

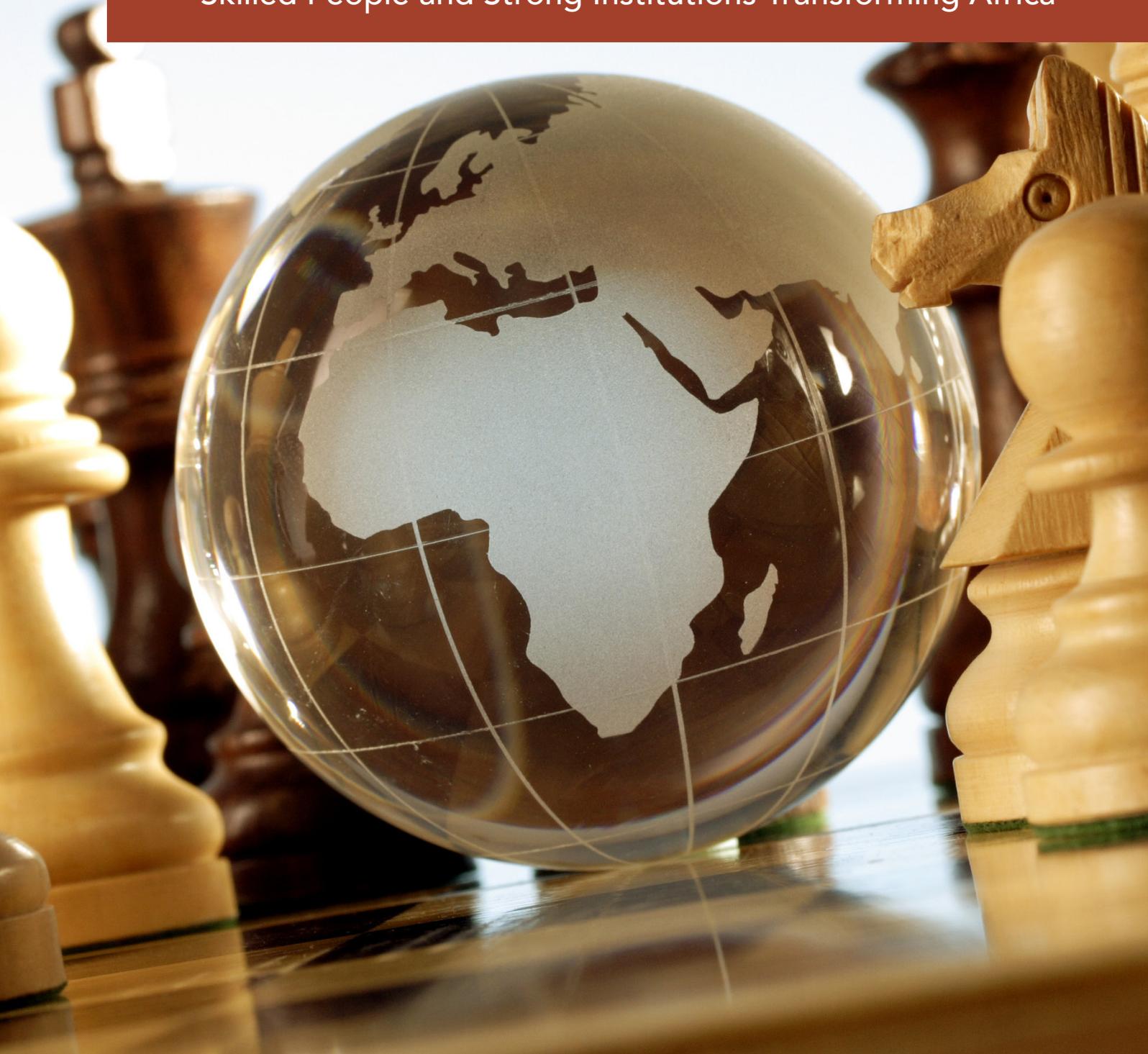


THE AFRICAN CAPACITY
BUILDING FOUNDATION

FONDATION POUR LE RENFORCEMENT
DES CAPACITES EN AFRIQUE

Synopsis of
**THE ACBF
STRATEGY
FOR 2017-2021**

Skilled People and Strong Institutions Transforming Africa



Africa's evolving capacity development landscape

Despite good progress since the turn of the century, capacity deficits remain a major challenge facing African countries in their quest for sustainable development. Those deficits continue to prevent them from implementing their development strategies and policies and from achieving their desired development outcomes. According to the Africa Capacity Report 2015, produced by the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), weak capacity in its various dimensions is still a problem of the continent. Indeed, ACBF's consultations with a broad cross-section of African governments, private sector, civil society, and development partners show that capacity constraints are most visible in addressing the continent's major problems.

According to the 2015 Africa Capacity Index, 73% of 45 African countries have medium capacity and 9% have low capacity, while only 18% have high capacity. An ACBF study on the capacities needed to implement the African Union's Agenda 2063 shows serious gaps in critical technical skills to implement the Agenda's first 10-year plan. For instance, Africa could have a projected gap of as many as 4.3 million engineers and 1.6 million agricultural scientists and researchers. The study also shows that leadership capacity is particularly important for implementing global, continental, and national strategies—but that it is woefully lacking across the continent. Without an urgent and concerted effort to address this conundrum, Africa will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, Agenda 2063, or national development strategies.

Other impediments to achieving the continent's long-term strategic goals and realizing the ambitious targets in Agenda 2063 include the lack of a systematic approach to creating, using, and retaining capacity. Such an approach would encompass individual, institutional and organizational capacity and an enabling policy, legal, and regulatory environment.

To address this challenge in the next five years, ACBF proposes to build on its strong track record of achievement as the leader in capacity development—and to intensify, in its Strategy for 2017–2021, efforts to fulfill its vision of “an Africa capable of achieving its own development.” For this, ACBF would accelerate and scale up:

- Developing critical technical skills—emphasizing in equal measure, capacity development, capacity retention, and capacity utilization.
- Building key institutions of development—to ensure greater effectiveness, implementation, and sustainability.
- Developing leadership capacity and changing the mindset—to implement global, continental, and national strategies.

ACBF's Strategy for 2017–2021 builds on the experience it has accumulated and the lessons it has learned over the past 25 years as a leading institution for capacity building. As a pan-African organization, ACBF must continue its journey of moving beyond “simply” providing grants to durably establish itself as a trusted advisor, facilitator, and broker to support capacity development in Africa.

The Foundation will realize this strategic aspiration by providing substantive advisory and capacity development services. This constitutes a major shift from ACBF's being perceived mostly as a “go-to place for funding” to being the “go-to place for capacity development support.”

Strategic Pillars for 2017–2021

The ACBF's new five-year strategy will focus on four ambitious and mutually supportive strategic pillars:

Strategic Pillar 1 - Enabling effective delivery of continental development priorities

This pillar targets the capacity development of pan-African institutions—the African Union, NEPAD Agency, and African Peer Review Mechanism—and of regional economic communities to increase their delivery capacities. The expected result by 2021 is increasing the delivery capacities of institutions leading Africa's transformational agenda. To support these institutions, ACBF will achieve three intermediate results:

- Improve its provision of integrated capacity development advisory services to pan-African institutions and RECs.
- Support pan-African institutions and RECs in prioritizing capacity development in their intervention strategies.
- Increase the effectiveness of pan-African institutions and RECs in implementing the continental transformation agenda.

Strategic Pillar 2 - Supporting countries to achieve tangible development results

This pillar focuses on the specific needs of member states and on the critical capacities they require for successful delivery of development results. Bringing value to the member states—particularly those with low capacity or those affected by conflict—will enable them to improve their performance. The five-year goal is to show concrete improvements in country performance in delivering on domestic development priorities. ACBF will achieve four intermediate results:

- Enhance country partnerships for integrated capacity development services.
- Support national capacity development strategies.
- Assist African states in integrating the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 in their national development strategies.
- Increase country capacities for successful delivery of development results.

Strategic Pillar 3 - Enhancing private sector and civil society contributions to sustainable development

This pillar targets developing the capacity of non-state actors, including civil society and the private sector—in delivering development priorities, including youth employment. ACBF will work closely with all key partners to ensure their full participation in national capacity building. The five-year goal is to demonstrate increased capacity of non-state actors in delivering continental and countries' development priorities. ACBF will achieve three intermediate results:

- Provide training programs to enhance the capacity of non-state actors to deliver on their results.
- Deliver technical and advisory services to non-state actors to enhance their results.
- Assist non-state actors in more effective engagement with the state.

Strategic Pillar 4 - Leveraging knowledge and learning to increase development effectiveness

This pillar seeks to increase the access to and use of capacity development knowledge and learning for better articulation of strategies and programs. To improve capacity development interventions across the continent, ACBF will achieve four intermediate results:

- Develop and disseminate relevant, quality, and timely capacity development products and services.
- Integrate knowledge and learning into ACBF's operations and services.
- Have actors in ACBF's network integrate capacity development in their practices.
- Ensure that ACBF is recognized as a reputable source of knowledge and learning in capacity development.

Delivering the ACBF Strategy 2017-2021

Five modes of intervention

The Foundation will use five modes of intervention in the new Strategy:

1. Grant making and fund management. This mode retails grants to finance capacity development programs and projects at various levels. It will also unblock constraints to delivery and address absorptive capacities.
2. Capacity development advisory services. This mode supports robust analysis of capacity challenges and develops strategies and programs to address them. It is a fee-based consulting service responding to the specific demands or needs of stakeholders. It includes systemic capacity assessments, capacity development policies, strategy and program designs, and change management support.
3. Knowledge services. This mode emphasizes tailoring “fit-for-purpose” knowledge products and connecting experiences and lessons on capacity development to actual decisionmaking. In addition, the Foundation will act as “clearing house” for capacity development through a well-established professional help desk. Examples of knowledge products and services include producing ACBF’s flagship publication, the Africa Capacity Report, organizing high-level forums, supporting knowledge sharing among African think tanks, and publishing strategic studies to support critical development challenges.
4. Resource mobilization for capacity development. This mode supports partners and stakeholders in mobilizing resources to implement capacity development programs required for their development agendas.
5. Capacity development innovations. The emphasis here is on transforming innovative capacity development methods into new models—and on using innovations in capacity development to create, use, and retain existing capacities. An example is our facility for financing innovative capacity building interventions.

ACBF will implement its programs and projects using a combination of internal competencies and networks of external implementing and technical partners. These networks include implementing partners, technical partners and experts who complement ACBF’s mix of competencies, and financial partners and knowledge networks, including the Strategic Studies Group, the African Think Tank Network, the Policy Institutes Committee, and the African Communities of Practice for managing for development results.

A programmatic approach based on selectivity and prioritization

Given the enormity and broad spectrum of the capacity challenges and the size of the continent, ACBF cannot do everything and be everywhere. The Foundation will be selective and prioritize its interventions, often using a regional approach and focusing on addressing the most binding capacity constraints to maximize effectiveness and impact. Selectivity will be determined by the intersection among continental and national needs, donor and partner priorities, and Foundation capacity. Selectivity and prioritization will also derive from considering the potential impact on relieving binding development constraints. Emphasis would be on the empowerment of women and youth and on migration and the brain drain.

The Strategy adopts a programmatic approach to manage its activities. To achieve the expected results, the programmatic approach focuses on achieving outcomes, implementing performance measures, and reporting on performance. It defines realistic expected results based on appropriate analysis. It clearly identifies program beneficiaries and designs programs to meet their needs and monitor progress toward results and resources consumed, using appropriate indicators. It also identifies and manages risk while bearing in mind the expected results and necessary resources. And it increases knowledge by integrating lessons into decisions and reporting on the results achieved and resources involved.

These programs have been designed to regroup activities and projects in a way that maximizes alignment with the four strategic pillars, facilitates reporting on intermediate results, and takes advantage of “naturally coherent” groupings of activities and the skills required to deliver them. The programs also facilitate bridges among ACBF functions and ultimately support Africa’s transformation and development agenda.

Repositioning the Foundation to support Africa's transformation

The Strategy for 2017–2021 builds on the experience accumulated and the lessons learned by the Foundation over the past 25 years as a leading institution in capacity building. As a pan-African organization, ACBF will move beyond simply providing grants to durably establish itself as a trusted and competent substantive advisor, facilitator, and broker to support capacity development in Africa.

Since 2012, the Foundation has implemented reforms in five key areas to transform itself into a more efficient and more effective organization:

- Prioritizing and scaling up operations for success.
- Increasing efficiency (significantly reducing the wage bill).
- Strengthening governance.
- Increasing the focus on results and impacts.
- Working toward its sustainability.

A total of 24 reform actions were identified, and all of the initially required reforms were implemented. Among the key reform areas was the need for ACBF to revisit its business model, which is now emerging to articulate its clients, service lines, and funding and institutional arrangements.

To achieve the results elaborated in the Strategy, the Foundation will continue and intensify efforts to reinforce several internal dimensions fundamental to its performance and sustainability. To do this, it will ensure that its business model, systems, processes, and organizational structures are optimized for enhanced service delivery in a client-centered approach.

The Foundation will also ensure that staff are supported through appropriate skill enhancement and recognition. It will enhance its visibility through improved institutional communication strategies. And it will augment its financial resources through new sources of revenue and funding. In addition to innovative autonomous funding initiatives, it will pursue such new sources of financing through membership fees—as the shift toward client service and support increases the “value for money” for its members—or consulting fees for specific services.

ACBF's value proposition

Created by and for African countries and their partners, ACBF has much to offer. It has been recognized by continental bodies as an African knowledge and capacity building service provider of choice for almost 25 years. It is also seen as having unique knowledge of Africa's capacity building landscape, thanks to accumulating in-depth understanding of the capacity needs of African countries and playing a lead role in assessing capacity with national partners.

This recognition and respect is at the heart of ACBF's value proposition. In a quarter century, ACBF has developed a strong network of think tanks and collaborated with universities, governments, and civil society. That gives it a unique position: strong coordination capabilities, a potentially wide delivery network, and the influence to leverage support.

ACBF's unique profile and strengths also highlight its value proposition:

- Twenty-five years of experience in supporting and coordinating capacity development in Africa.
- An Africa-wide mandate and unique understanding of the African context.
- Expertise in investment and program management.
- A strong track record in managing financial facilities and complex donor relationships.
- An exceptional skills mix of the core staff.
- Enhanced governance architecture and highly reliable operating systems and processes.
- Strong strategic partnerships and networks.

Conclusion

The capacity needs of African countries remain critical. Successful implementation of the continental agenda—delivered through a national and continental architecture comprising countries and continental institutions—requires significant support to capacity development. ACBF is well positioned to provide this support in partnership with the NEPAD Agency, the African Development Bank, the Economic Commission for Africa, and the wide network of implementing partners it has developed over the years. In this context, the Foundation remains more relevant than ever: its acquired knowledge and experience will be essential to meet the needs of transformational capacity development across the continent.

The results-oriented Strategy is articulated around strategic and intermediate results that ACBF aims at achieving under each of the pillars over the next five years. The results framework will guide in planning, monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on performance during the Strategy period, 2017- 2021. Two categories of results are expected:

- Strategic and intermediate results relating to the four strategic pillars and targeting ACBF's partners, stakeholder, and other clients.
- Organizational results to systematically track the impact of the internal reforms and the organization's performance over the Strategy period.

To facilitate achievement of the results set out in the Strategy, ACBF has developed a series of critical instruments—such as performance indicators, a performance and accountability framework allocating various roles and responsibilities (lead, deliver, and support), and an outline of the most significant risks that could interfere with achieving the Strategy, along with ways of addressing them.

By the end of 2021, the Foundation will have gone a long way in fulfilling its vision of “an Africa capable of achieving its own development.” To reach this goal requires providing political and financial support to institutions that have experience in capacity development and a solid understanding of the continent's development architecture to coordinate capacity development efforts for Africa's sustainable and inclusive development.