

Notes from the National System of Innovation Forum held at DST on 11 November 2013.

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) hosted a Forum in support of the National System of Innovation (NSI) at their Offices in Pretoria on 11 November 2013. Ms Eunice Ndeke attended the Forum on behalf of Ms Berenice Lue Marais.

The Forum was attended by 26 participants drawn mostly from universities. Ms Lisa Du Toit, Director: Development Partnerships welcomed all to the meeting.

The objective of this Forum was to introduce Partnerships for Enhanced Engagement in Research (PEER) programme which is a partnership between United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) designed to address development challenges through international research collaboration.

PEER is a competitive grants programme that invites scientists in developing countries to apply for funds to support research and capacity-building activities on topics of global importance such as food security, climate change, country-specific health priorities as well as other development topics. The PEER programme was presented by Dr Cameron Bess from the United States Agency for International Development.

The PEER programme has transformation power of Science and Development for cost-efficient global development and solutions to global challenges to enhance community development. In the last five years the programme has supported projects in green revolution, cell phone technology, solar power, 3D printing and remote sensing. The programme boosts research effectiveness and innovation by accessing local knowledge.

DST leverages funding from external sources to support South Africa institutions participating in the PEER programme.

Areas in which both NSF and USAID have strong mutual interests include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Food security** topics such as agricultural development, fisheries, and plant genomics
- **Climate change** impacts such as water sustainability, hydrology, ocean acidification, climate process and modelling, and environmental engineering
- **Other development topics** including disaster mitigation, biodiversity, water, and renewable energy

Dr McMahon from USAID gave a presentation on Securing Water for Food, A Grand Challenge for Development. Water scarcity is one of the most pressing challenges of the 21st century. USAID and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency will work with a group of industry experts to identify and accelerate innovative technologies and market-driven approaches in three areas that are critical to reducing water scarcity to boost food security:

- Water efficiency and reuse
- Water capture and storage
- salinity

Funding is allocated to support best entrepreneurs, business and science- and technology innovators that can help secure water for food. Implementation must take place in a developing country.

More information is available on the following websites:

www.securingswaterforfood.org
www.nationalacademies.org/peerscience

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