OUTREACH & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
**CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH,
EDUCATION, AND DEVELOPMENT**
VIRGINIA TECH.

526 Prices Fork Road
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
P: (540) 231-6338
vcrowder@vt.edu

Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, Learning, and Adapting (MERLA) Specialist for a Higher Education Project in Malawi

We are currently seeking qualified candidates for the position of: **Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, Learning, and Adapting (MERLA) Specialist, Malawi Higher Education Project** to be based in Lilongwe, Malawi.

Description

Virginia Tech's Center for International Research, Education, and Development (CIRED) is recruiting for a Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, Learning, and Adapting (MERLA) Specialist for an anticipated USAID-funded project that will work with Malawian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to strengthen their capacity to design and deliver high-quality and market-linked STEM and other targeted academic programs; expand access to higher education for marginalized and vulnerable youth; and improve research and innovation outputs. **Malawian nationals are strongly encouraged to apply**.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities

The MERLA Specialist will play a lead role in the design and implementation of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan by developing appropriate indicators and associated data collection methods, implementing systems to safeguard the collection and management of program data, recommending changes to annual work plans and projector activities, and development and oversight of the project's learning agenda. The MERLA Specialist also will train project staff and liaise with USAID/Malawi on M&E reporting requirements and program learning strategies.

Reporting to the Chief of Party, the key responsibilities of the MERLA Specialist are expected to include:

- Design the program MERLA system and related tools, clearly identifying the users and the utility of the data/information;
- Oversee the application of Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) principles to inform program implementation and management;
- Define M&E indicators and adapt M&E tools to meet program needs, which may include pre- and post- tests, focus group interview protocols, community survey tools, and baseline, mid-term, and end-line survey instruments;
- Coordinate with the COP and other project personnel, to provide MERLA support on all technical-related activities;
- Engage staff, youth, partners, USAID, and other key stakeholders in identifying project learning and adaptation;
- Train program staff, and project stakeholders as appropriate, on MERLA system operations, collection methods, and tools; and supervise MERLA activities of staff and sub-contractors;
- Oversee and safeguard data collection processes, perform data quality assessments, and inform survey methods and design to ensure methodological rigor;
- Liaise with the USAID Mission on the design of M&E tools and on modifications to M&E systems;

- Analyze all data collected and advise program management on needed program revisions;
- Contribute to written performance reports for funder and other program deliverables;
- Work with grantees or partners to ensure accurate information flow, including guidance/support on grantee data collection, measurement, and reporting

Education/Experience

Required Qualifications:

- Master's degree or its international equivalent in social science, statistics, international development, monitoring and evaluation, or a related field; or a bachelor's degree and two additional years of work experience;
- Minimum of 8 years of related work experience, with experience managing and implementing monitoring, evaluation and learning systems for donor-funded programs, preferably within STEM or education programs in Malawi or similar country contexts;
- Significant experience designing and implementing MEL systems from program initiation to closeout stages;
- Demonstrated abilities utilizing appropriate qualitative and quantitative data collection methodologies and analytic approaches for project monitoring and evaluation, including experience with survey design and sampling, mobile data collection, statistical analysis, data mining and machine learning, Focus Group Discussion facilitation, and content/thematic analysis;
- Experience coordinating with governments, ministries, universities, and/or local NGOs, as well as with local communities, to communicate information about project activities and results
- Proven interpersonal and communication skills and the ability to lead multidisciplinary and collaborative teams;
- Ability to effectively use statistical analysis software such as SAS, STATA or SPSS;
- Experience on the use of M&E systems to support a learning agenda utilizing a variety of learning activities to inform the refinement of program activities as needed;
- Oral and written fluency in English and Chichewa

Preferred Qualifications:

- Knowledge of USAID policies and procedures;
- Experience with, understanding of, and commitment to positive youth development and gender and social inclusion approaches and strategies

How to Apply

To apply, please send a cover letter and resume by email to: CIRED.Jobs@gmail.com, with "MERLA Specialist, Malawi HE" in the subject heading. Applications will be reviewed beginning on 9 August 2021 and the position will remain open until filled. Only short-listed candidates will be contacted. Recruitment is contingent upon successful award of the project; this document should not be construed in any way to represent a contract of employment.

About the Organization:

Virginia Tech's Center for International Research, Education, and Development (CIRED) manages and implements externally funded projects in developing countries.