



National Research Foundation
الهيئة الوطنية للبحث العلمي

Research and Scholarship Award (RSA) 2009 Competition

Call for Submission of Proposals

KEY DEADLINES

Expression of interest submission	13:00, Monday, 15 December 2008
Pre-proposal submission	13:00, Tuesday, 17 February 2009
Full Proposal submission	13:00, Tuesday, 16 June 2009

Terms of Reference

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All responses to this Call for Proposals will be treated in confidence and no information contained therein will be communicated to any third party without the written permission of the applicant except insofar as is specifically required for the consideration and evaluation of the proposal or as may be required under law.

National Research Foundation

RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

I. Introduction

The National Research Foundation (NRF) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) advances the national research agenda by awarding grants for research on a competitive basis in those fields of endeavor that will improve the quality of life of the citizens of UAE.

The human benefits of research are most often not immediate. It usually takes layers and layers of accumulated knowledge before the improvement to the quality of human life can materialize. NRF therefore supports investigative efforts with far-term as well as near-term and mid-term potential for beneficial applications. The grants in this program are intended to expand the horizon of knowledge, accelerate discoveries, and foster creative activities across all disciplines, including physical, biological, and mathematical sciences; engineering and technology; medicine; business, economics, and management; social and behavioral sciences; and arts and humanities.

II. Program Objectives

- Facilitate the participation of scientists and scholars from UAE in the expansion of frontiers of knowledge and in the most sophisticated problem solving.
- Build and enlarge a solid core of knowledgeable, capable, and well-trained researchers in UAE.
- Support activities that focus on developing and enhancing research talent in UAE so that the nation retains the finest researchers that are working in or are attracted to it.
- Enable the UAE academic institutions to recruit and retain top researchers and, through them, the most talented students.
- Develop interdisciplinary links among researchers to catalyze team research for solving difficult scientific, industrial, economic, and societal challenges.
- Promote UAE's participation in the international research community.

III. Award Information

Research and Scholarship Award (RSA) grants will be made for a period of 3 years. The continuation of a grant from year to year is contingent upon satisfactory progress towards achieving the goals of the award.

RSA 2009 awards can range up to AED 1,000,000 (direct costs) for three years. However, the average of all awards is likely to be around AED 750,000 for three years. Eligible costs include relevant research expenses, such as researcher salaries, support for postdoctoral fellows and student researchers, costs of collaboration, travel, equipment, and materials and consumables. Administrative/secretarial support is not allowed.

In addition to the direct costs, NRF also makes an indirect or overhead contribution to the host institution, which is reflected as a percentage of the direct costs (excluding equipment). Overheads are payable as a contribution to the applying institution for the indirect costs of hosting the grant, and are intended to enable the grantee institution to develop internationally competitive research infrastructure and support services. For the RSA 2009 competition, the overhead rate is set at 25%.

IV. Eligibility Conditions

1. Only the UAE federal institutions and the CAA-approved institutions in UAE can submit RSA applications.
2. An RSA proposal may have up to three investigators. One of them must be designated as the Principal Investigator (PI), and the remaining, if any, must be designated as co-Principal Investigators (co-PIs). In addition to the PI and the co-PIs, an RSA proposal may request to employ students, postdoctoral researchers, consultants who provide specific expertise on a limited portion of the project, lab technicians, and programmers.
3. While the number of investigators is limited to three as above, there is no limit on the other personnel participating in an RSA project. However, it should be noted that RSA awards are meant for individual or small team research. Large team efforts are best supported via NRF's Research Excellence Center (REC) program.
4. An individual can be the PI on only one proposal and a co-PI on at most one additional proposal.
5. The PI must be employed as a full-time faculty member at an eligible institution (Condition 1 above), with their employment contract covering the period of the grant, and their normal place of work being within UAE.
6. The co-PIs usually must be employed as full-time faculty members at eligible institutions (Condition 1 above), with their employment contract covering the period of the grant, and their normal place of work being within UAE. In special circumstances a co-PI may be employed by a government department, non-government organization, hospital, clinic or research laboratory. For such co-PIs their employment contract must cover the period of the grant, and their normal place of work must be within UAE.
7. NRF also allows RSA proposals to include personnel (such as the PI and the co-PIs) who are not employed by the host institution at the time of proposal submission, but will be so by the requested award start date, should NRF make the award. Furthermore, their employment contract will cover the period of the grant, and their normal place of work will be within UAE.
8. The PI and the co-PIs must have PhD degrees or equivalent. There is no requirement on the numbers of years beyond the doctorate degree. But the applicants will be expected to have a track record of research/scholarship that is commensurate with the stage of their career as measured by the academic metrics appropriate to their fields of endeavor.
9. The PI and the co-PIs are expected to have the capability and authority to mentor and supervise graduate students and team members.

If any of the above conditions are not met, then NRF reserves the right to declare the application ineligible.

V. Application and Proposal Submission Instructions

Each RSA application has to specify, from the following list, the *domain* of research/scholarship in which the proposed work will lie primary and will be reviewed. Exactly **one** domain must be selected, and should be the one closest to the proposed work or in which the principal contributions will be made. The topics mentioned for each domain are meant to be examples, not an exclusive list defining the domain

1. **Physical Science and Mathematics:** astronomy, physics, mathematics.
2. **Material Science and Engineering**
3. **Chemical Sciences:** chemistry, biochemistry
4. **Ecology and Environmental Sciences:** ecology, water resources, climate change, pollution studies and remediation
5. **Agricultural Sciences**
6. **Earth Sciences:** geology, geography, resource exploration
7. **Biological Sciences**
8. **Medical, Dental and Veterinary Sciences**
9. **Engineering:** mechanical, electrical, chemical, aeronautical, civil engineering
10. **Computer and Information Sciences and Engineering**
11. **Economics, Finance, and Accounting**
12. **Business and Management**
13. **Social Sciences:** psychology, anthropology, law, political science, education, sociology
14. **Humanities and Cultural Studies:** Arabic and modern languages, literature, history, philosophy, religion and Islamic studies, visual and performing arts

The RSA application process has three stages: an Expression of Interest, a Pre-proposal, and a Full Proposal.

Stage 1. Expression of Interest

An Expression of Interest (EOI) statement is required for participating in the RSA 2009 competition, and must be submitted by **13:00, Monday, 15 December 2008**. It must include:

1. Project title
2. PI name and contact information
3. A domain from the above list
4. Project description, not exceeding 250 words
5. Up to 5 keywords

The EOI must be submitted electronically using the template provided on the NRF Web site. The deadline of 13:00, Monday, 15 December 2008 is absolute; failure to lodge an EOI by that time and date invalidates a proposal from this competition.

Stage 2. Pre-proposal

A Pre-proposal must be submitted by **13:00, Tuesday, 17 February 2009**. The Pre-proposal must provide the following:

1. Cover Sheet: includes a title, PI's name and institution, domain, and an abstract of 100 words or less (maximum one page).
2. Body: provides a brief (maximum 4 pages) description of proposed work, including all figures and references.
3. CV: includes the PI's scholarly biodata, and up to 5 relevant publications (maximum one page).

The research project description must address the following questions (which should be treated as sub-headings in the Body):

- i. What major research challenge(s) will the project address? Describe the expected outcomes of the research.
- ii. Why is this research challenge significant?
- iii. What work has already been done that is relevant to your research goals? Give a brief survey of prior research with appropriate citations.
- iv. How will the problem(s) be addressed? Describe the proposed approaches and plans to solve the posed problems.
- v. Why is the proposed research likely to succeed? The answer might include any preliminary results obtained by theoretical investigations, experiments, or simulation. The identified flaws in previous approaches might be pointed out.

The Pre-proposal must be submitted electronically, using the submission instructions and forms posted on the NRF Web site.

NRF will review the pre-proposals, and will determine which applicants to invite to submit a Full proposal. The deadline of 13:00, Tuesday, 17 February 2009 is absolute; failure to lodge an Pre-proposal by that time and date invalidates a proposal from this competition.

Stage 3. Full Proposal

Full Proposals can be submitted only by those applicants who have been invited to do so by NRF as a result of reviewing their Pre-Proposals. Full Proposals must be submitted by **13:00, Tuesday, 16 June 2009**.

The full proposal consists of the following items:

- 1. Cover Sheet:**

The RSA 2009 Cover Sheet template is available on the NRF Web site. It contains fields for the project title, PI and co-PI names and PhD dates, host institution identification, domain, total requested budget amount, certification information and signatures.

- 2. Project Summary:** (max. one page)

It summarizes research objectives and approaches. Up to 5 key phrases must be listed.

- 3. Project Description:** (max. 10 pages)

This section describes the research goals and the approach proposed to accomplish those goals. The research can be in any discipline or disciplines, e.g., physical

sciences, mathematical and information sciences, engineering, social and behavioral sciences, humanities, literature, and arts.

The research project description must address the following questions (which should be treated as sub-headings in this section of the proposal). Note that these are the same questions that were addressed in Pre-proposals, but the larger page limit in Full Proposals allows them to be answered in more detail.

- vi. What major research challenge(s) will the project address? Describe the expected outcomes of the research.
 - vii. Why is this research challenge significant?
 - viii. What work has already been done that is relevant to your research goals? Give a brief survey of prior research with appropriate citations.
 - ix. How will the problem(s) be addressed? Describe the proposed approaches and plans to solve the posed problems.
 - x. Why is the proposed research likely to succeed? The answer might include any preliminary results obtained by theoretical investigations, experiments, or simulation. The identified flaws in previous approaches might be pointed out.
4. **References Cited** (no page limit, but keep the list reasonable)
 5. **Biographical Data:** (max. 3 pages for each PI or co-PI)
The bio-data of the PI and the co-PIs must list their educational background (undergraduate and graduate degrees, the years obtained, and the granting institutions), relevant employment (positions held, host institutions, employment period), relevant skills, honors and awards, and significant publications (**at most 5** publications most relevant to the proposed project and **at most 5** other publications representing significant work by the PI).
 6. **Institutional Endorsement:**
There must be an official letter from the host institution (written by the PI's Department Chair, Dean, or some other authority) that endorses the grant application, guarantees eligibility of the PI and the co-PIs, and describes the support offered by the institution to the project. The letter might state how the proposed research fits into the department's or the institution's development plans, and might indicate any special support offered to the PI, e.g., release time, matching funds.
 7. **Budget** (max. 2 pages):
Allowed budget items include salaries for team personnel, equipment, materials and consumables, and travel. The budget justifications should relate closely to the project description. That is, the budget justification should link seamlessly to the narrative of the proposal. The budget should be prepared on the special forms available on the NRF Web site.
 8. **Supplementary Documents:**
Any Letters of Collaboration (from researchers or industrial groups) should be included in this section. These letters should describe the intended collaboration and any support offered. NRF is looking for evidence of **tangible** commitment. The letters should **not** be tantamount to recommendations of the PI or reviews of the proposal from "critical" friends.

VI. Proposal Review and Funding Criteria

The following merit criteria will be applied in assessing submissions:

- The quality, significance, and relevance of the proposed research, including the potential to advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields.
- The originality and novelty of the proposed research approach.
- The qualifications of the research team to carry out the proposed work successfully based on the team members' past accomplishments and future potential.
- The quality of the proposal with respect to its presentation, clarity, organization, completeness, and being well argued.
- The relative intellectual and strategic merits of other proposals participating in the same competition.
- The benefit of the research outcome to UAE.
- The availability of current and future NRF funds.

Proposals will be evaluated using postal or panel reviews or both by international scholars having expertise in the fields relevant to the proposals. Once NRF has completed the decision process, all full proposal applicants, whether successful or not, will receive copies of all mail and panel reviews (with reviewer identities removed).

VII. Award Administration

Award Notification: NRF will make the notification of the award or declination to the submitting organization. In the case of an award, the submitting organization will receive award notification with the approved budget amount (which might be different from the requested amount), possibly with guidelines as to various budget categories. When the institution submits the final budget satisfactorily, NRF will issue a letter of award.

Special Conditions: RSA grants are subject to all the usual NRF conditions for grants.

Reporting Requirement: As for all multi-year grants, the PI of an RSA grant is required to submit an annual progress report at least 60 days before the award anniversary date. Within 90 days after the grant expiration, the PI must also submit a final report. Templates for these reports will be available on the NRF Web site.

VII. Agency Contacts

The NRF contact information is listed on the NRF Web site. Before approaching NRF with questions, please check the information on the NRF Webs site, specially the relevant Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section.