

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Position Title: ARA Head of Secretariat (Secondment)

Monthly Salary: Commensurate with qualifications and experience (USD 80,000 to 120,000 per annum)

Duration: As soon as possible until 31 March 2025 (with the possibility of extension)

Location: Cape Town, South Africa or another country in the Global South

The [Adaptation Research Alliance \(ARA\)](#) seeks a senior professional to serve as Head of Secretariat of the ARA; supporting the ARA governance structure – the Steering Board, Co-Chairs and Plenary – and leading the ARA Secretariat to deliver on the ARA's mission.

The ARA is open to filling this position as a regular recruitment or on a secondment basis. In the case of secondment, the ARA is seeking expressions of interest from potential secondees and seconding organisations. The secondee can be hosted at the seconding organisation (if based in the Global South) or another ARA member organisation from the Global South, including SouthSouthNorth, a leading NGO based in Cape Town, South Africa.

Background on ARA

The [Adaptation Research Alliance \(ARA\)](#) is a global collaborative effort to **catalyse increased investment and capacity for action-orientated research** that addresses pressing needs for adaptation to climate change for the most vulnerable – primarily in developing countries – at the scale and urgency demanded by the science. The ARA does that by bringing together researchers, funders, and civil society organisations, as well as intermediaries such as policy makers and other decision makers to **advocate** for needs-driven research and for this research to inform policies and actions; to **cooperate** in the planning and designing research; and to **mobilise** resources for action-oriented research and research-informed action based on the needs of the most vulnerable.

The ARA governance structure includes a Plenary comprising of all member organisations, a Steering Board elected by the Plenary, Co-Chairs elected by the Steering Board and a Secretariat. The Steering Board is the highest operational decision-making body of the ARA and is responsible for setting priorities for the ARA work programme to deliver on the ARA's Theory of Change and Mission.

The ARA Secretariat is currently hosted at SouthSouthNorth, a leading NGO in Cape Town, South Africa; which also provides administrative support, and financial management for the ARA. The ARA Secretariat is responsible for implementing the priorities and programmes as decided by the Steering Board, as well as engaging with members, communications and outreach and other activities such as fundraising, donor / funder management (including reporting) and monitoring, evaluation and learning. Some of the priorities and programmes of the ARA are delivered through ARA member organisations, though oversight remains with the ARA Secretariat.

Role Summary:

Reporting to the Director of SSN (as head of the hosting organization) and the ARA Steering Board Co-Chairs, the Head of Secretariat will play the lead role in supporting the ARA Steering Board and the Plenary, by providing leadership and managerial expertise to produce evidence-based, timely and strategic advice to the Steering Board to ensure that decisions are timely and well informed. The Head of Secretariat will also provide strategic leadership and management of the Secretariat team and oversight of its activities to enable it to deliver on the ARA's Mission and Theory of Change.

This position requires a dynamic and experienced professional with a strong experience in driving similar organisations, able to see the big picture to be able to provide sound, strategic advice; strong leadership skills to successfully manage a team and upward-manage senior stakeholders; a track record of timely implementation and/or delivery; and strong networking and communication skills to be able to champion the ARA's mission and goals.

Key Responsibilities:

Strategic Management of the Secretariat:

- Provide overall strategic management of the ARA Secretariat in its role to support and enable delivery of the mission and goals of the ARA.
- Ensure that Secretariat-led activities are implemented to meet the Steering Board's expectations, and that output and outcomes from these activities are made available to the ARA Steering Board and Plenary to assess the Alliance's progress and to define future priorities.
- Oversight and alignment of Secretariat Core Functions, including (but not limited to) fundraising, comms & knowledge management, member engagement, meeting and event management, financial and risk management.
- Provide strategic oversight of all ARA activities (both Secretariat- and Member-led) to ensure that they are in line with the ARA Theory of Change and of sufficient quality to merit ARA branding.

Strategic planning and supporting the Steering Board

- Supporting the SB in developing plans to achieve the ARA's mission and Theory of Change
- Support the Steering Board to make strategic decisions and agree on priorities for the ARA; support and enable the strategic engagement of the Plenary; as well as driving the implementation of the ARA governance structure.
- Build strong relationships and working closely with the ARA Steering Board and Co-chairs to inform them on upcoming decisions and seeking strategic input and steers.

- Provide clear, succinct and timely briefings and relevant supporting material to the Steering Board and facilitate effective communication within the Steering Board.
- Ensuring the implementation of these actions by mobilizing resources including fundraising and funder engagement as needed; with the support from the Secretariat.

Operational Model Transition

- The ARA is in the process of creating and implementing an operational model that is “fit for purpose”. This includes arrangements for the host organization of the Secretariat, defining Secretariat functions and staffing, securing core support for the ARA Secretariat and developing processes for member-led delivery of activities.
- The Head of Secretariat will play a key role in this process to ensure a smooth transition and related transition management activities, including leading the ARA Secretariat through this transition.

Skill and Experience Requirements

Essential:

- Proven experience in a senior management position, within an international organisation or a comparable setting, including upward management of senior stakeholders
- Experience working in developing countries
- Strong understanding of governance principles and best practices and experience of organizational evolution and change
- Strong self-motivation, leadership and team management skills.
- Excellent organisational, communication, and interpersonal abilities, especially with policy audiences; meticulous attention to detail
- Proficiency in basic Microsoft suite, including Word, Excel, and PowerPoint

Desirable:

- Familiarity with climate change and its implications, particularly in adaptation and resilience.
- Demonstrated experience engaging with and balancing the interests of diverse stakeholders
- Knowledge of other UN languages (especially Spanish and / or French) will be valued.

Qualifications:

- A master's degree or higher in relevant subjects, or strong equivalent experience.
- Preferably 10 or more years of relevant work experience.

Application process

To apply, please complete the following [application form](#) including at least two of the following:

- Example of working in dynamic and fast-paced environment.
- One example of previous experience in managing a Committee, a Steering Board, a Membership organisation/network or a group of very senior stakeholders.
- One example of previous experience in using communication skills to influence key senior stakeholders with a non-technical background.
- One example of managing organisational change/transition, or of establishing a new organisation.

Recruitment will remain open until the role is filled. If you are not contacted, please consider your application unsuccessful. Unfortunately, we are not able to offer feedback on any application made for this job posting. The ARA reserves the right not to make an appointment.

About the Host organisation and SouthSouthNorth

As the ARA is not a legal entity, post will be contracted through SouthSouthNorth (SSN), that provides contracting support to the ARA, and will be Hosted by SSN or into an organisation (tbd) that is an ARA Member. This post will be therefore framed as a Secondment to the ARA through the Host organisation. The contract will be stipulated either through SSN or through the Host Organisation.

SSN supports national and regional responses to climate change through policy and knowledge interventions, partnerships and deep collaboration. We do this by connecting people and information, enhancing capability and mobilising resources to respond innovatively to the challenges and opportunities that climate change presents. Being positioned in the Global South affords SSN a deeper understanding of, and connection to, the climate and development challenges facing the region. We enhance developing countries' access to climate information by brokering climate knowledge through formalised exchanges among various stakeholders. We assist decision-makers in delivering climate compatible development by informing policy formulation and implementation. We bring good governance to the management of donor funds, technical assistance and project management.

Full details of the projects that SSN currently implements are available at www.southsouthnorth.org.