

# TEACHING AND LEARNING INNOVATION FUND (TALIF) GHANA

## Background

The Teaching and Learning Innovation Fund (TALIF) is the third component of Ghana's Education Sector Project (EdSeP) launched in March, 2004. TALIF Operational Manual (Version 2.B, August 2005) describes the Fund as "a development tool designed to enhance the ability of the country's tertiary institutions to fulfill their primary responsibilities" of teaching, learning and extension of knowledge to the wider community. (1) TALIF is planned to last five years, 2004-2009 and is the second major joint initiative of the Government of Ghana and the World Bank in the tertiary education sector within the past 20 years.

At the request of the Government of Ghana, the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank, once more, agreed to provide assistance to the Education sector and preparatory work began on the Education Sector Project (EdSeP) of which the Teaching and Learning Innovation Fund (TALIF) is a component. The IDA's Project Appraisal Document (PAD) on the EdSeP identified a number of problems facing the tertiary education sector including the following:

- the quality and relevance of polytechnic education were considered inadequate by employers.
- the tertiary sector was not attracting qualified staff into teaching positions.
- the tertiary sector had not received the required financial resources necessary to maintain quality "in the midst of enrolment expansion".
- inadequate capacity for managing the tertiary system numbers within the sector.

TALIF was, therefore, designed as a medium term instrument of tertiary education policy to

- raise the quality of tertiary level teaching and learning;
- sharpen the relevance and skills content of technical education;
- improve the efficiency by which polytechnics, universities and system supervisory institutions manage their academic programmes;
- through the combined effect of these, open greater access to tertiary level academic education; and

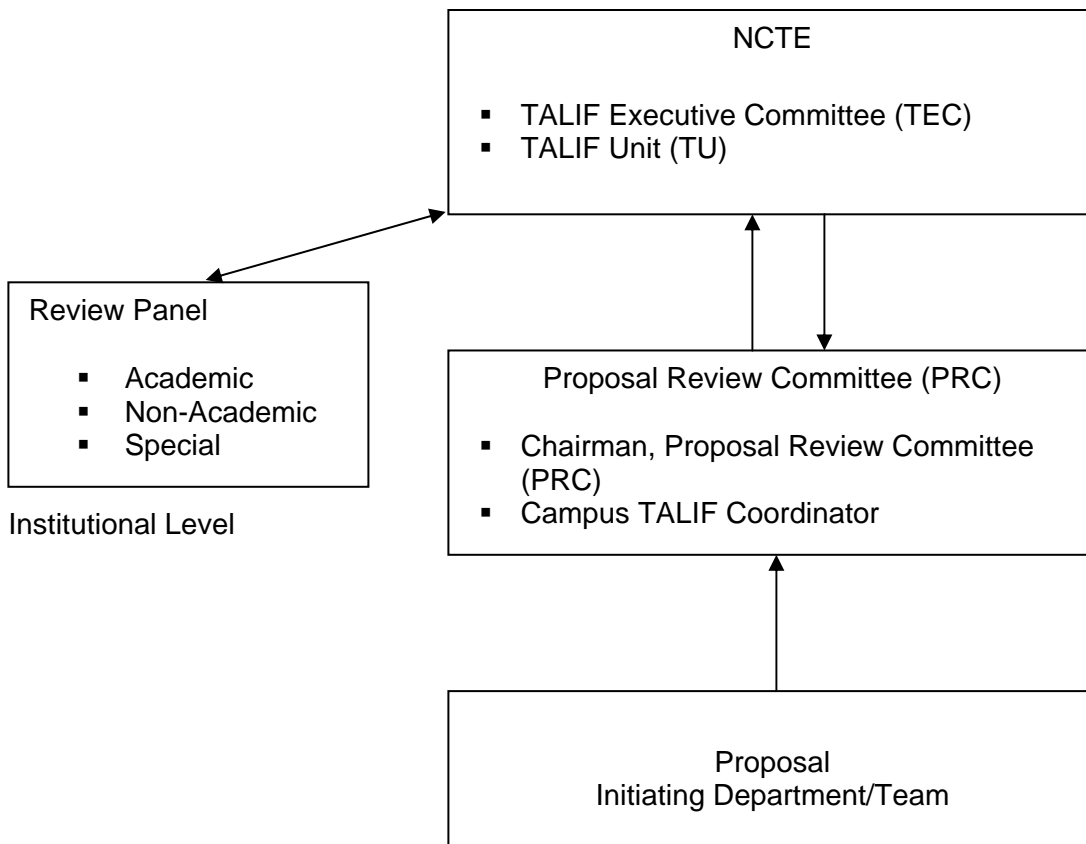
- tackle the problems of HIV/AIDS by assisting institutions to develop institutional policy and framework for managing HIV/AIDS on the campuses.

TALIF is being funded with \$33.4 million credit from the International Development Association of the World Bank group. The Government of Ghana is to contribute the equivalent of 10%. In addition, the institutions are requested to contribute the equivalent of 10% in kind, time and effort.

**The organisation and management of TALIF**

TALIF is managed by the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE), the body responsible for the coordination of tertiary education in the country on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Sports. The Fund was designed as a collaborative venture involving the NCTE and seventeen (17) tertiary level institutions in the public sector made up of ten (10) polytechnics and seven (7) university institutions. TALIF is organized and managed at the two levels - the NCTE and institutional levels.

**Functional Organogram of the Teaching and Learning Innovation Fund**



TALIF activities at the institutions are designed to be integrated into existing institutional structure. To ensure that the Fund gets the required attention, the institutions accepted a recommendation to use Proposal Review Committees (PRCs) as the structure for the organization and management of the Fund on the various campuses.

An institution's PRC is appointed by the Vice- Chancellor/Principal of the institution and is made up of key members of the university/polytechnic community and two external members who have demonstrated commitment to assisting the institutions in improving their academic programmes. The PRC is chaired by the head of the institution or his representative.

### **The Chairman of the Proposal Review Committee**

The Chairman of the PRC is the main focal person on each campus. Of the 17 public institutions, 12, made up of the 10 Polytechnics and two Universities have the heads of the institutions as Chairmen of their PRCs. None of the other 5 chairmen is below the rank of a Director of an institute.

The Chairmen of the PRCs oversee the disbursement and utilization of funds on the various campuses. They make the final decision on TALIF on the campus, including entering into a Performance Agreement on behalf of the institution with the NCTE.

Since April 2004 the TALIF Unit has decided to route all communication with Proposal originators through the PRC Chairmen instead of the TALIF Campus Co-coordinators. The office of the Chairmen has therefore, become the coordinating unit of TALIF on the campuses.

### **The TALIF Campus Coordinator (TCC)**

The TALIF Campus Coordinator was conceived as the coordinator and facilitator of all TALIF related activities on the respective campuses. The planned responsibilities of the TCC have gone down over the past months because of the decision to route all correspondence through the Chairmen of the PRCs. The TCCs now perform very limited functions including:

- Receiving completed proposals from within their respective institutions, checking them for completeness and forwarding them to the PRC for action.
- Serving as Secretary to the Proposal Review Committee.

## **Organisation and management of the Fund at the NCTE**

The National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) manages the fund on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Sports. The Executive Secretary of the NCTE has oversight responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Fund.

### **i. TALIF Unit/NCTE:**

The TALIF Unit (TU) operates as a unit within the NCTE. The primary function of TALIF Unit is to coordinate all activities related to TALIF. The basic functions of TU under the supervision of the Executive Secretary of the NCTE include:

- Carrying out and coordinating the various activities of TALIF, including disseminating information about TALIF, providing necessary support to campus-based TALIF Coordinators, TALIF Proposal Review Committees, TALIF Academic Review Panels (ARP), and other structures created for the purpose of furthering the objectives of TALIF;
- Monitoring the proper use of TALIF resources in project execution and identifying institutions' technical assistance needs with the view to improving proposal preparation and implementation of projects on campuses;
- Carrying out any other activities necessary to ensure the achievement of the goals and objectives of TALIF.

### **ii. TALIF Executive Committee (TEC)**

The TALIF Executive Committee (TEC) is a small committee under the Chairmanship of the Chairman of the NCTE whose membership includes representatives of heads of Polytechnics and Vice-Chancellors Ghana (VCG).

The primary responsibility of this important committee is to ensure that the accumulated approval of proposals made by the ARPs and PRCs serve the government's stated policy goals for tertiary education, as well as the objectives of the TALIF. TEC's functions include the following:

- On an annual basis, TEC recommends to the NCTE, for approval, a Table of TALIF Allocations that establishes a target amount of TALIF resources to be awarded during each funding cycle throughout the year, through each of the seven funding Windows;
- Advises NCTE on the review of the *aggregate of proposals* (not individual proposals) approved by the institutions' Proposal Review Committees and the TALIF Academic Review Panels to ensure conformity with the targets set in the Table of TALIF Allocations for that cycle.
- Advises NCTE on steps which may be necessary to improve the quality of proposals and the functioning of TALIF.

### **How the Fund is staffed**

TALIF was designed to be managed by six professional staff and two support staff including:

- i. A Project Accountant,
- ii. Three TALIF Officers to be responsible for the various windows, and
- iii. A Procurement Specialist/Trainer
- iv. An Accounting Assistant and Administrative Assistant

The TALIF Unit is headed by a TALIF Coordinator.

The Executive Secretary, TALIF Co-ordinator, Project Accountant, TALIF Officer and Senior Accounting Assistant are at post. Procurement services are currently provided on part time basis.

### **Review of Proposals**

Proposals are reviewed at two levels: by the Proposal Review Committees at the eligible institutions and by the Proposal Review Panels. The responsibilities and roles of the various actors in the review process are as follows:

#### **i. Review at the institutional level.**

Proposals originate from departments and cost centres. They are submitted to the TALIF Campus Coordinator who checks for completeness and arranges for Review by members of the PRCs.

Proposal Review Committees:

- screen all proposals received;
- recommend improvements to proposals;
- approve a limited number of Small Proposals;
- forward to the TALIF Unit all recommended Regular Proposals and Small Proposals that are in excess of their discretionary limits at an agreed time.

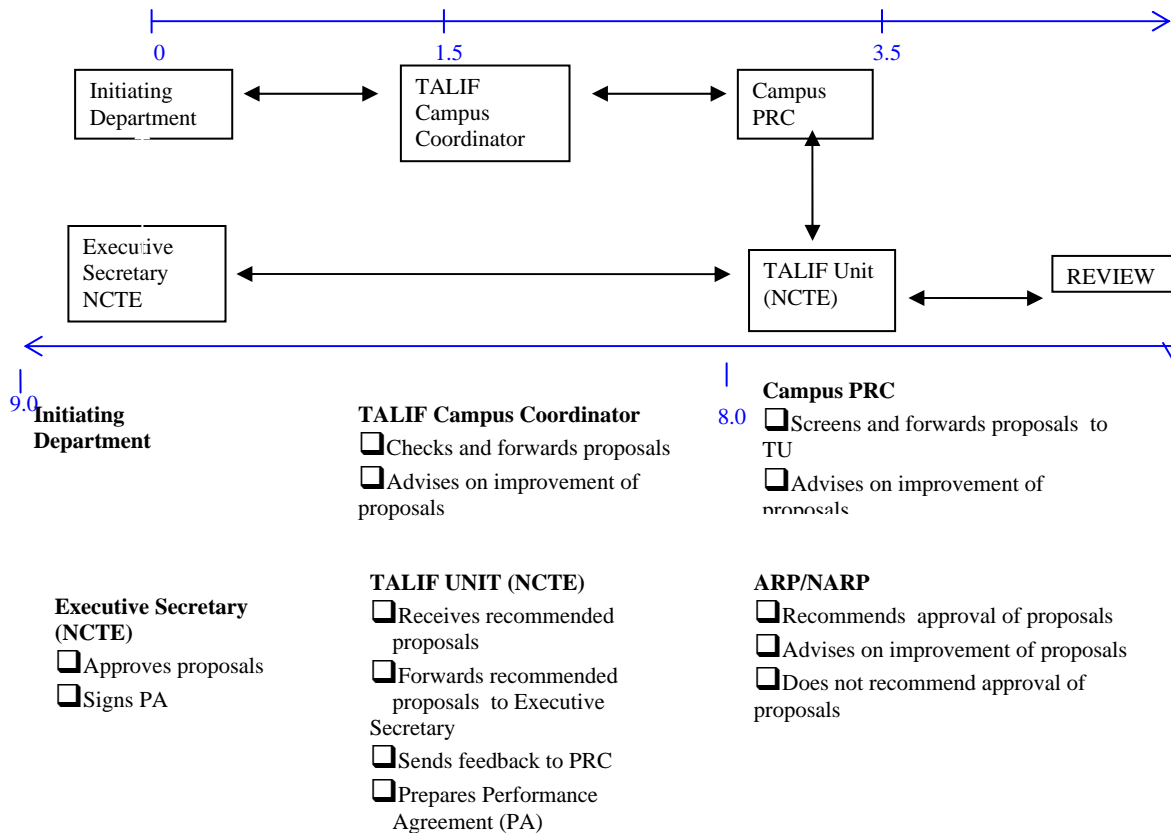
The review and processing of Small Proposals are planned to be completed within six weeks from the time a proposal is received by the TCC.

## ii. **The role of the TALIF Unit (TU) in the review process**

The TALIF Unit coordinates the review of Proposals. The Unit:

- advertises the call for proposals, and sets deadline when proposals must be submitted to the TALIF Campus Coordinator and when the campuses must submit them to the TALIF Unit;
- processes appointment of Review Panels;
- receives approved Small Proposals and checks for completeness;
- receives all recommended Regular Proposals from all eligible institutions, records the proposals, checks for completeness and forwards them to the Review Panels for evaluation;
- receives proposals from Reviewers, collates the results, places the aggregate of proposals recommended before the TALIF Executive Committee by the various panels for approval;
- announces the decision of TEC (results of the approved proposals) publicly in the national dailies with wide circulation and on the TALIF website;
- sends feedback to institutions to help them improve proposals which were not approved.

## TALIF Processing Flow Regular Proposals



### iii. Proposal Review Panels

Regular Proposals are reviewed by the following Panels:

#### 1. Academic Review Panels (ARPs) in the following areas:

- Agriculture and Veterinary
- Arts and Social Sciences
- Engineering and Technology
- Science and Mathematics
- Health Sciences

ARPs review proposals relating to post-graduate programmes from the institutions and academic programmes from the Polytechnics:

#### 2. The Non-Academic Review Panel (NARP)

This Panel reviews proposals relating to institutional management and other non-academic activities including HIV/AIDS.

### 3. Special Independent Review Panel (NARP)

Proposals from the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE), National Accreditation Board (NAB) and National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations (NABPTEX), variously referred to as tertiary support institutions or tertiary supervisory bodies, are reviewed by a Special Independent Review Panel (SIRP) established by the Chief Director of the Ministry of Education and Sports. This panel is required to be independent of the NCTE, the institution supervising TALIF.

Panel members work independently of each other using guidelines approved by the NCTE and the Bank attached to this report as Appendix 1.

During the First Call, the TALIF Unit received 226 Proposals worth USD 18.8 million. Of that number, 35, valued at USD 4,745,566 were approved for funding. Ninety three (93) Regular Proposals were processed by TALIF Unit during the Second Call and out of the number 45 proposals, worth \$6,206,000.00, were approved.

#### Procedure for disbursing Funds to approved proposals

The project funds are allocated to the following windows

#### TALIF ALLOCATIONS

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	TOTAL
Annual Share (%)		20	28	27	20	5	100
Annual, Total \$m		6.68	9.35	9.02	6.68	1.67	33.4
Assumed Small Proposal Average Cost (\$):15,000							
Number of Small Proposal		70	98	94.5	70	17.5	350
Total Allocations to Small Proposal (\$) (PRCs)		1.05	1.47	1.42	1.05	0.26	5.25
Regular Projects: assumed Av. Cost per Project-year: \$140,000.00							
Number of Regular Projects in progress each year		40.2	56.28	54.27	40.2	10.05	201
Total Allocations to Regular Proposals (\$m)		5.63	7.88	7.60	5.63	1.41	28.15
Total Number of Proposals (average duration 1.5 yrs)							551
<b>Window</b>	<b>% Share</b>	<b>\$m</b>	<b>\$m</b>	<b>\$m</b>	<b>\$m</b>	<b>\$m</b>	<b>\$m</b>
1. Polytechnic	36	2.40	3.37	3.25	2.40	0.60	12.02
2. Postgraduate	22	1.47	2.06	1.98	1.47	0.37	7.35
3. Leadership & Management	10	0.67	0.94	0.90	0.67	0.17	3.34
4. HIV/AIDS	4	0.27	0.37	0.36	0.27	0.07	1.34
5. Distance Education	8	0.53	0.75	0.72	0.53	0.13	2.67
6. Tertiary Support Institutions	7.5	0.50	0.70	0.68	0.50	0.13	2.51
7. UDS	12.5	0.84	1.17	1.13	0.84	0.21	4.18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6.68</b>	<b>9.35</b>	<b>9.02</b>	<b>6.68</b>	<b>1.67</b>	<b>33.4</b>

Two types of proposals are approved for funding; *Regular Proposals* and *Small Proposals*. A Regular Proposal is one whose value is from \$20,001.00 up to \$200,000.00. A Small Proposal has value of not more than \$20,000.00

Regular Proposals are assessed by three Reviewers and when two of the Reviewers recommend a proposal for approval without reservation, such proposals are processed for funding. The aggregate of such proposals are collated and arranged according to windows and brought before TALIF Executive Committee for consideration. The TALIF Operational Manual requires that before disbursement of TALIF grant a meeting of TEC is required to:

- give consent to the Small Proposals approved by the PRCs; and
- approve proposals recommended by the Review Panels.

When TEC's consent and approval are obtained, the TALIF Unit:

- informs institutions about the results,
- prepares five copies of Performance Agreement for each proposal;
- arranges for the signing of the proposal by the Executive Secretary; and
- sends the Performance Agreements to the Chairmen of PRCs to be signed by the Chairmen of the PRCs and the Proposal Originators.

The Performance Agreements are sent to the institutions together with an award letter which specifies the conditions that must be met before First Milestone Payments are released. The conditions which are the same for both the Small and Regular Proposals include:

- Signing of a Performance Agreement with the National Council for Tertiary Education;
- The opening of an Account in a reputable commercial bank exclusive to TALIF grants; and
- Submission of an approved Procurement Plan to the TALIF Unit; a requirement of the Public Procurement Act, Act 663 of 2003.

When copies of the agreement are duly signed, they are distributed to the Proposal Originator, the office of the PRC and the Finance Officer of the institutions. The remaining two copies are returned to the TALIF Unit. First milestone payments are made to the institutions' TALIF Account when the conditions for the release of TALIF grants are met.

The PRCs of the 17 public institutions are allowed to approve a limited number of Small Proposals but the aggregate value of Small Proposals that an institution may approve during a call depends on the size of the institution. While small institutions may approve aggregate number of Proposals

whose value does not exceed \$40,000 the large institutions are allowed to approve Proposals whose total value is not in excess of \$100,000 during a round of Call for Proposals.

When Small Proposals are approved by the PRCs, copies are sent to the TALIF Unit for review and processing. When the TALIF Unit is satisfied that all the requirements have been complied with, the disbursement process follows the same processing steps used for Regular Proposals.

The approximate value of proposals approved during the first two calls and disbursement to the institutions up to end of September 2005 are as follows:

<b>NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION</b>				
<b>TEACHING AND LEARNING INNOVATION FUND (TALIF)</b>				
<b>USES OF FUNDS BY PROJECT ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 30 SEPTEMBER, 2005</b>				
<b>Expenditure Category</b>	<b>Project Component/Activity</b>	<b>Cummulative</b>		
		<b>Planned</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Variance</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Windows</b>	\$	\$	\$
	Polytechnic	4,280,000.00	984,567.00	3,295,433.00
	Postgraduate	2,622,500.00	1,059,083.00	1,563,417.00
	Leadership & Management	1,187,500.00	239,003.00	948,497.00
	HIV/AIDS	480,000.00	87,475.00	392,525.00
	Distance Learning	947,500.00	28,836.00	918,664.00
	Tertiary Support Institutions	887,500.00		887,500.00
	University for Development Studies	1,485,000.00	878,960.00	606,040.00
				-
	<b>Sub-total Windows</b>	<b>11,890,000.00</b>	<b>3,277,924.00</b>	<b>8,612,076.00</b>

### **Monitoring of approved proposals**

The TALIF Unit spent the first eight months visiting institutions and providing education on the structures and systems required to organize and manage the Fund at both the TALIF Unit and at the institutions. Release of funds to institutions started in March 2005 after TEC had met to approve disbursement under the first call. As a consequence of the late disbursement, implementation of projects began a year after the launch of the project.

Monitoring of projects therefore started September, 2005 and all the members of staff at post are involved in the process. Monitoring visits have been made to four institutions. During the visits the TALIF team seeks to find out whether the structures and systems put in place to manage the project are well understood and are functioning as intended. In particular, the following are examined:

- Bank records
- Accounting records
- Disbursement of funds at the campuses
- Procurement procedures, and
- Progress of projects.

Meetings are held with the Chairmen of PRCs, TCCs, other members of the PRC and Proposal Originators. So far the banking and accounting records have been well kept but there have been some difficulties with procurement procedures.

### **The three biggest problems the Fund has encountered**

#### **i. Inadequate staff and lack of dedicated offices for the Fund**

The absence of dedicated offices for the Fund and the inadequate staff have limited the ability of the TALIF Unit to meet deadlines.

#### **ii. Slow pace of accessing approved project funds because of the inability of the institutions to follow procurement procedures introduced by the Public Procurement Act, Act 663.**

It takes not less than five weeks for institutions to return Performance Agreements and additional three weeks to submit approved Procurement Plans. The implementation of TALIF Projects has coincided with the coming into effect of the Public Procurement Act 2003, Act 663. The Act seeks to streamline procurement procedures in public institutions and many of the tertiary institutions are finding it difficult to comply with the requirements of the Act.

In addition it takes between three and four months to go through the National Competitive Bidding process and for items to be received by institutions when some projects are expected to be completed within 12 months. The Proposal Originators have little time to implement projects. It may be necessary to review the time frame of small projects, in particular, in the light of these obvious difficulties and delays.

- (iii) There is also a need to improve proposal writing skills particularly for Polytechnic staff on continuous basis.

#### **Lessons learnt**

- (i) **TALIF processes and procedures should be understood by key actors and end-users of the Fund**

TALIF is a new concept and therefore there was an initial difficulty of getting tertiary institutions to understand the novelty. A great deal of time was spent on the provision of education and information to the institutions. It was also found expedient to review the procedures and processes and, in particular, the TALIF Operational Manual and Proposal Submission Form, to ensure that they are well understood by all stakeholders. The two documents have been revised three times since March 2004.

- (ii) **Dealing with new issues require regular consultation among key stakeholders**

Over the past 18 months, new issues and challenges have come up frequently and unexpectedly which required immediate actions. The design of TALIF allowed the TALIF Unit to consult the stakeholders on regular basis, and the constant interaction and pooling of ideas together enabled the Unit to deal very quickly with the emerging issues. During the First and Second Calls, for example, very few proposals from the Polytechnics were approved by Reviewers. Quick consultations and the decision to engage the services of experts to assist the institutions have improved their proposal writing skills. The design of the project as a collaborative venture involving the NCTE, the tertiary institutions and the World Bank has been helpful in managing the novel concept in Ghana.

**THE TALIF UNIT**

**SEPTEMBER 30, 2005**