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GUIDELINE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

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1. Background

The purpose of this document is to provide Community Engagement Guideline for Addis Ababa University. To carry out this, the Director of Community Service appointed an *ad-hoc* committee on October 7, 2015 to develop a community engagement framework for Addis Ababa University by issuing a TOR, “AAU Community Engagement”, with a definition of community engagement as “service rendered by the University community for a community, government institutions, business, non-profit organizations and society at large with the objective of solving their problems through capacity building, awareness creation and when necessary with the active engagement of the community with the view to improving the quality of their life”.

This guideline emanates from the Community Engagement framework produced by the *ad-hoc* committee.

1.2. Theoretical framework

According to Proclamation 650/2009, Community Engagement is one of the missions of all higher education institutions in Ethiopia along teaching -learning and research (Article 4 and Sub Article 4).

Different terms are often used in the literature to refer to community service such as university outreach, university community engagement, social responsiveness of universities, university-community relationship, university-industry partnership, school-university relationship, etc. Community service may also take many forms such as off-campus credit instructions, non-credit instructions, applied research, technology transfer, demonstration projects, evaluation studies, policy analysis or technical assistance.

Community Service is referred to community Engagement in the current international literature because it designates a two-way communication in contrast to the one-way communication often practiced in community services rendered to the community by the university but not vice-versa (Sellamna and Amare, 2014).

1.3. Community engagement in Higher Education in Ethiopia

In the Higher Education Proclamation 650/2009, the relevance of universities to their respective communities is highly emphasized (the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2009). This proclamation described community service as the content and intent of university research and teaching in that both have to be designed and implemented to address the economic and social problems of the country. Emphasizing the relevance of universities to the needs of the wider society, the two paragraphs of the Preamble of the Proclamation state as follows:

Whereas, it has become necessary to lay down a legal system to enable institutions to effect institutional transformation, and thus be able to serve as dynamic centers of capacity building consistent with the aspirations of the people of Ethiopia in the context of globalization;

*Whereas, it becomes necessary to create an appropriate legal framework to guide institutions to focus on critical issues of **relevance** and quality of education and research to contribute with efficacy to the Ethiopian peoples' aspirations of peace, democracy, and development* (the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2009).

In defining the objectives of higher education, two critical community engagement functions are stated in this Proclamation, “promote and enhance research focusing on knowledge and technology transfer consistent with the country’s priority” (Sub Article 4.2); “design and provide community engagement that shall cater for the development needs of the country” (Sub Article 4.4).

1.4. Community Engagement in Addis Ababa University

Formerly, community service in AAU was structured under the Vice President for External Relations, Strategic Planning, and Partnership (AAU, 2011) and later under the Vice President for Institutional Development (Senate Legislation, 2013). The Community service function has then been organized under the Office of Community Service. This Office had also four units (‘offices’) under it; Training Office, Consultancy Office, University-Industry Partnership Office and Outreach Office.

The Outreach Office was engaged in facilitating the dissemination of expert knowledge and innovations to various communities to contribute to their efforts in solving their developmental and technological problems.

Because of the emphasis of government on a reciprocal partnership and integration of universities with target communities and the renewed desire of AAU to be at the forefront of the idea, the concept of Community Engagement is adopted as appropriate.

At present, Community Engagement in AAU is one of the Directorates under the Vice president for Research, Community Engagement, and Technology Transfer. The other two directorates are Research and Technology Transfer, and University-Industry Linkage. Although the tasks of each Directorate are different, their working relationship among and the academic units are not clearly spelt out.

1.5. Challenges and opportunities of Community Engagement in AAU

The two important opportunities for community engagement in AAU are:

- a. availability or untapped human resource; and
- b. presence of high demand for community engagement.

The challenge at present is the absence of a community guideline for AAU.

1.6. Rationale for Issuing a Community Engagement Guideline

So far Addis Ababa University has not had a clear guideline and an incentive mechanism for academic staff community engagement. Due to the absence of such a guideline, community engagement receives marginal attention reflected primarily by the absence of a functional governance structure that links it with the academic units as envisaged by the Senate Legislation of 2019. Lack of clearly defined duties and responsibilities of the academic staff concerning community engagement has hampered the proper execution of the three missions of the University with equal emphasis and attention. As a result, Addis Ababa University has not been able to identify the unique concerns and needs of communities, and play its role towards alleviating the social, political, economic and environmental problems of the community, and the country at large, through participation and dissemination of appropriate research outputs.

Cognizant of this fact, the Vice President for Research, Community Engagement and Technology Transfer has, thus, issued a guideline for Community Engagement with an extended structure at the College and Department levels for the academic staff to deliver professional services as part of their duties.

2. Community Engagement Guideline

The 2019 Senate Legislation of AAU specifies the duties of the academic staff to treat community engagement as equally important as teaching-learning and research. The legislation further specifies

the coordination and promotion of community engagements as the responsibility of academic units whose main functions are teaching, research and community engagement.

2.1. Objectives of the Guideline

The general objective of this guideline is to facilitate for all the academic units of the University for the active Community Engagement of the academic staff. Accordingly, the guideline has the following specific objectives.

2.1.1. Specific Objectives of the Community Engagement Guideline

- put the necessary governance structure in place to ensure a sustained Community Engagement by the various academic units of the University;
- revitalize Community Engagement as a core business of AAU;
- encourage academic units to identify priority areas and specific activities commensurate to their specific professional competence for community engagement; and
- Ensure the availability, proper allocation and efficient utilization of resources necessary for effective Community Engagement.

3. Strategic approaches

To guide the overall community engagement in Addis Ababa University, the Office of the Director of Community Engagement will work with various academic units to assess core community needs and design, implement, evaluate and coordinate community engagement.

To this end, the following six strategic issues need to be considered:

- create and support an organizational infrastructure that promotes community engagement;
- cultivate a culture of community engagement among university staff and student body;
- build a strong partnership that benefits both the university and the community;
- work with academic units to assess core community needs and design, implement, monitor and evaluate projects that engage and serve the community;
- advocate volunteerism; and
- Solicit and use funds for community engagement.

Each of the strategic issues is identified in line with possible community engagement practices and mandates. Each strategic issue entails an area of focus outlined below for the Community Engagement Directorate as detailed below.

3.1. Create and support an organizational infrastructure that promotes community engagement

To run community engagement efforts effectively within the university, the Community Engagement Directorate will develop various operational processes and tools.

- *Annual Plans:* Annual plans that are intended to guide community engagement activities for each year will be developed by the Directorate.
- *Forms:* Various forms that can be put to use in evaluating community needs, project implementation, project evaluation and control, and others will be developed by the Directorate.
- *Capacity Building:* Capacity building efforts targeting the university community and students to better conceptualize and implement community engagement as a third core function of the university will be carried out by the Community Engagement Directorate.

3.2. Cultivate a culture of community engagement among staff and students

To properly position community engagement as a third mission of the University and make it part of the regular planning of academic units, it is necessary to inculcate a culture of community engagement among the university community and students.

Towards cultivating a culture of community engagement in the university community, the Community Engagement Directorate will consider the following activities:

- Promotion of community engagement as a complementary part to the mission of teaching and the research.
- Disseminate regular information to the university community regarding community engagement activities and opportunities.

3.3. Building Strong Community Partnership that benefits both the university and the community.

Since Addis Ababa University is an integral part of the communities in which its various campuses operate, and as such, it is heavily impacted by the people and organizations around it, building a strong community partnership that benefits both the university and the community is invaluable. Accordingly, the Community Engagement office shall work towards building mutually beneficial relationships with communities that stimulates academic effort to improve the quality of community life. Towards this end, and in line with identified core needs of communities, the Community Engagement Directorate:

- will seek partners that contribute to an environment of co-learning and co-creation of knowledge;
- collaborate with federal and regional organizations on matters affecting the community;
- encourage and facilitate for academic units enter into an agreement with target communities and federal and local government bodies to work in partnership for designing and implementing community-oriented projects;
- encourage and facilitate academic units to build the capacity of the target community to engage in for mutually benefiting activities;
- involve partners in decision making; and
- conduct periodic workshops with target communities to maintain the partnership

3.4. Work with Academic Units to assess core community needs and design, implement, monitor and evaluate projects that engage the community

Working with academic units in assessing core community needs and design, implement, monitor and evaluate projects that engage the community is at the center of the activities of the Community Engagement Directorate. In order to help address this strategic issue of the directorate, a four-step approach is envisaged.

3.4.1. Identify Core Community Needs

In collaboration with the respective academic units (Institutes, Colleges, and Schools) of the University, the Community Engagement Directorate will identify core community needs that can be addressed by academic units and also serve as a learning ground for the university community. The identification and prioritization of the core needs will consider areas that benefit both the target community and the university.

3.4.2. Design Projects

Based on the identified core needs, a community-based project will be designed to address issues, challenges, trends, and opportunities for interventions in outreach programs. While the community engagement directorate plays primarily a facilitating role, the academic units take charge of the designing of projects that engage communities as important members of the project team. This in turn ensures the exchange of knowledge and improves the implementation of projects.

3.4.3. Implement Projects

This is the part where actual engagement program and intervention takes place. In a similar approach as in the design stage of a project, academic units take responsibility in the implementation of projects.

3.4.4. Monitor and Evaluate projects

Projects being implemented require both periodic monitoring and terminal evaluation. Accordingly, periodic monitoring using key performance indicators of each project implemented and terminal evaluation using a standard format will be carried out by the academic unit and the Associate Dean for Research, Community Engagement and Technology Transfer.

3.5. Advocate volunteerism

In addition to the various professional community engagement efforts of the Community Engagement Directorate and the respective academic units, the Directorate shall also advocate for volunteerism in the university community. Volunteerism, in this case, is a direct service by students, faculty, and staff for the benefit of the broader community in various forms. The voluntary

services delivered regularly or episodically may not necessarily be directly related to the professional competence of the academic units but rather to the immediate needs of the community.

3.6. Solicit and Apply for Community Engagement Funds

The University Community Engagement Directorate, specifically the Community Engagement Grants Team Leader, in collaboration with academic units, will solicit for potential community engagement grants

4. Structure and Governance

Since it is appropriate for community Enjoyment to be reflected in the name of the unit handling it, the Office is renamed Vice-president for Research, Community Engagement, and Technology Transfer. At University level, the Director for Community Engagement will be run by the Director for Community Engagement and three Experts:

1. Community Relations Expert
2. Community Program Integration Expert
3. Community Grant Support Expert

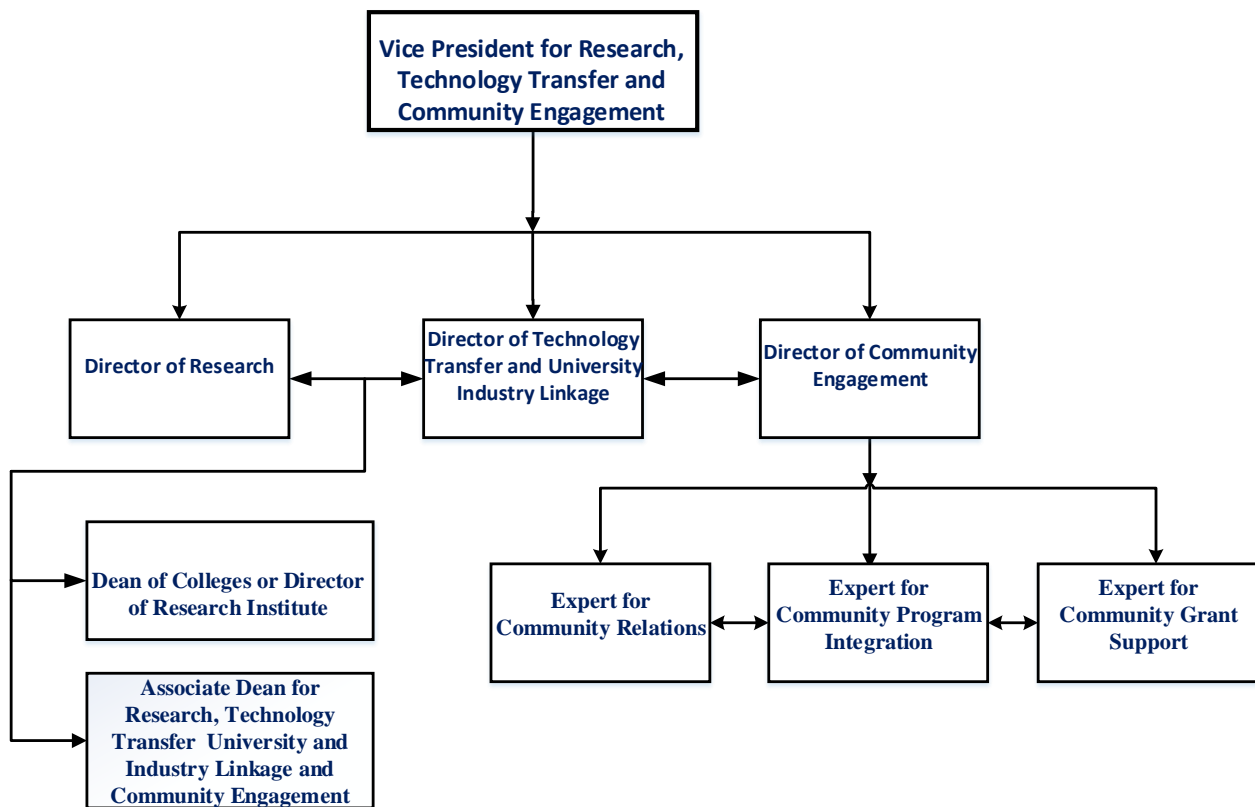


Figure 1: Organizational Chart of the current Vice-president for Research, Technology Transfer and Community Engagement Office

4.1. Duties and responsibilities

4.1.1. Duties and Responsibilities of the Office of Community Engagement

The Community Engagement Director will have administrative authority over the activities of the Associate Dean for Research, Technology Transfer and Community Engagement. The Director of Community Engagement will make sure that Community Engagement Activities at academic units comply with approved plans and other community engagement policies and procedures.

4.1.1.1. The Specific Duties of the Director for Community Engagement

The Director shall:

1. coordinate the overall community engagement efforts at the University level;
2. oversees the development and execution of the goals and strategies for community engagements at a university level;

3. ensures the creation and support of an organizational infrastructure that promotes community engagement;
4. communicate community engagement goals and strategies developed at a university level to respective academic units;
5. oversees building a partnership with target communities and government organs that are supposed to provide support for community engagement activities;
6. work with academic units (through the College Level Associate Dean for Research, Technology Transfer and Community Engagement) in assessing core community needs and designing, implementing, evaluating and controlling projects that serve and engage the community;
7. cultivate a culture of community engagement in the university staff and students;
8. works to advocate volunteerism within the university community;
9. develop a community engagement budget and jointly manages the budget with respective colleges and academic units;
10. lead the identification of grants and jointly apply for grants along with academic units;
11. collect and compile community engagement reports from Associate Dean for Research, Community Engagement, and Technology Transfer; and
12. keep the VP for Research Community Engagement and Technology Transfer informed about key community issues

4.1.2. Duties and Responsibilities of Associate Dean for Research, Technology Transfer and Community Engagement

The duties and responsibilities of the Associate Dean for Research, Community Engagement, and Technology Transfer are similar to the duties and responsibilities of the Community Engagement Director but differ only from those which are specific to the respective academic units. Community engagement activities in academic units will be coordinated by the Associate Deans for Research, Community Engagement and Technology Transfer of the respective Colleges and executed by the respective department or lower level academic unit as the case may be.

Associate Deans shall submit formal reports on community engagement activities to the Community Engagement Office quarterly and annually.

4.1.2.1. The Specific Duties of the Associate Dean in Community Engagement

The Associate Dean shall:

1. provide relevant support to the mandatory participation of Colleges and Departments in community engagements and in the incentivization and promotion of the academic staff;
2. mobilize Colleges or Departments for engagement in community problem-solving activities in the area of their specialization or by teaming up with other units;
3. identify those research outputs and sources of funding, in the College in consultation with the PI of researches, which can be translated into solution for community problems;
4. in collaboration with the Community Engagement Directorate, facilitates for the creation of stakeholder platforms for each college, school or research institute; and
5. collect Community Engagement activity reports from the academic units and submit them to the University Community Engagement Office

5. Embedding Workload in Community Engagement

To ensure and facilitate the involvement of academic units in Community Engagement activities, and ensure that the third mission complements the other two (teaching and research) every academic staff is required to engage in an approved and registered community engagement activity that amounts to at least 3 credit hours per year.

6. The Value of Community Engagement for Academic Promotion

Commensurate to the workload, Community Engagement shall have not less than 12.5% weighted average value for academic promotion.

References

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