Republic of Mauritius

and

The Ministry of Civil Service Affairs and Administrative Reforms

The Mauritius Research Council

Public Sector Collaborative Research Grant Scheme

Guidelines for Applicants

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Civil Service Affairs and Administrative Reforms (MCSA&AR) and Mauritius Research Council (MRC) hereafter referred to as the Promoters, are launching a research scheme to encourage and promote research and development in the Public Sector. The **Public Sector Collaborative Research Grant Scheme (PuSCRGS)** will be jointly sponsored by the MCSA&AR and MRC, while Research Institutions will provide the technical and academic collaboration in undertaking research.

This brochure gives details of the **(PuSCRGS)** as well as guidelines for applications. The terminologies used in this guide are explained hereunder:

Principal Investigator (PI): The PI is the single individual designated by the provider institution (*see below*) in a grant application who is responsible for the technical direction of the project.

Research: Any activity that is a systematic, intensive study directed toward greater knowledge or understanding of the subject to be studied or a systematic study directed specifically towards applying new knowledge to meet a recognised award.

Development: a systematic application of knowledge towards the production of useful materials, devices, systems, processes or methods, including design and improvement of prototypes to meet specific requirements.

Research Institution: Any public sector organisation involved in research and/or teaching and/or training at post-secondary level. This includes all the tertiary institutions, polytechnics, government ministries and departments involved in research.

Provider Institution: The institution through which a research proposal is channelled or through which the research will be undertaken. It is the institution where the Principal Investigator (PI) is employed. The Head of the provider institution and the PI are signatories to the contract with the MCSA&AR and the MRC, and have responsibilities that are detailed in the section on General Conditions of Grant Administration.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE PuSCRGS

The PuSCRGS is essentially a top-down approach to the promotion of research, whereby the promoters invite researchers and research institutions in the public sector to submit proposals in pre-identified areas of interest. Proposals that are multi-disciplinary and involve inter-institutional or inter-departmental collaboration are encouraged. Proposals are selected for funding based on their potential research value, their strategic importance and the contribution they would make to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Public Sector.

The main areas of research identified, among others, are:
- Flexitime
- Performance Management
- Leadership
- Motivation
- Quality Management
- Human Resource Management and Development

The Promoters will also consider research proposals identified by Provider Institutions.

2.1 THE PROPOSAL

The proposal should present the:

- objectives or other significance of the proposed work;
- the methods to be employed and their effectiveness;
- qualifications and experience of the PI and the provider institution;
- impact of the project in the public sector;

and
- amount of funding required.

It should describe the merits of the proposed project clearly. There should be sufficient information, prepared with the care and thoroughness of a paper submitted for publication, so that reviewers are able to evaluate the proposal in accordance with the merit review criteria established by the Promoters.

A checklist for proposal preparation is provided at Appendix A to ensure that proposals are complete before submission to MRC.

2.2   WHO MAY SUBMIT PROPOSALS?

Individuals or teams usually initiate proposals that are then officially submitted through their employing organisations (provider institution). Under this solicitation, graduate students are not encouraged to submit research proposals but can serve as research assistants to the PIs.

Before preparing a formal submission, prospective applicants may discuss their project ideas with the Promoters. This will enable them to verify the relevance of their research proposal with the established area of priority/interest as well as to ensure its originality.

In principle, any individual may submit a proposal, but preference will be given to proposals that are supported by the academic and/or research institutions/organisations.

Officials in the public sector, including parastatal bodies, are encouraged to submit proposals through their respective organisations.

2.3   WHEN TO SUBMIT PROPOSALS

Submissions can be made throughout the year. The PuSCRS will be advertised from time to time and research proposals will be called for on the basis of the priority areas identified by the Promoters. Processing will require a minimum of six weeks and a maximum of 3 months.

Funding will be subject to the availability of resources and other considerations explained below.

2.4   HOW TO SUBMIT PROPOSALS

Proposals should be submitted on prescribed forms as at Appendix B of this document. Applications can be sent to the following address:

The Senior Chief Executive
Ministry of Civil Service Affairs and Administrative Reforms
7th Floor New Government Centre
Port Louis
Mauritius
Tel: (230) 201 2886
Fax: (230) 212 9528
E-mail: civser@mail.gov.mu

Application forms can be made available on soft copy or by e-mail on request. The guidelines for preparing the research project proposal are explained in the following section.

3.   PROPOSAL PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

3.1   CONFORMITY WITH INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROPOSAL PREPARATION

It is important that all proposals conform to the instructions provided in this section and the Proposal Forms Kit at Appendix B. Proposals that are not consistent with these instructions will not be considered.

3.2   FORMAT OF THE PROPOSAL

Proposals in A4 paper must be stapled in the upper left hand corner or have a simple binding. The type size must be clear and readily legible in standard size, preferably 10 to 12 points. All the pages of the proposal should be numbered

and the proposal must be assembled in the sequence given in the Proposal Forms Kit. The proposal must follow the format outlined in Forms 1010 and 1015 of Appendix B.

3.2.1 Cover Sheet

The cover page (Form 1010) is available on soft copy. This gives basic information on the project. The title of the project should not exceed thirty words, be technically valid, intelligible to a technically literate reader. The title may be edited before making an award.

The proposed duration for which support is requested should be consistent with the nature and complexity of the proposed activity. Grants are normally awarded for up to **two** years under this scheme.

Specification of a desired start date for the project is important. However, requests for specific dates may not be met except in special situations. Requested effective dates should allow at least 3 months from the date of submission for review, processing and decision.

3.2.2   Project Summary (Form 1015)

The proposal must contain a summary of the proposed activity, suitable for publication, of not more than one page in length. The summary should be a self-contained description of the activity written in the third person and include a statement of objectives, methods to be employed and the potential impact of the project on advancing knowledge and/or enhancing efficiency in the public sector. It should be informative to other persons working in the same or related fields and understandable to a literate lay reader.

3.2.3   Project Description

The main body of the proposal should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken. It should include: objectives of the proposed work, relation to longer-term national goals; and relation to the present state of knowledge in the field, and to work in progress elsewhere and the issues it attempts to address. The statement should outline the general plan of work, including the broad design of activities to be undertaken. It should also indicate any broader impact of the proposed activity. Each item of information should be typed under an appropriate heading.

Any substantial collaboration with individuals not included in the budget should be described and documented with a letter from each collaborator, which should be provided as supplementary documentation. Brevity will assist reviewers in dealing effectively with proposals. The description may not exceed 15 pages. Visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and illustrations are included in the 15-page limitation.

3.2.4   Project Activities, Cost Components and Milestones

The proposal shall include a detailed breakdown of activities over the duration of the project together with the various items of expenditure (cost components). Project milestones will have to be identified for reporting and monitoring purposes. These are more fully described below.

(i)   Activities and cost components

The PI will be required to split the proposal into a maximum of 10 activities representing the critical steps of the project. The duration of each activity may be from one month to six months.

The total cost associated with any activity must be broken down into a maximum of ten predefined cost items.

The Project Scheduling and Cost Breakdown Form (Form 1020) should be used to give activity details and cost components. In case the project is jointly funded, each activity must be funded by only one funding agency.

(ii) Milestone

For monitoring purposes, project milestones will be finalised by the Council in consultation with the PI prior to the approval of the project and will be part of the contract. Each milestone will coincide with the end of a period. The milestones of the project will be presented according to the format of Form 1030: Project Milestone Details.

A period may last from one month to six months and must include at least one and a maximum of 3 activities. At the end of each period, the PI will be required to submit:

I. A progress report, covering the activities undertaken during the period.
II. A statement of actual expenses and a request of funds for the next period, if any.

3.2.5 Validation and Dissemination of results

The proposal should contain an outline of how it is proposed to validate an/or disseminate the results of the research. It should identify the main stakeholders likely to participate in the process. An indicative costing may be given but this should not form part of the total cost of the project.

3.2.6 Prior Research Work

The PI should describe his experience relating to the proposed research work and any related work already in progress at the institution or at collaborating institutions.

The PI should demonstrate that the proposed research does not duplicate work in progress or done elsewhere. A literature review report may be included. The Promoters may assist prospective PIs with the literature review.

4. METHOD OF SELECTION AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following section describes the selection process and the criteria that will be used to evaluate project proposals.

4.1   ADMINISTRATIVE SCREENING

The MCSA&AR and the MRC will review each proposal to determine if it satisfies the requirements laid down in the proposal preparation instructions and requirements section. If insufficient information is provided, a request for further information will be sent to the PI or a meeting may be convened to discuss the proposal.

When all information is available an internal assessment is carried out jointly by the MCSA&AR and the MRC. The Promoters may also have recourse to external assessors, either foreign or local to ensure the originality and feasibility of the research.

4.2   MERIT REVIEW

Independent assessors in the appropriate field will competitively evaluate duly completed applications in a process of merit review. Reviewers will be from Universities, Government and Research Institutions, both local and overseas. Reviewers will remain anonymous to the PI's, but all pertinent comments will be shared with them.

In all instances, proposals will be handled on a confidential basis and care taken to avoid conflict of interests. Evaluation will be confidential to the Promoters and to the PIs.

In the merit review process, approximately equal consideration will be given to each of the following five criteria.

(i)   Intellectual Merit

What is the technical or other quality of the proposed research? How important is the proposed activity to advancing knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields. What is the degree of

innovativeness of the proposed activity? How well conceived and organised is the proposed activity?

(ii) Relevance to National priority

To what extent will the research produce benefits to the Public Sector? Who are the potential users and customers and how will they benefit? Does the activity address a current problem area or urgent issue? Does the activity explore areas of strategic interest to the country? How will the project contribute to enhancing efficiency?

(iii) Manageability

What is the ability of the research team to carry out the activity within the time frame and budget? What are the qualifications of the PI, and other key staff, including the strength of their commitments? Is there sufficient access to resources?

(iv) Potential for Application

What will be the benefits of the proposed activity to society? What is the local ability to exploit the results?

Will the results be disseminated broadly to enhance understanding?

(v) Capacity Building

To what extent will the activity enhance the infrastructure for research?

Will the activity foster synergy between institutions?

Consequently, PIs are requested to take these into account when drafting their proposal to facilitate the selection and evaluation processes. They should submit full details as requested in the forms in Appendix B as well as CV's of not more than two pages each for the PI and other team members.

4.3 SELECTION FOR AWARD

Once external assessments are received, a selection meeting is held where the internal assessment is compared with the assessor's evaluation. This may lead to one of the following recommendations:

I.   Approval for full funding
II. Approval for partial funding
III. Not approved.

In case of partial funding, the PI is convened to a meeting at the Council to explore the feasibility of carrying out the project within the funding proposed The PI will have to submit a revised proposal along the lines of the agreement so reached.

In case of full funding there may be an optional meeting to discuss the modalities of implementation and funding. In case there are modifications to the original proposal, the PI will be requested to resubmit a detailed proposal.

When the Promoters are not able to fund a research project, the PI may be informed of the reason(s) thereof.

5. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The project is initiated by signature of a contract between the Promoters and the Head of the provider institution and the PI.

5.1 MONITORING PROCESS

After the first period of the project, the PI must submit a progress report constituting a comprehensive technical report of the tasks undertaken and results achieved. This report should be prepared along the lines of the prescribed format at Appendix C - Progress Report: Technical.

The Promoters may resort to external assessors for the evaluation of the progress report. The Promoters may at any time during the project

convene the PI and team members for a meeting to monitor progress of the research. Coordination meeting with researchers in other projects may also be organised.

5.2   PROGRESS REPORTS

The PI must submit a progress report at the end of each period. Projects must be scheduled in such a way that the end of each period coincides with a project milestone.

Progress reports should be submitted in pre-defined formats as detailed in Appendix C and consist of 2 sections:

I.   Technical achievement report (Form 1035)
II. Details of expenditure (Form 1040)

Monitoring of progress is based on activities and the progress report should focus on activities during the period under review.

6.   GENERAL CONDITIONS OF GRANT ADMINISTRATION

The administration of grants is governed by the general conditions laid down below.

6.1   CONTRACTING PARTIES

6.1.1   The contract will be signed between the Promoters on the one side, the provider institution represented by its Head and the PI on the other side. The provider institution shall ensure the smooth implementation of the research project according to the agreed time-table and cost estimate. The PI shall provide the technical leadership for the project.

6.1.2   The contract will be in the form of an exchange of letters between the contracting parties. All Annexes are deemed to be part of the contract.

6.1.3   The offer of funding will automatically lapse if it is not signed within six (6)

months of acceptance of the project. Likewise, if the contracting parties have not undertaken any activities within the first 6 months after signature of the contract, any advance payment made shall be returned and the project cancelled if no acceptable justification for the delay is given.

6.2   OBJECTIVES

6.2.1   The agreed objectives of the project are as laid down in the agreed project document.

6.2.2   Provision is made for revising the objectives of the research project if special circumstances so dictate subject to the agreement of Promoters.

6.3   PAYMENT AND REALLOCATION OF FUNDS

6.3.1   All financial transactions will be effected, administered and monitored by the MRC.

6.3.2   In exceptional cases, it may be possible to reallocate funds from one period to another and from one item to another subject to prior formal approval.

6.4   FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS

6.4.1   All financial transactions will be carried out in accordance with the accounting and audit procedures of the MRC. This includes tender procedures.

6.4.2   No purchases may be made of items other than those agreed upon unless there is formal agreement between the contracting parties.

6.5 EQUIPMENT AND MOVEMENT OF PROJECT PERSONNEL

6.5.1 Unless otherwise decided, all equipment purchased under the present grant scheme shall remain the property of the Promoters.

6.5.2 If a PI plans to leave an organisation during the course of a project, the provider institution has the prerogative to nominate a replacement PI or request that the grant be terminated.

6.5.3 In those cases where a particular PI participation is integral to a given project, and the PI's original and new organisations agree, the promoters will arrange for the transfer of the grant and the assignment of the remaining unobligated funds to the PI's new organisation.

6.5.4 Upon transfer of the grant to the new organisation, any monetary discrepancies must be resolved between the provider institution and the new grantee. The Promoters reserve the right to resolve the situation in case their interests are affected by such discrepancies.

6.6 REPORTING

6.6.1 At the end of the period the PI will submit to the Promoters a progress report constituting a comprehensive technical record of the tasks undertaken and the results achieved.

6.6.2 Promoters will use these reports as the basis for assessing the level of achievement of the objectives and the project as a whole. They will also be used in any independent in-depth review that may be conducted in order to check the authenticity and quality of the work undertaken.

6.6.3 In the event of an unsatisfactory report, the Promoters will undertake to discuss the issue with the PI and resolve matters, failing which the Promoters reserve the right to stop further disbursement of funds.

6.6.4 Assessment of and comments on all reports will be made available in writing to the PI.

6.6.5 A draft final report must be submitted within one month of completion of the project. This final report should constitute a substantive record of the whole project.

6.7 PROJECT REVIEW

Review of projects may be carried out at the discretion of the Promoters. Independent consultants may undertake such reviews. Assessment of and comments on all reports will be made available in writing to the PI. The Promoters may call meetings of PIs and other partners from time to time to monitor progress of the project.

6.8 DIFFUSION OF FINDINGS, DATA AND OTHER RESEARCH OUTPUT

The Scheme advocates and encourages open communication. It is expected that significant findings from supported research be promptly submitted for publication with authorship that accurately reflects the contributions of those involved. The Promoters shall also publish research results in their newsletters and other publications.

On completion of a project, the PI is convened for a meeting to discuss follow-up action. Depending on the type of the project, there may be one or more of the following actions to diffuse the findings of the research:

I.   A public seminar
II. A workshop with individuals who may benefit from the research

III. Public sensitisation
IV. Presentation of research outputs locally and at international level where applicable.

The Promoters shall contribute in this dissemination exercise.

7. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

7.1 LEGAL RIGHTS TO INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

As per the MRC Act No 10 of 1992, Section 12, all intellectual property arising out of Council resources shall be vested in the Council.

The intellectual property belonging to the Council may be made available for use on such terms as the Minister of Education and Scientific Research, responsible for the subject of the Council, may agree from time to time.

8. SUSPENSION OR TERMINATION OF GRANTS

Grants may be suspended or terminated in accordance with procedures contained in the contract. Grants may also be terminated by mutual agreement.

The MCSA&AR and the MRC reserve the right to revise and amend the terms and conditions laid down in this solicitation as and when necessary.