

Guidelines for the Management of Competitive R&D Grants

Matters to resolve before proceeding with research

Approvals from Ethics Committees

1. A copy of the necessary approval from the relevant board and committees (IRB, IACUC, GCP, etc.) must be sent to Grantor, where applicable. Failure to do so will delay the disbursement of funds.

Research Collaboration Agreements

2. The Investigators are responsible for putting in place research collaboration agreements where and when applicable.

Disbursement of funds

3. A list of non-fundable direct cost items is provided in Appendix 1. Only items specified in the approved budget will be funded.
4. All expenditure should be incurred (based on invoice date) before the end of the Term.
5. In general, prudence should be exercised for all project costs.

EOM

6. Funding of research staff under the grant must comply with prevailing and consistently applied human resource guidelines of the employing Host/Partner Institution(s), regardless of the source of funds.
7. For manpower-related fund requisitions, update of all staff employed under the project must be provided, including those whose employment has ended.
8. All hiring Institutions (Host or Partner) and the hiring supervisor PI/Co-Is/PM shall employ or otherwise engage Research Assistants/Research Technicians or staff of equivalent qualifications who are Singapore citizens and/or Singapore Permanent Residents to be deployed in the work under the Research.
 - a. For the purposes of this Clause 8, the term “Research Assistants” or “Research Technicians” or staff of equivalent qualifications shall mean research technicians, or staff of equivalent qualifications who participate in the Research by performing mainly technical tasks as well as providing support functions distinct from the work carried out by the Investigators.
 - b. Whilst Research Assistants/ Research Technicians may provide intellectual input to the Research, they are not required to be directly involved in the management of the Research or for providing leadership in the conception and creation of new knowledge, products, processes, methods and systems under the Research.

- c. At the point of entry, Research Assistants/ Research Technicians will typically not be required to possess PhD qualifications. For clarification, “Research Assistants” will not include nurses and other hospital workers whom may assist in the Research.
- 9. In the event the hiring supervisor PI/co-Is/PM is unable to comply with Clause 8 above, the PI must seek prior approval of the Grantor with proper justification and Research Assistants/Research Technicians or staff of equivalent qualifications of other nationality can be employed only if the request is supported.
- 10. For Research Fellows, the Institutions shall use reasonable efforts to employ or otherwise engage Singapore citizens or Singapore permanent residents unless the required expertise is not available or the skill of any foreign person is necessary for the performance of the Research.

Equipment and Other Operating Expenses (OOE)

- 11. Only items specified and approved in the Letter of Award will be funded.
- 12. All items claimed must comply with the Institution’s internal procurement processes, guidelines and policies.
- 13. Grantor’s approval must be sought prior to purchasing new equipment/OOE items that is not in the approved budget.
- 14. Grantor reserves the right to reject variation requests made retrospectively for equipment/OOE not listed in the Letter of Award.

Overseas Travel-Related Expenses

- 15. It is the responsibility of the Lead PI/Co-Is to ensure that all travel expenses are in line with the Institutions’ consistently applied policy on travel, regardless of the source of funds. The Host Institution and Partner Institutions are to ensure that any travel undertaken is in relation to the grant only and for no other purpose.

Indirect Costs

- 16. Indirect costs in research are those costs that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified readily and specifically with a particular sponsored research project, but contribute to the ability of the Institutions to support such research projects (e.g. providing research space, research administration and utilities, and not through the actual performance of activities under the sponsored projects).
- 17. The Grantor does not directly manage indirect cost funding. PIs should refer to their Host Institutions for their policy of managing indirect cost funding.

Performance Bonus

18. Claims for staff performance bonus should be submitted within six (6) months following the end of the Term. For Host Institutions that practise accrual of performance bonus according to its finance policy, balance funds should either be returned or claimed within six (6) months if the pay-out comes after the end of the Term.

Requests for variations to the awarded grant

19. Grantor reserves the right to reject any claims that have resulted from project changes without prior approval from Grantor (in specific circumstances as stated in these guidelines).
20. Request for any variation should be made before the last three (3) months of the original end of the Term. Retrospective variation requests will not be allowed, unless there is compelling justification for submission of a late variation request.

Virement between Votes

21. Grantor delegates the approval authority for the virement of funds between votes to the Host Institution, subject to a cumulative amount not exceeding ten percent (10%) of the original total project direct cost value. For virements cumulatively above ten percent (10%), the approval authority remains as the Grantor.
22. Any virement into the EOM and Research Scholarship votes would require Grantor's approval, even if the cumulative amount is below ten percent (10%) of the original total project direct cost value.
23. Inter-institutional virements, where applicable, require the Grantor's approval and acknowledgement from the director of research (or equivalent) for all Institutions involved.
24. Virement of funds into the Overseas Travel vote is not allowed. Overspending will not be reimbursed.
25. Variation from Research Scholarship to other budget category is not allowed, regardless of variation amount.

EOM

26. Grantor delegates the approval authority for manpower changes (i.e. increase/decrease in headcount, change in designation or scheme of projected hires, change in time commitment to the grant) to the Host Institution. Any virement into the EOM vote will require Grantor's approval. Updates should be provided when the fund requisition form is submitted to the Grantor.

Grant Extension

27. Request for grant extension should be made before the last six (6) months of the original end of the Term. The PI must ensure sufficient funds in each vote to support the extension request. Any variation requests necessary to meet the extension period must be made known as part of the extension request.
28. A one-off project extension should not be more than a total of six (6) months. An extension beyond six (6) months will require compelling justification. No additional funds should be given for any extension.

Change in Lead PI/Co-Is (Not applicable for Talent Award)

29. Request for a change in the Lead PI/Co-Is must be made to Grantor and be endorsed by the grant administrative office of the existing and new Host Institutions. The new Lead PI/Co-Is must be an expert in that area and possess the necessary expertise to continue with the research work.

Audit and Progress ReportsYearly Audit Report

30. The Host Institution is required to submit a Yearly Audit Report of the preceding financial year ending 31 March, by 30 September of each year.
31. The Yearly Audit Report must be prepared by each Institution's internal or external auditors and certified by the director of research and chief financial officer (or an authorised nominee).
32. The Yearly Audit Report should confirm that the Host Institution's requisitions are made in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of a Competitive Grant, and Guidelines.

Yearly Progress Report

33. The Host Institution is required to submit a Yearly Progress Report within two (2) months from the end of the Financial Year (by 31 May). The requirement to submit a Yearly Progress Report is waived if the project start date is less than three (3) months from the end of the FY.
34. Investigators may be required to give additional information about the progress of any grant if the information submitted is deemed to be inadequate.

Final Progress Report

35. The Host Institution is required to submit a Final Progress Report within three (3) months following the end of the Term.

Final Statement of Account

36. The Host Institution is required to submit a Final Statement of Account within six (6) months of the 'End Date' of the research project.

Debarring of Investigators

37. Investigators who fail to submit the Final Progress Report and/or Final Statement of Account within the stipulated timelines at paragraphs 35 and 36 will be debarred. Debarred Investigators will not be eligible to submit new grant applications for a minimum of one (1) year starting from the end of the respective deadlines. The period of ineligibility will continue until the Final Progress Report and/or Final Statement of Account are submitted to Grantor.

NON-FUNDABLE DIRECT COSTS

1. EOM Related Expenses

Type of Expenses	Description
General policy	<p>The general principle is that grants should support EOM costs and related benefits (as per employment contract) as long as it is in line with the consistently applied Host Institution's HR policies.</p> <p>This will extend to Host Institution policies that govern staff recruitment and related costs (e.g. costs associated with the onboarding of staff, staff insurance, overtime claims, staff relocation, employment benefits, employment levy, employment pass, pre-examination medical check-up and housing allowance.)</p> <p>All Manpower related costs that fall under Other Operating Costs (OOE) should be accurately reflected in the Budget.</p> <p>Fractional charging for staff costs based on time commitment to the project must be practised.</p>
Principal Investigators / Co-Investigators / Programme Managers EOM cost	Not allowable.
Unconsumed leave	Provision for unconsumed leave is not allowable.
Student Assistants / Interns	<p>Not allowable for students who are recipients of existing awards (or stipends) or students who are not residents of Singapore.</p> <p>Only full-time students enrolled in local institutes of higher learning qualify to be supported as a student assistant/intern.</p>

2. Equipment Related Expenses

Type of Expenses	Description
General policy	<p>No purchase of equipment is allowed unless specifically provided for in the grant approved by the Grantor.</p> <p>The procurement of such equipment must be made according to the formal established and consistently applied policies of the Host Institution.</p> <p>The invoices for all claims must be dated before the end of the Term.</p>
Cost of capital works, general infrastructure, general purpose IT and communication equipment, office equipment, and furniture and fittings	<p>Not allowable under direct costs, unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by NRF.</p> <p>Examples of such costs are computers, office productivity software, PDAs, mobile phones, photocopier machines, workstations, printers, etc.</p>

3. OOE-Related Expenses

Type of Expenses	Description
General policy	Not allowable for expenses that are <u>not directly related</u> to the Research. All procurement of such items must be made according to the formal established and consistently applied policies of the Host Institution.
Visiting Professors/Experts	Not allowable unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by the Grantor. The visiting professor must be identified and his/her contribution to the project must be clearly defined and described in the proposal.
Audit fees	Not allowable. This includes both internal and external audit fees.
Entertainment & Refreshment	Not allowable.
Fines and Penalties	Not allowable.
Legal Fees	Not allowable.
Overhead Expenses	Not allowable unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by the Grantor based on the nature of the research. This includes rental, utilities, facilities management, telephone charges, internet charges, etc.
Patent Application	Not allowable. This includes patent application filing, maintenance and other related cost.
Professional Membership Fees	Not allowable. This applies to PI and Co-Investigators as well as all research staff funded from the grant.
Software	Not allowable under direct cost unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by the Grantor.
Professional fees (including fees to consultants)	Not allowable unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by the Grantor.
Staff retreat	Not allowable.

4. Overseas Travel Related Expenses

Type of Expenses	Description
General policy	<p>Not allowable unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by the Grantor.</p> <p>Conference participation should be directly relevant to the research area outlined in the project and necessary to accomplish project objectives.</p> <p>All travel must align to the existing and consistently applied institutions' travel policies regardless of the source of funds.</p>

5. Research Scholarship

Type of Expenses	Description
General policy	<p>Not allowable unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by the Grantor.</p> <p>Postgraduate stipend must align with the prevailing rates set by the Ministry of Education. Postgraduate stipend and tuition support will not attract indirect costs.</p>
Undergraduate stipend and tuition support	Not allowable.