



National Research Program for Universities

Call for Proposals Guidance

Deadline for Full Proposal Submission: 15th January, 2020

I. General Information

A. Program Description:

The objective of the NRPU program is to support university-based researchers for conducting cutting-edge research. The program is open for contributions related to both basic and applied research. NRPU aims to stimulate scientific excellence and the advancement of knowledge by allowing researchers the freedom to formulate by themselves the research concept, method and The NRPU grant awards will be made to the host higher education institution of the lead academic – faculty – associated with the project, and administered through the appropriate ORIC on campus.

NRPU awards will be selected competitively using a merit-based, independent, transparent evaluation and selection process based upon international standards. The process is described in the Sections below, as well as in the full Evaluation and Selection protocol available on the HEC website.

B. Applicant Eligibility

Principal Investigator (PI) must:

- be a regular faculty member of the Higher Education Institutions (public and private) or hold a contract equivalent to the length of project duration
- have an advanced academic degree (PhD or MPhil/MS with Two (02) years of research experience)
- have relevant experience of working as a researcher
- have max one (01) NRPU research grant at a time for the PI

C. Anticipated Funding Amount:

The budgets for NRPU projects may be range between PKR 5–20 Million, with a maximum project duration of 3 years. Co-financing – including in kind and cash contributions–by industry partners will be considered a merit and an indicator of industry support. The allocation of the overall budget between basic & applied research will be as follows:

- Basic Research – 60%

- Applied Research – 40%

A detailed budget template is provided in the proposal template. The project budget can finance the following activities:

- a) **Salaries** for PI and co-PIs based on the amount of time spent on the project
- b) **Stipends** for bachelors, masters, doctoral students and post-doctoral scholars to help take the prototype or proposed product to market
- c) **Travel** to national and international conference/workshop to present research results obtained and in support of the proposed research
- d) **Equipment purchase and maintenance** as appropriate & approved to conduct the proposed research
- e) **Purchase of Research supplies** necessary to conduct the proposed research
- f) **Processing Fee** for open access journals/ publications for disseminating research results obtained
- g) **Project Overhead Cost** is permissible to support admin cost and research support

D. Dead line for submission of proposal

Full Proposals must be submitted to HEC by 15th January, 2020

II. Proposal Preparation Instructions

A. Basic Guidance

All researchers interested in submitting a proposal for the NRPU must submit a Full Project to the Higher Education Commission via the HEC online portal according to the guidelines provided in the call for proposals. The research proposals are assessed by peer reviewers having great expertise within the field. The assessment is conducted in an objective, impartial and transparent manner and is of high quality.

B. Proposal Formatting

- a. All invited Full Proposals should use the .docx Full Proposal Template Document as the basis for the submission. The section guidance (in light grey) should be deleted prior to proposal submission.
- b. Proposals must be submitted in English.
- c. Full Proposals should include a Table of Contents.
- d. All sections of the template must be completed prior to submission. The list of required sections – and the guidance for the content within each section – is provided in Section III below of this Call for Proposals.
- e. The page limit for each section must not be exceeded.
- f. All pages of the proposal should have a page number.
- g. Proposals should be submitted in 11 point, Calibri font.

- h. Tables should be completed in the format and length indicated in the relevant Template document (.docx).
- i. Proposal sections should not include URLs for additional information. Information or documentation beyond that included in the written proposal will not be used in the evaluation process.
- j. Proposals should follow accepted academic practice in citing references throughout the proposal. References should be numbered sequentially, and listed separately as a required attachment to the proposal. References should be reported in a standard form, and include: the names of all authors; the article and journal title; book title; volume and page numbers; and year of publication. If available, a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) may be provided.

III. Required Proposal Sections

The required sections for the Full Proposal submission are described below. All submissions should address the identified topics for each section. Do not exceed the maximum page limit for each section.

A. Full Proposal Submissions

Principal Investigators must complete each section of the proposal as described in the attached link to the Full Proposal Template .docx Document. The section guidance (in light grey) should be deleted prior to proposal submission.

- [Web Link for Full Proposal Application Form](#)

B. Instructions for proposal write up

The proposal must include the information requested. Successful proposals will include clear statements of the project goals and explanations of how these goals will be addressed.

1. **Project summary (limited to one page).** The summary should be succinct and clearly state the goals and resulting outcomes of the project. It should be informative to specialists in the same or related fields as well as understandable to a well-informed, non-technical reader. Include the title of the project, the names of the co-principal investigator(s), and the names of partner institutions. Include a clear description of the project, stating its specific aims and long term goals. Briefly indicate the unique aspects of the project and interdisciplinary composition (if any).
2. **Project description (ten pages max).** The project description is limited to the equivalent of 10 printed pages including all figures, tables, and charts but not including lists of additional participants, advisors, and supporters (if any). The project description should be prepared with reference to the review criteria and

the guidance provided in this and the preceding sections of this solicitation. Incomplete proposals, and those exceeding the established page limits may not be considered.

- 2.1 **Background and rationale.** Provide the background of, and context for, the proposed activity. Where relevant, present a critical and comparative summary review of pertinent literature, justifying the activity proposed.
- 2.2 **Problem statement.** Describe accurately the problems to be addressed and/or opportunities to be pursued by the proposed project.
- 2.3 **Team experience/capability.** Describe relevant prior efforts by applicants to address the problems identified. If you and/or your team have preliminary results, please discuss them. Illustrate how the proposed work will build upon existing expertise, if applicable. Proposals intended to improve the capacity of Pakistani institutions to support technology commercialization or industry competitiveness should also explain the role that industry representatives played in developing the proposal and articulate how the proposed project builds upon other measures undertaken by industry to improve competitiveness.
- 2.4 **Scope and objectives.** Specify the scope of the project accurately and list the specific aims of the project. It is important that the specific aims be compatible with the requested proposal duration. The proposal should demonstrate that a project's objectives are feasible to achieve within the requested project duration.
- 2.5 **Methods.** Describe the project design, conceptual framework, procedures, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. The proposals should describe a methodology for determining the degree to which a project meets its objectives, both while the project is underway and at its conclusion. If relevant, include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted as well as any data-sharing plan. Describe any new methodology and its advantage over existing methodologies. Describe any novel concepts, approaches, tools, or technologies for the proposed activity. Discuss the potential difficulties and limitations of the proposed procedures and alternative approaches to achieve the aims. Describe proposed strategy for encouraging and ensuring the participation of women in the project. As part of this section, provide a tentative sequence or timetable for the project.
- 2.6 **Results statement.** Clearly and concisely state the final results expected from the activity. The ability of the project to positively impact the goal area should be obvious. Each project should provide a mandatory deliverable in the form of a demonstration or presentation to the Panel at the conclusion of the project in addition to the report.
- 2.7 **Additional benefits.** Explain any other anticipated scientific, technological, or economic benefits that will accrue to country besides those already articulated in the Results Statement.
- 2.8 **Executive matters/Budget requirements.** Provide a timetable for execution of the project and budget justification. The proposal should explain how project

activities will be administered in ways that will ensure that the project maintains a focus on its objectives while adjusting to changing conditions, assessments and opportunities, opening of account, hiring of students, tendering etc..

- 2.9 Please ensure sections of your budget are well justified. Value for the investment will be an important consideration in proposal evaluation and selection.
- 2.10 **Equipment:** Provide a detailed justification for each piece of equipment or service to be purchased for which the expected cost is more than 0.5 million. In other words, why is the equipment needed and how many users do you anticipate for the equipment? Also include plans for on-going maintenance of purchased equipment.
- 2.11 **Facilities and Other Resources (two pages max).** This information is used to assess the capability of the organizational resources available to implement and/or develop your project. Identify the facilities to be used (Laboratory, Animal, Computer, Office, Clinical and Other). If appropriate, indicate their capacities, pertinent capabilities, relative proximity and extent of availability to the project. Describe only those resources that are directly applicable to the proposed work.
- 2.12 **Curricula vitae** (one to two pages per investigator max). Provide brief CVs (no more than 2 pages each) for Principal Investigator, other faculty involved in project.
- 2.13 **Bibliography and References Cited (as needed).** Provide a bibliography of any references cited in the Research Plan. Each reference must include the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. Make sure that only bibliographic citations are included. Be especially careful to follow scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials relied upon when preparing any section of the application.

IV. Evaluation and Selection Process

The selection of awards will be made through an open, rigorous, transparent, competitive and merit-based process consistent with international standards for funding academic research projects. All Full Proposals submitted in response to this Call for Proposals will be evaluated by independent experts.

The Evaluation process of NRPU projects consists of single step i.e. Desk Evaluation of the written Full Proposal.

A. Full Proposal Desk Evaluation

For the Desk Evaluation, Full Proposals will be grouped discipline wise and assigned to a Panel for evaluation. Each Panel will be composed of a team of experts – including subject

matter experts – who will evaluate the written proposals. Each Full Proposal will be independently evaluated by at least two members of the Panel, and additional reviews may be obtained by appropriate subject matter experts.

The expert evaluators will assess each proposal according to a scoring rubric, and will provide written comments on the proposal.

- [Web link for the scoring rubric for Desk Evaluation](#)

All members of the Panel will discuss each Full Proposal assigned to the Panel.

Following the Desk Evaluation of Full Proposals, a committee composed of two members including the chairs of each Panel will identify a list of the top ranked proposals that will be considered for funding.

The Desk Review Panel will formulate recommendations to the Higher Education Commission on the proposals that should be selected for NRPU support.

Proposals recommended for funding should meet the following criteria: based upon the written proposal, there is a strong likelihood of successful implementation of the proposed project; the project team and the institutional leadership should be capable of implementing the project; and the proposal must achieve a scoring threshold as determined by the evaluators in the Desk Evaluation to ensure quality.

At the conclusion of the Selection process, the evaluations of each proposal submitted will be shared with the proposing institution. Both the scoring rubric(s) and the written comments will be made available. For the Desk Evaluations, the identities of the expert evaluators will be redacted.

Grievance procedure: In exceptional circumstances, institutions submitting Full Proposal that was not selected for funding may submit a written Notice of Grievance to the Ethical Appeal Review Board at the Higher Education Commission within 7 working days of selection results being announced. A Notice of Grievance is permitted only when the institution believes that the proposal was not evaluated fairly or in a reasonable manner.

C. [Negotiation and Implementation](#)

Following the Evaluation and Selection process, the Higher Education Commission will enter into negotiations with the PI and the host institution on the following topics.

The final budget for each selected NRPU project, budget will be negotiated following the evaluation and selection process. The budget will depend upon: the proposed research and education activities; the size of the research team; the costs associated with the proposed workplan; the resources required; the capacity of the research team to achieve the results; and the feedback to the PI provided through the Evaluation and Selection process. The negotiation on anticipated results will occur concurrently with the budget

negotiation.

Prior to the formal signing of contracts and launch of the selected projects, several critical elements must be completed: (1) a revision and strengthening of the proposal in response to the comments and feedback provided in the evaluation process; (2) a fiduciary assessment and procurement plan; and (3) an environmental and social safeguards screening and management plan. In addition, a detailed implementation plan for the project must be prepared and approved.

D. Project Websites

Full details of the NRPU will be available on the Higher Education Commission website available at: www.hec.gov.pk/site/NRPU

Questions regarding the NRPU Research Grant may be directed to:
Info-R&D@hec.gov.pk