Research & Development Office

KSA International Collaboration Grant

Application guidelines

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Summary

Overview

The Research and Development Office (RDO) of the Ministry of Education was established in 2017 to transform the R&D ecosystem through strategic initiatives to enhance the research capacity in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Based on the RDO's Vision, as well as the need to strengthen the capacity of research in the Kingdom, the KSA International Collaboration Grant will be implemented following the Conference to heighten the Kingdom's culture of joint international research collaborations.

Background

To improve the quality of research, development, and innovation activities in the Kingdom, the International Collaboration Grant aims to:

A. Strengthen the capacity of university R&D in producing high quality research with increased strategic impact
B. Develop long-term partnerships with international universities in conducting R&D that has a joint institutional interest
C. Enable researchers to work in a different academic setting to gather skills while fostering knowledge exchange
D. Promote a sustainable R&D culture of collaboration across disciplines

The funding available will be in the form of a competitive research grant to be selected based on a peer review process, and will represent a substantial investment in growing the Kingdom's R&D network. This will accelerate and improve research output while building upon the complementary capabilities of both universities.

The International Collaboration Grant focuses on laying the groundwork for Saudi and international researchers to identify R&D areas of overlap, and that respond to challenges of joint interest.

Types of Awards

The International Collaboration Grant is broken into two funding schemes: the 'Research Capability' grant, and the 'Grand Challenges' grant. While both differ in terms scope and funding, the application process and required supporting documentation remains the same across the Program.

1. Research Capability Grant

The Research Capability Grant was designed to provide a source of funding to promising Saudi and international research collaborations in support of basic research. The key research areas that fall within the scope of this grant are considered priority research fields within the Kingdom's R&D ecosystem. Applications for grants to fund research that contributes indirectly to these fields are welcome but the justification of the   potential impact must be clear.

Relevant fields

Researchers with a joint institutional interest in one of the following sub-fields may apply for funding:

Field	Sub-fields
Life Science & Health	Biogenomics
	Nanobiology
Petrochemicals	Catalysis & Polymers
Water	Red Sea & Marine Studies
	Desalination & Water Reuse
Energy	Renewable Energy
	Oil & Gas
Environment	Pollution Management
	Crowd Management
	Climate Change
Information Technology	Machine Learning
	Cyber Security

Funding Allocation

Collaborations selected for funding for this grant will be eligible to receive **between SAR 0.6 and 1.8 million ($160,000 - $480,000 USD) over the course of three years on an annual instalment basis.** The amount requested must be clearly justified in the research proposal, which will be carefully evaluated by our expert panel. Allocation will take place through one tranche per year over the Program's three-year duration.

Funding will be distributed to the local Principal Investigator's university and earmarked for the international collaboration research project. The local PI will either be a Faculty member belonging to a Saudi public university under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education, or a Saudi national working as a researcher in a private or independent university in KSA, and will hold the responsibility for allocating the amount outlined in the research proposal to its partner collaborators.

Note that ordinarily the funding allocation should maintain that two thirds of the total grant is spent within the KSA university, leaving the remaining third to be distributed to the international collaborator.

2. Grand Challenges Grant

The Grand Challenges grant was designed to provide funding to support multidisciplinary teams with the potential to make significant progress in improving a socioeconomic challenge within the Kingdom. The Grand Challenges were developed by a Scientific Committee designated by the Research and Development Office with the aim of enhancing collaborative R&D that positively impacts domains of strategic importance, and will be of a joint interest for the collaborating university.

Grand challenges

Researchers with a joint institutional interested in conducting R&D that directly contributes to one of the following Grand Challenges may apply for funding:

Grand challenge	Potential fields for investigation[1]
1. **Increase the total available capacity of desalinated water by 50%**	Desalination & Water Reuse
2. **Increase the reliable transmission and storage of renewable energy to account for 4% of total energy use**	Renewable Energy
3. **Reduce the threat posed by emerging infectious diseases through prediction, pandemic detection, and vaccine development**	Biogenomics & Nanobiology
4. **Develop a real-time simulation and monitoring mechanism for Massive Crowd Movement with early warning capabilities**	Crowd Management

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[1] This is not an exhaustive list; it provides examples but we expect other fields to contribute too.

Funding Allocation

Collaborations approved for funding for this Grant will be eligible to receive **up to SAR 7.5 million ($2 million USD) over the course of three years on an annual instalment basis.** The amount requested must be clearly justified in the research proposal, which will be carefully evaluated by our expert panel.   Allocation will take place based on one tranche per year over the Program's three-year duration.

Similar to the Research Capability grant, funding will be distributed to the local Principal Investigator's university and earmarked for the international collaboration research project, to then allocate the amount outlined in the proposal to its partner collaborators. The local PI must come from a public Saudi university under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education.

Note that ordinarily the funding allocation should maintain that two thirds of the total grant is spent within the KSA university, leaving the remaining third to be distributed to the international collaborator.

Eligibility and Governance

This section outlines the eligibility criteria and requirements for some of the key parties involved.

Principal Investigators

Collaborations should consist of at least one Principal Investigator (PI) with a full-time position at a Saudi public university under the Ministry of Education, or a Saudi national with a full-time position at a Saudi private or independent university and at least 1 Co-PI with a full-time position at a non-Saudi, university that appears on the MoE's recommended university list[2]. PIs and Co-PIs must have successfully completed PhDs. It is up to the collaborating team to determine how many PIs and Co-PIs should be involved in the research. Researchers from private, government and not-for-profit entities can also serve as Co-PIs as a part of the collaboration.

A PI can only be named as a Co-PI on one other proposal. Likewise, an individual named as a Co-PI on a proposal can only be named as PI or Co-PI on one other proposal.

The PI and Co-PIs must have a contract of employment with the university that lasts at least a year. The CVs of the proposed PIs should be attached as a component of the research proposal. CVs should be no longer than three pages.

The local PI/s from the Saudi university will carry the responsibility in coordinating and developing the proposal in close connection to the Co-PIs. He/she must ensure the proposal and all related documentation are submitted on time.

Note that proposed collaborations can be based on already existing collaborations, or on newly established relationships- any collaboration must demonstrate that it brings together the capabilities, expertise and resources necessary to address the proposed research.

Potential applicants should contact the RDO in advance of the submission deadline if they have any doubts concerning their eligibility.

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[2] Please see *https://ru.moe.gov.sa/*

Research Team

The Research Team encompasses additional Post-Doctoral, PhD, or Graduate-level researchers and students who contribute to the scientific work but are not in a position of project and/or grant administration. It is up to the PI and Co-PIs to determine how much additional capacity is desired in the form of a team, and outline this accordingly in the application.

Program Governance & Management

The PIs and Co-PIs should take into consideration the overarching administrative leadership at each grantee's university (e.g. Department Chair, Dean of Research) and clarify their role and any interdependencies that may affect the research process.

A letter of support from the Department Chair or Dean should be provided from the international collaborating university. It should include language dealing with his/her assurance in providing reasonable accessibility to research facilities, in considering requests for salary buy-outs and international travel, as well as a commitment to participate in occasional collaboration governance.

Collaborators will maintain the ultimate responsibility for compliance with the terms of the International Collaboration grant.

Scope

The usage of the funding is divided into three categories: Mobility, Equipment, and Consumables. It is the collaborating team's decision to determine allocation, as long as proposed expenses fall into one of the following:

Mobility:

- Travel
- Travel expenses
- Salary Buy-Out (as a general rule, for KSA PI and Co-PI three months and two months basic salary per year, respectively)

Equipment:

- Items to further enable research, with a unit value of over SAR 30,000 and a life expectancy of one year of greater (Purchasing equipment is limited to KSA universities)

Consumables:

- Supplies and materials used in the performance of the project

When considering the balance of expenditure across these areas, applicants should make sure they understand the impact of the upper limit of one third of the grant being available for the international collaborator and the fact that purchasing equipment is limited to KSA universities.

Submission Process and Deadline

Applications for the International Collaboration Grant must be submitted to the RDO electronically; the submission process will be published on the RDO website ahead of the submission deadline. The local PI must ensure that the application is received by the RDO by 4pm (16:00) on the **October 29th, 2018**, as one single PDF file. An incomplete application, or one that does not meet the eligibility criteria of the grant will be rejected and no longer considered. Successful applicants will be informed once the peer-review evaluation process is complete.

It is expected that local PIs will coordinate in working with the Co-PI from the partner institution to develop the proposal and supporting documentation, and for him/her to also aggregate all documentation to submit to his/her KSA university point of contact.

Each proposed collaboration may only apply for funding in a single application.

On the application form you will be asked to confirm the following:

A. The content of the application is original and a similarity check has been completed
B. The proposed research is aligned to the University's overall research strategy
C. Resources and facilities are available to support the project

Documents required

Based on the International Collaboration Grant Program schedule, research teams must submit a number of documents over the course of the three years. The following documentation will be required throughout the program and release of the year two and three funding is conditional upon its receipt.

Pre-allocation (all in the application form document):

1. *Research Proposal*
2. *Spend Plan*
3. *Declaration*
4. *Letter of support from the international collaborator*

After Year 1 (templates to be used from here to be shared with successful bidders):

5. *Expenditure Statement*
6. *Interim Report*

After Year 2:

7. *Expenditure Statement*
8. *Interim Report*

After Year 3:

9. *Expenditure Statement*
10. *Final Outcome Report*

A summary of the documentation required for the International Collaboration Grant is shown below. The application form contains the relevant templates.

Document	Requirements
Research Proposal	The *Research Proposal* is the key element in obtaining the International Collaboration funding. It should outline the following information: • Research/demand question for joint collaborative research • Type of grant requested and the field or Grand Challenge • Roles and responsibilities of Lead & Co-Principal Investigators • Scientific methodology to be used throughout research • Compliance measures throughout Program cycle • Alignment to national priorities and the objectives of Vision 2030
Spend Plan	Provide cost estimates of resources the collaboration seeks to use over the Grant cycle.
Letter of Support	A letter from the international collaborator (Department Chair, Dean, Research Center Director, Vice-Rector or similar) addressing support and commitment to the research project, along with reasonable assurance of research facilities, and other partnership related matters.
Expenditure Statement	Provide the financial statement of expenditure of the grant spending based on the proposed Spend Plan. *All expenditures listed in the Expenditure Statement must have an associated proof of purchase (e.g. receipt, sub-contract, salary statement, etc.) to be submitted to the RDO along with the actual Expenditure Statement
Interim Report	Provide an update on ongoing outputs, impacts, and outcomes as the Grant cycle progresses.
Final Outcome Report	Provide a final statement on outputs, impacts and outcomes at the conclusion of the Grant cycle

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Evaluation

Research Proposals are the core element of the International Collaboration grant application, and will be scrutinized by a panel of experts to determine their success on the basis of:

- Scientific quality and impact
- Scientific leadership
- Justification of resources
- Collaborative strengths
- Research capacity building
- Ethical/governance issues
- Alignment to national priorities and Vision 2030

After the collaborators receive their funding, it is permissible to diverge from the *Spend Plan* submitted to the RDO according to different priorities or new circumstances. It is not necessary to re-submit a revised plan; however, the expenditure must still conform to the scope and intent of the grant. Compliance will be assessed upon submission of the *Expenditure Statement*. Note that a proof of purchase for all items listed in the *Expenditure Statement* must be submitted along with the Statement itself (e.g. receipt, sub-contract, salary statement, etc.) for the statement to be considered complete.

Reporting and Monitoring

Funded collaborations must fulfil the financial and non-financial reporting requirements as set by the RDO. The local PI will hold the responsibility in ensuring all documentation is satisfactory and submitted on time.

The collaborators must ensure proper financial management of the funding, and accountability for the use of Government funds, while ensuring that formal audit standards and procedures exist for maintaining appropriate anti-fraud and corruption controls – in line with existing university audit and financial control processes within its respective jurisdiction.

It is the responsibility of the collaborating universities to evaluate whether any legal conditions should be considered in forming an international collaboration based on local and international requirements. Universities must ensure compliance from the onset of the collaboration formation to the completion of the Grant cycle. Local KSA universities should also ensure all legal conditions comply with KSA legal standards.

Universities must also ensure all research is conducted in an ethical manner, and will be responsible for the intellectual property of the research generated through the grant.

Enquiries: RDICC@moe.gov.sa