



# FLAGSHIP PROGRAM

Call for Pre-Proposal

هيئة تنمية البحث  
والتطوير والابتكار  
Research Development  
and Innovation Authority



# Flagship Program for Project-Level Funding

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## About Flagship



The Flagship Program is a premier funding program dedicated to advancing research in strategically significant, predefined areas for the Kingdom. Focusing on cutting-edge scientific research within the four national RDI aspirations and priorities — Sustainability and Essential Needs, Health and Wellness, Energy and Industrials, and Economies of the Future — the program supports projects that address specific research areas (Targeted RDI Domains) detailed in the "Research Focus" section.

Supporting the later stages of technology development, the Flagship Program requires that the technology component of the applicant's innovation has demonstrated feasibility potential or progressed beyond the proof-of-concept stage (e.g., at least Technology Readiness Level 4). This focus ensures that funding is directed toward projects with a clear path to application and impact.

Applicants to Flagship can submit proposals through the following grants (further details about the grants are available on the official portal):

Grants	Who can Apply	Funding <sup>1</sup>
<b>Innovation Flagship Grant (IFG)</b>	Academia applicants (Universities, Research Institutes)	Up to 10 Mn SAR (consider support rate)
<b>Accelerator Flagship Grant (AFG)</b>	Private Sector applicants (Small-Medium Enterprises, Corporates)	Up to 10 Mn SAR (consider support rate)
<b>Consortium Flagship Grant (CFG)</b>	Only consortia can apply (at least 2 eligible entities)	Up to 20 Mn SAR (consider support rate)

**Support rate:** Applicants from academic entities will be supported at 100% of the project cost; SMEs will be supported at 85% of the project cost; Corporate entities will be supported at 50% of the project cost

The final amount awarded will depend on the project's scope, budget justification, and alignment with the call's objectives. Projects funded under this program will typically have a maximum **duration of 3 years** (the project's duration may be extended in duly justified cases).




<sup>1</sup> The grant funding cap is being evaluated at this time.



## Eligibility and Admissibility Criteria



All applicants must comply with the following criteria to participate:

Grants	Applicant Eligibility 	Pre-Proposal Eligibility 	Pre-Proposal Admissibility 
<b>Innovation Flagship Grant (IFG)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant should be a KSA-based legal entity – a research organization or institution</li> <li>The PI should be an FTE<sup>2</sup> at the grant-seeking entity</li> <li>Saudi nationals can reside ex-KSA at time of application but must be affiliated with a local inst. by time of award*</li> <li>All the research activities must be performed in KSA apart from exceptional cases when required technical expertise is not available in the Kingdom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-proposals must have a clear linkage to the specific mission, RDI<sup>3</sup> domain, and objectives outlined in the call</li> <li>Pre-proposal should satisfy Mission specific project eligibility criteria (if specifically indicated in the information of the call)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All mandatory sections of the pre-proposal should be duly filled</li> <li>Must be submitted before specified deadline</li> <li>Must be readable, accessible and printable</li> <li>Pre-proposal should be submitted only through official portal</li> <li>Pre-proposal should abide by the limit of 6 pages following a set format, unless mentioned otherwise</li> <li>Pre-proposal should satisfy all the formatting criteria</li> </ul>
<b>Accelerator Flagship Grant (AFG)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant should be a KSA-based legal entity – a private business of any scale such as an SME or Corporate</li> <li>MNCs<sup>4</sup> should have at least 1 facility in KSA</li> <li>The PI should be an FTE at the grant-seeking entity</li> <li>Saudi nationals can reside ex-KSA at time of application but must be affiliated with a local inst. by time of award*</li> <li>All the research activities must be performed in KSA apart from exceptional cases when required technical expertise is not available in the Kingdom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the PI resides ex-KSA at time of application, a binding statement from the host institution must confirm its association with- and its support of the project and PI should the proposal be successful*</li> </ul>	
<b>Consortium Flagship Grant (CFG)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 or more eligible entities must collaborate to form a consortium</li> <li>Applicants should be a legal entity – a research org., inst., or private business of any scale (SME or Corporate)</li> <li>The leading organization of the consortium should be based in KSA</li> <li>Saudi nationals can reside ex-KSA at time of application but must be affiliated with a local inst. by time of award*</li> </ul>		

Note: \*) Saudi national researchers who may reside outside of KSA at the time of application wishing to carry out a project with a host institution in KSA are eligible. A KSA-based host institution must engage the PI for at least the duration of the project and must confirm its association with- and its support of the project and PI through a binding statement as part of the application.

<sup>2</sup> Full-Time Equivalent

<sup>3</sup> Research Development and Innovation

<sup>4</sup> Multi- National Corporations

## Research Ethics



It is required that the research is designed and conducted in such a way that it meets specific ethical principles and is subject to appropriate professional and institutional oversight in terms of research governance. Please refer to the following principles:

- The research should aim to maximize benefit for individuals and minimize risk and harm
- The rights and dignity of individuals and groups should be respected
- Wherever possible, participation should be voluntary and appropriately informed
- Research should be conducted with integrity and transparency
- Lines of responsibility and accountability should be clearly defined
- Independence in the research should be maintained, and where conflicts of interest cannot be avoided, they should be made explicit
- All necessary ethical approvals and permissions must be taken prior to the commencement of the project

RDIA will:

- Only fund research that has an adequate and appropriate ethics statement, which takes the ethical dimensions of the research seriously
- Consider reviewer or panel member disagreement with the suggested project approach to ethics as either grounds for a conditional grant or rejection of the proposal (where it calls into question the researcher's competence or the feasibility or validity of a proposal)
- Consider the suspension of payments and grant termination if the review shows that a project requires major changes that will alter it to the extent that it can no longer retain RDIA support
- Only fund research organizations that have processes in place to follow the guidance in this framework and comply with the grant conditions and RDIA's policy and guidelines
- Hold the PI and researchers involved in any allegations of research misconduct and breach of compliance accountable with the grant conditions; this can result in the immediate suspension of the individual project and other projects

## Use of Funds



Funding received from the program may be used for the following categories<sup>6</sup>:

- Manpower costs
- Sub-contracting costs
- Equipment costs
- Travel costs
- Other operating expenses
- Indirect costs

Although the above expense categories are used to provide applicants with high-level guidance, the

<sup>6</sup> The budget items are under consideration and study at this time.



program does not set any limits or stringent criteria on how the funding can be efficiently utilized to achieve the intended goals. Rather, it offers them reasonable degrees of freedom to submit high-quality proposals with a cap limit on expenses.

## Allowances of the Project Team

- This article applies to individuals working on research projects supported by RDIA's grant funding, including the following categories:
  - Faculty members, research faculty, postdocs, graduate students, and those in similar positions
  - Researchers, their assistants, technicians, administrators, and accountants
  - Project managers and their assistants
  - Consultants, referees, and individuals providing expertise relevant to the project
- Salaries and allowances will be disbursed based on the approved budget for a three-year project in accordance with the next Table. In case of longer project, any subsequent years will follow a similar pattern.

Table: Salaries and allowances disbursement guidelines.

Year	Payment	Description	Disbursement date
First	First	Salaries and allowances to the project staff for the first half of the first year, except researchers	After the contract is signed, implementation plan is approved, and the periodic technical report #1 for the project is submitted
	Second	Salaries and allowances to the project staff for the second half of the first year, except researchers	After the annual technical #1 and financial report #1 is submitted
	Third	Researcher allowances for the first year will be disbursed	After the annual technical #1 and financial report #1 is approved
Second	Fourth	Salaries and allowances to the project staff for the first half of the second year, except researchers	After the contract is signed, implementation plan is approved, and the periodic technical report #2 for the project is submitted
	Fifth	Salaries and allowances to the project staff for the second half of the second year, except researchers	After the annual technical #2 and financial report #2 is submitted
	Sixth	Researcher allowances for the second year will be disbursed	After the annual technical #2 and financial report #2 is approved
Third	Seventh	Salaries and allowances to the project staff for the first half of the third year, except researchers	After the contract is signed, implementation plan is approved, and the periodic technical report #3 for the project is submitted

	<b>Eighth</b>	Salaries and allowances to the project staff for the second half of the third year, except researchers	After the annual technical #3 and financial report #3 is submitted
	<b>Ninth</b>	Researcher allowances for the third year will be disbursed	After the final technical and financial report is approved, along with an electronic copy of all scientific outputs for the project

- Project-related allowances received by any member of the research team, including the PI, co-PI, and project manager, should not exceed the amount received for three projects per month.
- Before disbursing allowances to the research team, technical reports must be approved as specified in the contract.
- It is not permissible to combine two allowances for any member of the project team.
- Allowances will not be disbursed until the project has commenced.
- Project funds will not be disbursed until the contract has been signed.
- Work on the project will not commence until the entity's account has received the funding.
- Allowances will only be disbursed for research projects that have been approved as specified in the project budget. Participants will receive allowances based on the completion of their assigned tasks and roles, and the amount of allowances will be determined by the RDIU and based on the RDIA's regulations and policies.
- The next Table outlines the guidelines and spending limits for the human resources budget for the research project.

Table: Guidelines and limits for expenditure on the human resources item in the research project

Member	Maximum Allowance <sup>7</sup> (SAR)	Yearly Allowance (Months)	Total (SAR)
<b>Researchers</b>			
<b>Principal Investigator</b>	6,000	10	60,000
<b>Co-Principal Investigator</b>	5,000	10	50,000
<b>Assistants – Part time</b>			
<b>Project Manager</b>	3,000	10	30,000
<b>Masters / PhD holders</b>	3,000	10	30,000

<sup>7</sup> Allowances are under consideration and study at this time and are subject to adjustments.

Assistants – Full time (Salaries Exclusively for Project Contracts) <sup>8</sup>			
PhD Holder	12,000	12	144,000
Master	9,000	12	108,000
Bachelors	7,000	12	84,000
Technicians and Administrators			
Technicians	2,800	10	28,000
Administrators	2,400	10	24,000
Professionals (Skillful Labors)			
Staff/Workers and the like	1,600	12	19,200

11. The next Table outlines the guidelines and spending limits for consultants in the research project.

Table: Guidelines and limits for expenditure on the consultants in the research project

Item	Allowance Incl. Per Diem Allowance (SAR/Day)	Max. Consul-tation Duration (Days)	Maximum Visits During The Project Period	Providing Tickets	Total	The Total Incl. The Tickets
Within the administrative region for research implementation	1,000	15	unlimited	X	15,000	15,000
Outside the administrative region for research implementation	2,000	10	2	✓	20,000	25,000
Outside the Kingdom	3,000	10	1	✓	30,000	50,000

## Application Process



The Flagship Program employs a two-stage application process:

- Pre-Proposal Submission:** Applicants must submit a concise pre-proposal outlining their project idea, objectives, and potential impact. This stage allows for a preliminary assessment of project relevance and alignment with the call for proposal's objectives.
- Full Proposal Submission:** Upon successful evaluation of the pre-proposal, shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a comprehensive full proposal. This detailed proposal will undergo a rigorous peer-review process.

<sup>8</sup> These are salaries that are exclusively allocated to full-time individuals contracted for the designated project.

Detailed information regarding the application process and templates will be made available on the official RDIA grants portal.

## Review Process



RDIA grants adhere to the global best practices in program management to ensure the highest degree of objectivity and quality. A qualified expert will be appointed to review the pre-proposal. Throughout this process, the grant personnel and selected experts will adhere to all conflict-of-interest and confidentiality requirements. Qualified pre-proposals will be invited to submit a full proposal.

In alignment with best practices, the full proposal will undergo a two-phase process, each phase with its own application review steps:

- In the first phase, an initial review of every application will be conducted upon receipt of the grant application forms to ensure that the proposal meets all the specified requirements. The RDIUs in the institutions will ensure the completeness of the applications per the guidelines and policies and will check for plagiarism.
- In the second phase, complete grant applications that meet the program's priorities and budget constraints will be, subsequently, evaluated in terms of technical merit. This step is conducted by independent experts and/or a panel committee. The summary statement for each proposal will be evaluated by an Oversight Committee, and funding recommendations for high-scoring applications will be recommended. A notice of approval or rejection will be sent to the RDIUs or applicants once the review process is complete.

## Project Quality



Based on the RDIA's system, funding allocations will be performance-based. When applying for grants, it is important for researchers to be aware of the requirements for grant closure to ensure successful completion of the project and proper use of grant funds. These requirements may vary depending on the specific grant but typically include completion of all project activities, submission of all required reports, compliance with RDIA's policies and regulations, and preparation and submission of closeout documentation.

It is important for applicants to include the expected outcomes of the proposed project in the grant application. These outcomes may include various forms of scientific output (e.g., publications, patents, prototypes, and other acceptable results, depending on the type of fund). By including these expected outcomes in the grant application, the applicant is providing a clear indication of the potential impact and significance of the proposed research. This information is important for the RDIA in evaluating the feasibility and potential success of the proposed research project. Additionally, by setting clear expectations for the research outcomes, applicants can better track and document their progress throughout the project, which is critical for a successful grant closure.



## Evaluation

Pre-proposals will be assessed according to the following evaluation criteria:

### TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE AND NOVELTY

**Novelty of Proposal:** How unique or original is the proposed research compared to existing work in the field?

**Technical Merit of Proposal:** Is the proposed research scientifically sound, technically feasible, and supported by evidence?

**TRL Advancement:** To what extent does this project contribute to advancing the technology from its current TRL?

### POTENTIAL IMPACT

**Relevance to Prescribed RDI Domain:** How well does the proposed research align with the specific research priorities and objectives outlined in the grant call?

**Market Demand:** What is the potential market size, demand, and overall attractiveness for the proposed solution or technology?

**Overall Impact:** What are the potential broader benefits and impact of the project beyond the immediate scientific or technological advancements, considering economic, societal, or environmental factors?

### TEAM AND EXPERTISE

**Quality of Research Team:** Does the research team possess the necessary expertise, experience, diversity, and capacity to successfully execute the project?

**Partnership Building:** Has the proposal outlined relevant and strategic partnerships with entities capable of contributing to the project's success and facilitating the advancement of the technology through later TRLs?

### IMPLEMENTABILITY

**Execution Plan:** Is the proposed execution plan well-structured, logical and realistic to achieve the project's objectives?

## Terms and Conditions



1. This grant is subject to the RDIA's policies and national regulations for research grants that govern all award personnel and activities.
2. Proposals must not duplicate or have significant overlap with existing grants.
3. The final grant amount may differ from the requested amount based on review recommendations and availability of funds.
4. Any proposal found to include investigators based on personal or reciprocal arrangements, rather



than their ability to contribute meaningfully to the project, will be disqualified for favoritism or conflict of interest.

5. Applicants are highly encouraged to share data/ outcomes generated from their projects through open-access platforms.

## Contact Information



For application enquiries, such as eligibility queries, budget preparation questions, or technical issues with the portal, please contact:

[GRANTS-INFO@rdia.gov.sa](mailto:GRANTS-INFO@rdia.gov.sa)