

The National Science Council's New Initiative for Establishing
International Research-intensive Centers of Excellence in Taiwan (I-RICE)

I. Objectives

In order to enhance the cooperation between research universities in Taiwan and top international research institutions, the National Science Council ("NSC") is planning to support the establishment of a number of International Research-intensive Centers of Excellence in Taiwan (the "Center") with joint efforts from abroad. The purpose is to establish the Center as a research hub to attract internationally renowned scholars and researchers to stay in the Center on a temporary basis to conduct joint research with domestic researchers and to improve the reputation and global ranking of Taiwan's universities.

II. Requirements for Applying Institutions and Principal Investigator

Applying Institutions: The Applying Institution must meet the program's objectives and funding criteria as established by the NSC.

Principal Investigator ("PI"): The PI must meet the NSC requirements for research grant applications (not including retirees) and have received Taiwanese or international academic awards or attained outstanding research achievements.

III. International Collaborating Research Bodies ("International Partner")

1. Global top 50 universities (including their respective research units), important foreign national laboratories, and other world-class research and development organizations.
2. Within the same research field, each International Partner may only collaborate with one Applying Institution. Applications in different fields are not limited by this rule.

IV. Grant Type and Funding Limit

1. The costs to establish the Center shall be shared by the Applying Institution, the International Partner, and the NSC.

2. The amount of grant funding from the NSC shall depend on the proposed budget submitted by the Applying Institution and the International Partner, with an upper limit of NTD 50 millions per year for each Center,
3. In-kind Contributions
 - a) The Applying institution can provide space, relevant equipment, and research and administrative personnel as in-kind contributions.
 - b) The international partner can provide professional research personnel and essential research equipment or resources to support the establishment and operation of the Center. The resources can include staffing, databases, etc.

V. Application Process

The application process consists of two phases, i.e., Preliminary Proposal and Full Proposal.

Phase 1: Preliminary Proposal Submission

1. The PI shall submit the preliminary proposal, which includes overall planning and the resumes of the PI and co-investigators, via email to the Department of International Cooperation of the NSC. In the meantime, the Applying Institution shall also deliver the hard copy of the original application to the NSC.
2. The NSC will review the submitted Preliminary Proposals, and notification of initial approval will be sent to the Applying Institution if the preliminary proposal passes the first-round review. The Applying Institution shall then work with its International Partner to prepare a detailed Full Proposal.
3. On rare occasions, the NSC will selectively provide an Initial Planning Grant (no more than 1 year) for those Applying Institutions not passing the first-round review to continuously work with their International Partners in preparing a revision within a specified period.

Part 2: Full Proposal Submission

1. The PI shall submit the Full Proposal within the deadline to the NSC via the online research application system, using the grant application format with Chinese and English versions. The Applying Institution shall also deliver the hard copy of its official application to the NSC.

2. If its project passes the second-round review, the NSC will send approval notice to the project PI and inform the Applying Institution to start the contract signing and grant appropriation process.

In the first year when this program is initiated, it will be announced publicly and applications will be accepted by a pre-determined deadline. After one year, this program will be reviewed, evaluated, and revised for further improvements in its application process.

VI. Timeline

The duration of each project shall be 3 to 5 years

VII. Process of Performance Review and Evaluation Criteria

The Applying Institution shall set the performance criteria and targets based on the characteristics of the project. Such criteria and targets can include publications, intellectual property rights, patent applications, technology transfers, personnel training, database setup, academic research awards, international visibility enhancement, public policy contribution, and social impact, etc. After the review and approval of these criteria and targets by NSC, the project will be evaluated annually on the basis of these criteria and targets.

VIII. Review

1. First-round Review: The NSC will invite a team of academics and experts to review all applications.
2. Second-round review: The Applying Institutions that have passed the first-round review and submitted the Full Proposal will be invited by the NSC to make a presentation (briefing) to the review meeting. If necessary, the NSC will conduct an on-site visit to the Applying Institution before holding the second-round review meeting
3. In order to simplify the process, the NSC's approval of a project will cover a period of 3-5 years. However, the subsequent year's funding is contingent on the performance of the previous year.
4. Focal Points of Proposal Review
 - a) Significant, substantive achievements of the Applying Institution during the past five years

- b) The mission, objective, strategy and operation of the proposed Center.
- c) The supporting operation and administration of the applying institution.
- d) The infrastructure to conduct and support international joint research, and strategy of the Applying Institution for scientific research and development.
- e) Other unique features of the Applying Institution.
- f) Collaborative and supportive arrangements of the International Partner.
- g) Other related items.

IX. Execution and Evaluation

1. This program will provide sufficient funding for long-term research projects and allow the PI to plan short, medium and long-range goals and set performance targets. During the execution period, the PI shall provide research results and performance data to NSC, complying with the requirements in the approval letter from the NSC. If the Applying Institution or International Partner fails to provide matching fund or equivalent expenditure according to the budget, the NSC will reduce the funding for the following year as necessary. This is a 3-to-5 year program and the PI is required to submit mid-term reports according to the agreed upon deadlines.
2. Mid-term evaluation: PI shall submit an execution report two months before the end of each fiscal year. The report should include current progress of the project, initial research results, and focal areas for upcoming execution. The NSC will forward the reports to experts to conduct document review or hold review meeting for the consideration of following year's funding. Funding will be terminated for those projects that do not meet the expected progress.
3. Pre-conclusion evaluation: The NSC will invite the PI to present the project results three months prior to the conclusion of the project. A committee of academics and experts will be formed to conduct an evaluation.
4. Post-conclusion evaluation: The PI is required to submit a final report of the project results (including digital forms) through the Applying Institution to the NSC no later than three months after the conclusion of the project.

X. Budgeting and Expense Guidelines

1. The grant shall only be used for the purpose of the project. The grant is not to cover construction for new buildings, as well as equipments, personnel and administrative expenses not related to the Center. All Center-supported expense items shall be listed on an approved budget list.
2. If inappropriate uses of the grant are discovered as a result of the audit, the expense request will be revoked. In addition, the Applying Institution shall be held accountable. The NSC may also reduce or terminate the grant payments for subsequent years.

XI. Contract Signing and Grant Disbursement

The contract signing of the approved project, grant appropriation procedure, expense reporting, grant extension and modification, mid-term reports, final report, etc., shall all be conducted according to the NSC approval letter.

XII. Other Related Matters

1. All Applying Institutions and affiliated universities shall not apply to other NSC departments or other organizations for the same project.
2. Other related matters not mentioned in this announcement shall comply with NCS expense guidelines, research project contracts, approval documentations, and other applicable policies.
3. This program shall comply with the Clause 4 of the "Guidelines of Central Government Funding for Private Institutions and Individuals": The final expense report should include detailed itemization of expenses and expense purposes, as well as the total amount and actual government funding of each item of expenditure.

Note: This translated version is for the convenience of English readers. The official document is based on the original Chinese version, "「補助在台成立跨國頂尖研究中心計畫」試辦方案"