

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES  
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
& SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH



الإمارات العربية المتحدة  
وزارة التعليم العالي  
والبحوث العلمي



الهيئة الوطنية للبحث العلمي  
National Research Foundation

# University-Industry Research Collaboration Award 2011

## Call for Submission of Proposals

### KEY DEADLINES

Proposal submission

13:00, Monday, 14 November 2011

Awards announced

January 2012

#### 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.

[www.nrf.ac](http://www.nrf.ac)

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# National Research Foundation University-Industry Research Collaboration

## I. Introduction

The National Research Foundation (NRF) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) advances the UAE 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 or contribute to the development of the UAE as a knowledge-based society.

The NRF affirms the importance of **University-Industry research collaboration** by launching a competitive call under this topic. University-Industry research collaborations have a long tradition and have brought forward excellent results for both sides as well as for society at large. For companies in order to stay competitive and profitable access to research facilities, human resources and new ideas are important. By teaming up with a university these needs can be met. On the other hand, universities are gaining reputation by their ability to attract businesses interested in accessing their knowledge, talents, as well as their physical research infrastructure. Thus, cross-fertilizing research relationships between universities and companies enable both entities to sustain growth in their areas.

**The University-Industry Research Collaboration Award (U-IRCA) 2011 program aims to support University-Industry research collaboration projects** in any scientific discipline and field of application. A key criterion for U-IRCA 2011 projects is their potential impact for the participating companies' performance as well as the potential for establishing a long-term partnership between the entities.

The U-IRCA 2011 program supports research collaborations on a small scale, with a 1-year timeframe and limited budget of AED 200,000 per partnership. Although NRF is aware of the limitations that these conditions may have on addressing any high-risk frontier research we see great potential in this program to pave the way for the future of University-Industry research collaboration. The U-IRCA 2011 program may prove as a very valuable instrument for initiating larger research collaboration projects for the future and establishing a long-term research relationship amongst the involved parties by supporting e.g. feasibility studies.

Please note that in the frame of this program the term "industry" also implies governmental institutions. University-Industry research collaborations are thus understood here as any research partnership between a higher education institution and an alternative entity, being either a private business or a governmental affiliation.

## II. Program Objectives

With respect to the focused areas identified above, the program aims to:

- Foster research collaboration between UAE national higher education institutions and industry
- Set the ground for longer-term university-industry partnerships in the UAE

- Strengthen the innovative capacities of local industries and advance industry-driven research and innovation
- Provide universities access to industrial environments for applied and problem-based research activities

### III. Award Information

The U-IRCA 2011 Award is granted to projects with a duration of up to **12 months**. The total amount granted to each project is up to **AED 200,000**, including direct and indirect costs for one year. Due to these limitations NRF expects to receive proposals for **small-scale research projects or feasibility studies** for larger U-I research collaboration projects to be performed in the future.

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 total costs of the project. 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 U-IRCA 2011 competition, the overhead rate is set at a maximum of 20% of the total project cost. That is, in determining the total cost, indirect costs may not exceed 20% of the total cost. Alternatively direct costs must be at least 80% of total costs.

The funding should cover mainly costs incurred by the research institution (university) as it is expected that this partner will perform most of the research work. Only in appropriately justified cases 20% of the budget can be allocated to cover costs for the industrial partner.

NRF expects to fund four (4) projects in total for this call.

### IV. Eligibility Conditions

1. Only UAE federal institutions and the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA)-approved institutions in UAE can submit U-IRCA 2011 applications. The list of CAA institutions is available at the CAA website as follows: <https://www.caa.ae/caa/DesktopModules/Institutions.aspx>
2. Any U-IRCA 2011 must have a signed university-industry partnership commitment (see MoU below)
3. The participating industry partner must be a legal entity established in the UAE. It can either be a private business or a governmental affiliation.
4. Two universities (according to the definition in Condition 1 above) alone cannot establish a University-Industry partnership. However, one proposal may include more than one university as long as the partnership also includes an alternative entity as defined under Condition 3 above.
5. Any U-IRCA 2011 must have a designated Principal Investigator (PI), who takes main responsibility for the scientific coordination of the project

6. In addition to the PI the proposal may involve additional senior researchers, doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, students, consultants who provide specific expertise on a limited portion of the project, lab technicians, and programmers.
7. Although there is no limit on the other personnel participating in any U-IRCA 2011 project. It should be noted that U-IRCA 2011 awards are meant for individual or small team research.
8. An individual can be the PI on only one proposal.
9. 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.
10. The PI must have a PhD degree 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.
11. The PI is 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 **\*\*NEW REQUIREMENT ADDED. Point #4\*\***

Proposals for the U-IRCA 2011 have to be submitted electronically via the NRF Website, using the submission instructions and forms posted on the NRF website. The NRF website has a user-friendly portal for submitting project proposals.

Deadline for submission is **Monday, 14 November 2011 at 13:00**. **The deadline for submission is absolute. Failure to lodge the application by that time and date invalidates the applicant from this competition.**

Each U-IRCA 2011 application must specify the ***Frascati domain*** of research/scholarship in which the proposed work will lie primarily and will be reviewed. Details of the Frascati domains may be found on NRF's website (<http://www.nrf.ae/ref/frascatiManual.pdf>). Exactly **one Frascati** domain must be selected, and should be the one closest to the proposed work, or be the Frascati domain in which the principal contributions will be made.

The submission must contain the following:

1. **Project Summary** (max. **500 words**): ***mandatory***  
It summarizes the research objectives and approaches. Up to 5 key phrases must be listed. The project summary has to be 'pasted' as text in the online form field *Project Summary* provided by the NRF. **Clearly indicate whether the project is a small-scale research project or a feasibility study for a larger research project to be performed in the future.**
2. **Project Description** (max. **10 pages**): ***mandatory***  
This section describes the research goals for the U-I research collaboration and the approach proposed to accomplish those goals.

The project description has to be presented according to the following structure (which should be treated as sub-headings in this section of the proposal):

**For small-scale research projects:**

**1. Scientific and/or technical quality**

- a. Concept and Objectives:  
Describe the main research challenges and the expected outcome of this research collaboration
- b. Progress beyond state-of-the-art:  
Describe the timeliness of this research and relate it to work that has already been done. Demonstrate where and how this research goes beyond current state-of-the-art. Describe potential risks (if any) related to this research.
- c. Methodological approach and work plan:  
Describe the research methods that are going to be applied and how the whole project will be effectively performed. The work plan should be structured into workpackages, tasks and milestones.

**2. Implementation**

- a. Management structures and communication procedures:  
Describe the organizational structure and decision-making mechanisms for the project. E.g. how is the communication in this partnership managed, how are responsibilities distributed and how are decision-making processes established?
- b. Individual participants:  
Provide a short description of the institutions involved, e.g. host institution of the main applicant and industry partner organization(s)
- c. The partnership:  
Briefly describe how this partnership was established, if there are intentions for maintaining the partnership in the future, etc.

**3. Impact**

- a. Expected research results:  
Describe the expected benefits for both sides, covering the university's and the industry's view. Describe how these results will be disseminated.
- b. Potential for transferring the research results into business values for the entities of the partnership:  
Elaborate on the expected mutual benefits of the research collaboration as well as on the potential for establishing a long-term partnership between the participating organizations.

**For feasibility studies:**

**1. Scientific and/or technical quality**

- a. Concept and Objectives:  
Describe the main research challenges and the expected outcome of the future research collaboration
- b. Progress beyond state-of-the-art:  
Describe the timeliness of the envisioned research and relate it to work that has already been done. Demonstrate where and how this research goes beyond current state-of-the-art. Describe potential risks (if already identified).

- c. Methodological approach and work plan:  
Describe the research methods that are going to be applied for the feasibility study and how the study will be effectively performed. The work plan should be structured into workpackages, tasks and milestones.

## 2. Implementation

- a. Management structures and communication procedures:  
Describe the organizational structure and decision-making mechanisms for the project. E.g. how is the communication in this partnership managed, how are responsibilities distributed and how are decision-making processes established?
- b. Individual participants:  
Provide a short description of the institutions involved, e.g. host institution of the main applicant and industry partner organization(s)
- c. The partnership:  
Briefly describe how this partnership was established and why there is a need for a larger-scale research collaboration project (e.g. innovation need of the company, etc.)

## 3. Impact

- a. Expected research results:  
Describe the expected benefits of the envisioned research for both sides, covering the university's and the industry's view.
- b. Potential for transferring the research results into business values for the entities of the partnership:  
Elaborate on the expected mutual benefits of the research collaboration as well as on the potential for establishing a long-term partnership between the participating organizations.

## 3. References Cited (no page limit, but keep the list reasonable) *mandatory*

## 4. **\*\*NEW\*\* Biographical Data:** (max. 3 pages for the PI) The bio-data of the PI and must list his/her 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).

## 5. **Partner Description** (max. 3 pages): *mandatory*

This part includes a short description of each of the partner institutions involved.

## 6. **Institutional Endorsement:** *mandatory*

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. The letter must indicate that the host institution understands and supports all the terms and conditions of the U-IRCA 2011 competition.

Institutional Endorsement Letter Template is provided on the NRF website:

[http://www.nrf.ae/ref/uirc\\_statementOfEndorsement.doc](http://www.nrf.ae/ref/uirc_statementOfEndorsement.doc)

## 7. **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU):** *mandatory*

The industry partner must sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) expressing its commitment to participate in the research collaboration project with the applying host institution.

MoU Template is provided on the NRF website:

<http://www.nrf.ae/ref/MoUTemplate.doc>

**8. Budget** (max. **2 pages** including the table template): *mandatory*

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 website.

The budget should mainly cover expenses of the host institution (university). In cases of appropriate justification a maximum of 20% of the allocated budget can also be transferred to the industrial partner. Generally, it is expected that the industry partner's expenses will be handled as contribution in kind to the project.

Budget Template is provided on the NRF website:

[http://www.nrf.ae/ref/uirc\\_budgetTemplate.doc](http://www.nrf.ae/ref/uirc_budgetTemplate.doc)

**9. Supplementary Documents:**

Any Letters of Collaboration (from additional 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.

Supplementary Documents are not mandatory. The documents provided as Supplementary Documents should add evidence to issues in the proposal. For example, a letter from a collaborator stating his/her willingness to collaborate and listing the specific contributions expected such as samples provided, analysis tools provided etc., or a letter from a company stating the amount of cash, material, or equipment provided to the project. Note that general letters of recommendations and endorsements saying how great the PI is or how important this research project is are NOT useful and often are viewed negatively by the reviewers.

**Note:** The applicant will be required to upload a **single PDF** file containing all the mandatory sections.

**Warning:** Failure to abide by the requested page limit for each section will result in disqualification from the competition.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that he/she has uploaded the correct version and that the submission includes all the mandatory sections requested in this Call document.

## **VI. Proposal Review and Funding Criteria**

The following merit criteria will be applied in assessing submissions:

- **S&T Quality**
  - Scientific and/or technological quality of the proposal
  - The originality and novelty of the proposed research approach
  - Soundness of the concept and methods
  - Progress beyond current state-of-the-art and the potential of the proposed research to advance the scientific knowledge base within its own field or across different fields.
- **Implementation**
  - Quality and efficiency of the project implementation
  - Quality and relevant expertise of the individual participants
  - Quality of the U-I partnerships in terms of level of commitment, knowledge exchange and communication structures
  - Appropriateness of the allocation and justification of resources (budget, staff, equipment)
- **Impact**
  - Potential impact through the development, dissemination and use of the project results
  - Potential impact of the project outcomes for the business performance of the company
  - Potential for the establishing of a long-term partnership between the U-I entities
  - Potential impact for the quality of life of the citizens of UAE

Proposals will be evaluated using electronic, postal or panel reviews by international scholars having expertise in the fields relevant to the proposals. All proposals will be evaluated according to the merit criteria above. Evaluators will be briefed to follow strictly and exclusively these criteria in their evaluation.

Once NRF has completed the decision process, all proposal applicants, whether successful or not, will receive copies of the review report (with reviewer identities removed).

## VII. Award Administration

**Award Notification:** NRF will make the notification of the award or declination to the submitting PI. In the case of an award, the submitting PI 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:** U-IRCA 2011 grants are subject to all the usual NRF conditions for grants.

**Reporting Requirement:** The PI of an U-IRCA 2011 grant is required to submit a final progress report at the end of the project, maximum 90 days after the grant expiration. Templates for these reports will be available on the NRF website.

## VII. Agency Contacts

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

## VIII. Key Dates

Timeline of Applications and Evaluations:

<b>STAGE</b>	<b>DATE</b>
1. General Announcement and Call issued	10 October 2011
2. Deadline for application submission	14 November 2011
3. External evaluation of applications completed	2 January 2012
4. NRF sends notification on awarding decision	Early January 2012
5. Grant Awarding Ceremony	January 2012