

**SUMMARY STATEMENT**

**PROGRAM CONTACT:**

( Privileged Communication )

*Release Date:* 11/09/2020

*Revised Date:*



*Application Number:* 1 G11 AI160669-01

**Principal Investigator**

**KAKEETO, STELLA**

**Applicant Organization: MAKERERE UNIVERSITY**

*Review Group:* ZAI1 EC-D (J2)

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Special Emphasis Panel  
Global Infectious Disease Research Administration Development Award for Low-  
and Middle-Income Country Institutions (G11-Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

*Meeting Date:* 10/30/2020

*RFA/PA:* PAR18-335

*Council:* JAN 2021

*PCC:* X84

*Requested Start:* 05/01/2021

*Project Title:* Strengthening Makerere University's Research Administration Capacity for efficient management of NIH grant awards (SMAC)

*SRG Action:* Impact Score: [REDACTED]

*Next Steps:* Visit [https://grants.nih.gov/grants/next\\_steps.htm](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/next_steps.htm)

**Human Subjects:** 10-No human subjects involved

**Animal Subjects:** 10-No live vertebrate animals involved for competing appl.

Project Year	Direct Costs Requested	Estimated Total Cost
1	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
2	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
<b>TOTAL</b>	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

**ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET NOTE:** The budget shown is the requested budget and has not been adjusted to reflect any recommendations made by reviewers. If an award is planned, the costs will be calculated by Institute grants management staff based on the recommendations outlined below in the COMMITTEE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS section.

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**1G11AI160669-01     Kakeeto, S****FOREIGN INSTITUTION  
COMMITTEE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RESUME AND SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:** This exceptional new Extramural Associate Research Development Award application entitled “ Strengthening Makerere University's Research Administration Capacity for efficient management of NIH grant awards (SMAC)” was submitted in response to PAR18-335: Global Infectious Disease Research Administration Development Award For Low-and Middle-income Country Institutions (G11-Clinical Trial Not Allowed) by the Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda with Stella Kakeeto as Principal Investigator (PI). The main goal of this application is to develop and implement a staff training plan for Makerere University grants administrators and research investigators to improve their understanding of NIH funding policies and regulations. This will be achieved through 1) hands on training at George Washington University (GWU) in USA, 2) tailored training with the Grants Management Program (GMP) at NIAID-Rockville, and 3) the NIAID regional workshop on program funding and grants administration.

The application has many strengths. There is a significant need at the Makerere University College of Health Sciences (MakCHS) to solidify the knowledge base of its grant administrators and those in East African region in order to respond to a growing research enterprise. The scope and breadth of this training program is vast given Makherere’s collaboration with about 300 institutions globally and the plan to train 25 regional research administrators in Uganda and East Africa. The training plan proposed in research administration is extremely well delineated and organized with clear goals and objectives to attain the required skills consistent with administrative best/current practices. There are three specific aims that comprehensively address the institutional needs at MakCHS. The PI, Stella Kakeeto, has an excellent track record in grants management and research administration as well as substantial specific experience in grants management training within and outside her own institution. Her team of collaborators has the expertise and experience in all the relevant areas. The George Washington University (GWU) has also demonstrated expertise to provide additional training and resources to the applicant institution. Coursework is very well laid out and delineated. The creation of a) A buddy program (senior administrators being paired with junior administrators) and b) online learning Café (place to share in real-time best practices, lessons learned, etc. are innovative approaches to form a peer support network. The establishment of both a Project Implementation Team (PIT) with guidance from a Project Advisory Committee (PAC incorporate leaders/experts from a variety of sectors including IT, HR, finance, etc. are real strengths that will ensure proper oversight and implementation of this training program. The environment at the Makerere University combined with resources at George Washington University (GWU), are excellent to carry out the proposed research administration training program.

Very minor weaknesses were noted after discussion. There are few details about the plan to install a new Grants Tracking system and integrating it with their financial system. It is unclear whether they have enough senior administrators available to serve as buddies for the junior administrators but over-time this should not be an issue as more administrators are capacitated.

Overall, this is an exceptional strong application that will likely have an important impact for enhancing training capacity in grants administration in Uganda and the East Africa region. Based upon the evaluation of scientific and technical merit, this application received an Impact/Priority score of 10.

**DESCRIPTION (provided by applicant):** Makerere University College of Health Sciences (MakCHS) is the largest health training Institution in Uganda and East Africa. Majority of its biomedical research is

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supported by NIH funding, which for decades has been predominantly secured through sub awards from collaborating partner organizations. Over the last four years, MakCHS has registered a steady increase in its NIH direct grant awards from under USD 2.1M to USD 4.6M. This growth has increased her role and responsibility for the management of NIH grant awards and calls for improved research administration capacity to match the need. Having been a sub recipient for many years, during which time grants oversight was largely under the stewardship of prime award recipients, most of MakCHS administrators have limited exposure to grants management processes required for rigorous management of NIH grants. They often rely on the collaborating prime recipients (who have the overall grant oversight) to interpret funding regulations for them. They struggle to comply with NIH grants policies, and this could compromise future grant funding. There is an urgent need to equip MakCHS research administrators with the right knowledge and skills for better management of NIH grants. To achieve this, we will provide two Senior Administrators with advanced training in management of NIH grants, and access to good business practices for managing NIH grant awards. This will be done through: 1) hands on training at George Washington University (GWU) in USA, 2) tailored training with the Grants Management Program (GMP) at NIAID-Rockville, and 3) the NIAID regional workshop on program funding and grants administration. After training, the senior administrators will cascade lessons learnt to MakCHS junior research administrators and other administrators in the region to improve their capacity for efficient management of NIH grant awards. The training will be delivered through low-cost seminars and webinar meetings, using an approved staff-training plan. We will also implement a Research Administrator Buddy Program and an online Learning Cafe to provide mentorship and enhance collaboration among research administrators in the region, by providing a mechanism for consultations and sharing of grants resources. In addition, we will implement the good business practices learnt from GWU to streamline MakCHS grants monitoring processes. A modern Grants System will be introduced to improve tracking of grant expenditures and provide real time access to grants data for informed decision-making. Existing grants management SOPs will be reviewed, updated and new ones developed where needed. By the end of the project, MakCHS grants management systems and resources will be improved for better management of NIH grants. Two MakCHS senior administrators will be transformed into proficient institutional Grants management leaders. 69 junior administrators and 56 scientists at MakCHS, plus 25 administrators in the region will have improved knowledge and skills for management of NIH grants. This will contribute to the pool of grants administration experts NIH can use as resource persons in the region.

**PUBLIC HEALTH RELEVANCE:** Most of Uganda leading infectious diseases research is funded by International organizations such as the National Institutes of Health. Strengthening the grant acquisition and management capacity of recipient Institutions is critical for the success of current and future NIH supported research and optimizes NIHs investment in research.

**CRITIQUE:** The comments in the CRITIQUE section were prepared by the reviewers assigned to this application and are provided without significant modification or editing by staff.

### CRITIQUE 1

Significance:	2
Investigator(s):	1
Innovation:	2
Approach:	1
Environment:	1

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**Overall Impact:** A new G11 application, submitted by Makerere University College of Health Sciences (MakCHS) in Kampala, Uganda, collaboration with U.S.-based George Washington University (GWU) with an overarching aim of strengthening the grant acquisition and management capacity of research administrators within the MakCHS and the region as a whole. In short, the plan the team lays out for this proposed training program in research administration is extremely well delineated, clearly identifying an important gap (Significance), putting forth ideal staff to lead such a program (the PI and assembled team of Co-Investigators, with extensive research portfolio management experience including G11's)(Investigators), and an ideal Environment (MakCHS and U.S. partner George Washington University (GWU)), a sound Approach that includes highly innovative tools and tracking modalities (Innovation), namely a Research Administration Buddy Program (allowing junior administrators to be paired with and build relationships with senior administrators) and Online Learning Café to keep administrators connected, engaged and interacting in their work (that will become a community of practice), that is well-poised to adapt and improve over time given the project performance monitoring and evaluation framework it plans to put into place that will be guided and overseen by a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) and Project Implementation Team (PIT).

Based on this, the overall impact of this training program would be very high.

## 1. Significance:

### Strengths

- The application addresses an important problem, as the grant portfolio continues to expand in terms of total USD funding (more than doubling over the past four years) at the parent institution, Makerere University College of Health Sciences (MakCHS) in Uganda, there is a significant need for grants administration staff to attain the requisite skills consistent with best/current practices, allowing their team to train others within their parent research institution but also other grants admin staff within the region.
- The proposed project is well delineated in terms of clearly outlining the gaps it will address, while having a feasible plan to provide staff with the necessary skills to manage more complex, larger, and diverse research grant portfolios as the prime grant recipient, including an increasing proportion of NIH-funded research initiatives. As outlined, the proposed project appears to be well designed to address the deficiencies and/or gaps identified in research administration that exist at the parent institution.
- Detailed processes and work tools are identified that will be developed and expanded upon to address current gaps in the research admin infrastructure.
- The staff training program does an exceptional job facilitating the strengthening of grants administration at both the grantee institution as well as other relevant in-country and regional institutions.

### Weaknesses

- None identified.

## 2. Investigators:

### Strengths

- The PI is incredibly well-suited for this project given her experience (8+ years) as a senior Grants Administrator and her active involvement and membership with numerous international and domestic research and innovations management associations.

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- In addition, she possesses a proven track record successfully mentoring and training large numbers of research administrators on preparing proposal budgets and tracking grant compliance at MakCHS and regionally (e.g. Bishop Stewart University in western Uganda, etc.).
- The PI also possesses relevant experience in finding suitable research grant opportunities, developing proposal budgets, grant contract negotiations and modifications, grant reporting and close-out.
- The U.S. consultant, George Washington University, has the appropriate skills and experience in managing NIH awards to effectively train the assembled foreign team.
- The PI, given her recognized and established senior administrative role within the parent institution, does have the requisite authority to implement the proposed institutional grants administration/management training plan.

#### **Weaknesses**

- None identified.

### **3. Innovation:**

#### **Strengths**

- Novel pedagogy recommended as part of this proposed training program in the form of a) Research Administration Buddy Program (allowing junior administrators to be paired with and build relationships with senior administrators) and b) the implementation of an Online Learning Café to keep administrators connected, engaged and interacting in their work (that will become a community of practice over time).
- The proposed training leverages an existing lunchtime Seminar Series program to deliver targeted quarterly sessions to administrators and scientists on NIH grants management, during and after the duration of the project.

#### **Weaknesses**

- None identified.

### **4. Approach:**

#### **Strengths**

- Overall strategy and methodology are appropriate to accomplish the specified goals and objectives.
- The plans for training are sound, both in-country (internally at MakCHS) as well as in the U.S., at both their partner institution George Washington University and NIAID (Rockville, MD) for the 5-day training.
- The U.S., Washington D.C.-based training program is well delineated and appears to cover all essential core grants admin and management topics.
- The 3 specific aims are appropriate and appear to comprehensively cover/address the needs identified within research oversight/grants admin capacity at MakCHS.

#### **Weaknesses**

- None identified.

### **5. Environment:**

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### Strengths

- The environment at the Makerere University College of Health Sciences (MakCHS), coupled with collaborative resources available from their established U.S. partner institution, namely George Washington University (GWU), is ideal to carry out this specific research administration training program.
- The proposed administrative environment, with the proposed structure, is well poised to contribute to the success of this training program.
- The institutional commitment from MakCHS is excellent. Appropriate level and scope of staff, facilities, training and resources have been allocated.
- The requested resources are appropriate based on the expressed goals of MakCHS's sustainability initiative.

### Weaknesses

- None identified.

## CRITIQUE 2

Significance:	1
Investigator(s):	1
Innovation:	3
Approach:	1
Environment:	1

### 1. Significance:

#### Strengths

- This is an outstanding application that clearly documents why, even though Makerere is a growing research enterprise, it still needs this award to help solidify the knowledge base of its administrators and those in the region.
- The staff training programs described are logical, well thought out, and generally progress well – both staff and investigators receive training specific to their needs. The numbers are realistic (2 leaders, 69 junior administrators, 56 scientists) and indicate they have thought about who needs to be trained.
- Excellent the idea of a Buddy program and an Online Learning Café.
- The plan to train 25 regional research administrators in Uganda and East Africa and cost-effective (6 webinars over 3 months, recorded for re-use and to aid future enhancements). Institutions have already been identified and a plan for identifying additional participants through the PI's professional network involvement was impressive.
- The idea of a post-award period in-house grants management career track with modest registration fees to sustain the initiative is a good idea.

#### Weaknesses

- Given that Makerere collaborates with more than 350 institutions in Africa, America and Europe may result in the need for their program to outstrip demand. That would be a nice problem to have.

### 2. Investigators:

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### **Strengths**

- The investigator team is a strong one on both the Makerere side and the GWU side. The involved investigators are a blend of pre-award, post-award, and training experience that should complement each other and are at various levels of seniority within the organization. This should facilitate implementation.
- The PI has specific training experience (75 administrators, 92 investigators) and has trained outside her own institution. Her experience is life cycle based which will help her see the big picture.
- The Quarterly PAC meetings contain well-chosen knowledgeable leaders at the organization that can help advance the project (and as cited elsewhere, includes the Principal.) One of the members of the PAC (Rhod Wanyenze) has specific experience in capacity building and program management and is experienced in policy development.
- The PIT (Project Implementation Team) is well designed to facilitate change management and bring the goals of the project to fruition with its senior administrative leaders (Grants Management, Finance, HR, Administration, Training).

### **Weaknesses**

- None were noted.

## **3. Innovation:**

### **Strengths**

- The Buddy System and the Online Learning Cafe are innovative ideas as they create a peer support network.
- The ability to “re-use” the regional webinars will expand the impact the project can achieve for their participating regional institutions.
- The training aspects of this are solid, well-thought out and organized – but not unusually innovative.

### **Weaknesses**

- It is unclear whether they have enough senior administrators available to serve as buddies for the junior administrators. The application indicates that 70-75% of administrators have limited knowledge and skills; it may be necessary to either “tag team” or put significant burdens on the more seasoned staff to achieve this objective.

## **4. Approach:**

### **Strengths**

- Their approach to their plan is logical, well thought out and articulated. Table 5 of the project tasks is a strong indicator that they have worked to “meld” their tasks into a cohesive whole.
- Their concept to have their Project Advisory Committee (PAC) lead change management both locally (and the fact that it includes the Principal) speaks to the larger commitment to success.

### **Weaknesses**

- The specific number of SOPs developed or updated as shown in Table 6 may be premature without understanding the degree to which such are needed – however, it does make it clear

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that significant review activity will be expected. It is unclear whether this rate of change is realistic – but the goal of attempting it is admirable.

- There is a great deal of activity expected for 20% effort for the PI and ~8% of the other individuals.

## 5. Environment:

### Strengths

- Their physical infrastructure seems well aligned to the ability to produce the outcomes they stipulate.
- As noted in the approach, their governance structure is well positioned and articulated to achieve change management.

### Weaknesses

- It is unclear whether they have adequately assessed the implementation demands of installing a new Grants Tracking system and integrating it with their financial system, though their process of going about selecting a product and how they might proceed with its use seems reasonable.

## CRITIQUE 3

Significance:	2
Investigator(s):	1
Innovation:	2
Approach:	2
Environment:	1

**Overall Impact:** This is a very strong application which demonstrates how the Institution can benefit from learning grants management under the auspices of this NIAID funding mechanism and partnering with a U.S host Institution. The key strengths are in the well-organized and defined leadership, and linkages with key partners.

### 1. Significance:

#### Strengths

- The applicant organization has a goal to improve the infrastructure of an already established Grants Administration Office. Additional training will enable the staff to better manage all pre and post award activities their organization and its researchers.
- Excellent proposed training plan to improve the research administration infrastructure.
- Clear examples and a table are provided as to how the applicant plans to create and develop a training program.

#### Weaknesses

- Over 70% of the MakCHS Administrative staff lack enough training in NIH NIAID grants management.

### 2. Investigators:

#### Strengths



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- The PI, Stella Kakeeto has a long and impressive proven track records in grants management and research administration.
- Overall, there is a very qualified group of investigators with expertise and experience in all the relevant areas.
- US Host Institution is well established whose own research portfolio has significantly grown in the past decade. It has demonstrated it has the expertise to serve as a Consultant to provide additional training and resources to the applicant institution.

#### **Weaknesses**

- No weakness noted.

### **3. Innovation:**

#### **Strengths**

- Novel approach to increasing training by implementing a buddy program, online learning café and improved systems.
- Demonstrated sustainability plan after the project period has ended to continue to improving training.
- Very good Project performance monitoring and Evaluation framework.

#### **Weaknesses**

- No weakness noted.

### **4. Approach:**

#### **Strengths**

- The MakCHS Senior Administrators have demonstrated the ability to effectively manage NIH/NIAID grants. However, they are seeking advanced training via this Award
- Has a plan to develop a staff training and mentorship plan.
- Improve MakCHS' Standard Operating Procedures and guidelines and strengthen its grants
- Tracking and monitoring system, for efficient management of NIH grant awards.

#### **Weaknesses**

- Over the past four years NIH funding has significantly increased. Previously, funding has been mostly as a Sub-Recipient and Sub-Awards. This award will prepare the applicant institution to seek additional training to manage more NIH funding as a Prime Recipient.

### **5. Environment:**

#### **Strengths**

- Strong environment with adequate training facilities to support the continued development of grants management and best practices.
- US Host Institution has committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure Applicant Organization is successful.

#### **Weaknesses**

- No weakness noted.

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**THE FOLLOWING RESUME SECTIONS WERE PREPARED BY THE SCIENTIFIC REVIEW OFFICER BASED ON INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER COMMENTS OR ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW BY NIH STAFF:**

**PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS: NOT APPLICABLE (CODE 10)**

**VERTEBRATE ANIMAL: NOT APPLICABLE (CODE 10)**

**AUTHENTICATION OF KEY BIOLOGICAL AND/OR CHEMICAL RESOURCES: NOT APPLICABLE**

**FOREIGN INSTITUTION: JUSTIFIED. Uganda**

**AUTHENTICATION OF KEY BIOLOGICAL AND/OR CHEMICAL RESOURCES: NOT APPLICABLE**

**BUDGETARY OVERLAP: NOT APPLICABLE**

**COMMITTEE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS: The following budget modifications were recommended for all years.**

The differences between the budget base salaries requested in page 53 and in page 56 for Year 1 and Year 2 need to be clarified.

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Footnotes for 1 G11 AI160669-01; PI Name: Kakeeto, Stella

NIH has modified its policy regarding the receipt of resubmissions (amended applications). See Guide Notice NOT-OD-18-197 at <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-18-197.html>. The impact/priority score is calculated after discussion of an application by averaging the overall scores (1-9) given by all voting reviewers on the committee and multiplying by 10. The criterion scores are submitted prior to the meeting by the individual reviewers assigned to an application, and are not discussed specifically at the review meeting or calculated into the overall impact score. Some applications also receive a percentile ranking. For details on the review process, see [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer\\_review\\_process.htm#scoring](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer_review_process.htm#scoring).