Applicants should be in the early stages of their research or policy careers.
- d) **Institutional Affiliation:** Applicants must be affiliated with a recognized research institution (e.g., universities, think tanks) or a relevant policy organization (e.g., government departments).



- e) **No Prior ARIN Funding:** Applicants cannot have received full or partial funding from ARIN for the same proposed project.

Selection Preference: While all applications will be considered, preference be given to researchers from the Global South.

3.4. Expected Outputs

The ARIN Mini-grant program fosters knowledge exchange and capacity building through a variety of outputs:

Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration:

- **Learning and exchange webinars:** Fellows will participate in webinars to share research findings and engage with a wider audience.
- **Research seminars:** Fellows will present their research at in-person seminars to foster discussion and collaboration.
- **Monthly convenings:** Throughout the grant period, ARIN will host monthly meetings specifically focused on the science-policy interface and the progress of fellows' case studies. These meetings will culminate in the Fellows' Assembly, where the book volume will be launched.

Capacity Building:

- **Mentorship and training:** Fellows will receive ongoing mentorship and training in scientific writing, research translation, and communication skills, equipping them to effectively communicate their findings.

Knowledge Products:

- **Book volume:** A book volume will be published, featuring in-country case studies authored by the fellows on the theme of evidence and the science-policy interface.
- **Synthesis report:** The project team will develop a synthesis report drawing on the findings from the in-country case studies. This report will be disseminated as a journal article and a policy brief.
- **Journal article and policy brief:** Disseminating the research through a scholarly journal article and a policy brief ensures the findings reach both academic and policy audiences.

Annual State of Evidence Report

3.5. Expected Outcome

Enhanced institutionalization of evidence into research and policy programmes in Africa ultimately leading to more informed and impactful policy decisions across the continent.

4. Mini-grant Management Process

4.1. Sensitization Process

ARIN will utilize various channels to raise awareness about the mini-grant opportunity, including:

- ARIN Friday Review Webinars (virtual)
- Social Media Platforms
- ARIN Website

These communication channels will inform prospective applicants about the available mini-grants, focus sectors, and research areas.

4.2. Application Process

4.2.1. Call for Applications

ARIN will announce the mini-grant opportunity through various channels, including:

- External advertisements
- Email communication to ARIN Fellows
- Online platforms (website, social media)

4.2.2. Application Requirements

Applicants will be selected through a competitive process based on the following criteria:

- **Eligibility:** Applicants must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in Section 3.3.
- **Application Materials:** A complete application package includes:
 - a) Completed Application Form
 - b) Curriculum Vitae (CV)
 - c) Verified academic documents
 - d) Academic reference letters
 - e) Research Concept Note: This document should outline the proposed research topic, methodology, and expected outcomes.
 - f) Detailed Project Budget: Specify costs associated with all project activities.



- g) Electronic copy of a representative publication where the applicant is the lead or senior author.

4.2.3. Submission and Deadline

Applications must be submitted electronically by the application deadline. Incomplete applications or applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

4.3. Evaluation Process

The ARIN selection committee, composed of regional focal points, the ARIN Executive Director, relevant program managers (Research, Policy & Engagement, Fellowship), will evaluate applications through a two-stage process:

4.3.1. Initial Screening

Applications will be initially screened for eligibility and relevance to the program's thematic focus. This screening will consider the following criteria:

- a) **Applicant Qualifications:** Academic credentials, quality of publications, and experience relevant to the proposed research project.
- b) **Potential Impact:** The potential of the proposed project to contribute to scientific knowledge, policy development, and real-world impact (e.g., potential for recognition through awards).

4.3.2. In-depth Evaluation/Merit Review

A shortlist of qualified applicants will be selected for further evaluation based on:

- Applicant Motivation
- Concept Relevance
- Research-Policy Experience

4.3.3. Interviews and Selection

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to participate in virtual or in-person interviews with a panel comprising the ARIN Executive Director, Fellowship Manager, Research Manager, and Finance & Human Resource Manager. Interview performance will be used to rank the applicants.

4.3.4. Selection and Notification

Applicants will be ranked based on their overall performance in the application review and interview process. Finalists will be notified of the award and invited to attend an orientation session

to discuss research project objectives and expectations. Upon successful completion of the orientation, finalists will be presented with a fellowship agreement to sign.

5. Gender Equity, Equality and Inclusion

ARIN recognizes that gender equity, equality, and inclusion are fundamental human rights and essential foundations for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. Therefore, we strongly encourage applicants to submit gender-responsive or transformative project proposals that prioritize these principles. For more details on how gender considerations will be integrated into the evaluation process and potential research topics, please refer to ARIN's online gender guidelines.

6. Timelines

- The ARIN mini-grants will be awarded annually.
- The implementation schedule for awarded grants will follow the timeline outlined in Annex 1

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure successful project implementation, ARIN will employ a monitoring and evaluation process throughout the grant cycle. Mini-grant recipients will be required to submit regular progress reports to the ARIN Fellowship Manager. These reports will detail implementation progress, achieved results, and any challenges encountered. The reports will track performance against pre-determined indicators established collaboratively between the Fellowship Manager and each recipient.

Upon project completion, recipients must submit a final report. This comprehensive document will assess the project's success, catalog deliverables, and provide a financial summary. The report will also capture key learnings and experiences throughout the grant period. It serves the dual purpose of meeting ARIN's reporting requirements and informing decisions regarding future grant awards.

The ARIN Secretariat will review these reports to evaluate project success, potential for further funding, and overall program impact.

8. Financial Responsibility and Risk Management

Acceptance of a mini-grant from ARIN creates a legal obligation for recipients to manage the funds responsibly. This includes adhering to the terms of the grant agreement and all applicable



laws, regulations, and guidelines related to grant funding. Grantees are expected to maintain transparent and accountable financial practices throughout the project lifecycle.

Grantees are expected to uphold transparent and accountable financial management practices. This entails timely submission of accurate and complete financial reports, as stipulated in the agreement. Additionally, grantees must maintain detailed records of all financial transactions, including receipts, invoices, contracts, and any other relevant documentation. These records should support decisions, approvals, and any deviations from the approved project budget.

As part of the application process, grantees are also required to submit a risk management plan. This plan should outline strategies to mitigate potential challenges that could impact project completion or outcomes.

To safeguard grant funds, ARIN employs robust financial controls. These include phased disbursements contingent upon satisfactory completion of agreed-upon deliverables, regular monitoring of grantee expenditures through reports and monthly meetings, periodic audits to ensure financial accountability, and end-of-project reports. Disbursements may also be tied to specific milestones, such as project initiation, completion of key activities, or achievement of performance targets. Finally, ARIN conducts periodic evaluations of grantees' financial performance and project outcomes to identify key lessons learned and areas for improvement.

Where the grantee is in material breach of the provisions of the agreement and fails to remedy the breach within twenty (20) working days of receipt of written notice requiring such breach, funding may be withheld and/or the agreement terminated. Extreme cases such as fraud or embezzlement may deem the grantee ineligible to receive subsequent funding.

9. Donate Support ARIN's Research-Policy Fellowship Program

Various funding sources, including dedicated grant funding, private sector investment, and philanthropic contributions support the ARIN mini-grant program. To contribute financially to the ARIN Research-Policy Fellowship Program, please contact Amon Mtunji, ARIN's Finance Manager, at A.mtunji@arin-africa.org.

Annex 1: ARIN Mini-Grant Program Work plan

Output	Description	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8
Fellows' sensitization on the mini-grants	1 sensitization webinar								
Design and launch of migrants	Mini-grants launched and published on the websites of project partners								
Mini-grant applications and competitive reviews and selections	Mini-grants are competitively selected for implementation and are drawn from East, West, and Southern Africa.								
Monthly virtual convenings for technical reviews and learnings for mini-grant recipients	At least four monthly webinars with the mini-grantees								
Book editing drawn from mini-grant chapters	Peer review of the country case studies								
Book launch at the fellows' assembly	Launch of the consolidated case studies at the fellows' assembly								