



Research and Development Office
Ministry of Education



وزارة التعليم
Ministry of Education

Research & Development Office
Social Science Research Initiative
Application Guideline

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Summary

Overview

The Research and Development Office (RDO) of the Ministry of Education was established in 2017 to transform the R&D ecosystem through strategic initiatives to enhance the research capacity in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In this initiative, the RDO aims at funding a small number of social science-based research projects investigating important and key societal challenges in the Kingdom as it moves towards Vision 2030. This will enable the Ministry of Education to make a contribution to the Government's wider investigations into social challenges, as commissioned by other Ministries.

Through this process, the RDO signals the importance of Social Science research and will, over time, also seek to strengthen the capacity and capability of such research in the Kingdom. A focus on a limited number of researches is the start of this process.

Objectives

Social change is coming thick and fast to Saudi Arabia as the Kingdom deepens its reform. To address the pressing challenges, the social science research initiative aims to:

- Encourage high-quality and impactful social science research in areas of the Kingdom's strategic relevance
- Improve awareness of evidence-based policy research and cultivate culture of the social science research in the Kingdom
- Catalyze collaborations among existing social science research performers in the Kingdom, connecting scattered research organizations and groups

The initiative will focus on empirically based policy-related research where possible solutions to key challenges and problems are addressed.

Approach

The funding available will be in the form of competitive grants to be selected based on a peer review process, and will represent a substantial investment in growing the Kingdom's R&D network.

A **two-staged application** process is applied where candidates are shortlisted based on initial expressions of interest and given additional time to submit final proposals.

Initial expressions of interest would only highlight high-level details on the research question, roles and responsibilities of Lead & Co-Principal Investigators, expected benefits (social, economic, etc.), etc. This will allow the panel to quickly evaluate initial applications and make a quick decision on which candidates to shortlist. Final proposals should include all required details, including project management, project financials, timeline, etc.

An evaluation method will be developed with the panel as appropriate depending on the potential number of proposals. For example, a small number may lead to the applicants presenting to the panel too.

The competition will be open to **researchers/research teams in KSA universities**. It is likely that the research themes will require an inter-disciplinary approach. We encourage applications to include international academic

expertise, where relevant to the subject, both in contributing to the research itself and the development of research in the discipline more widely. International partnerships will need to evidence a track record of high quality of relevant research.

Types of Awards

Two types of awards will be introduced:

Type I - Research Project: Budget up to SAR 3 million over 1-2 years

- For research efforts that pursue more ambitious, interdisciplinary research on issues of cross-cutting interest
- May include extensive survey and data-gathering at a national level
- May include multiple PIs and co-PIs plus any additional research assistance teams

Type II - Small and Medium Grant: Budget up to SAR 1 million for up to 1 year

- For smaller-scale investigator-led research projects
- Include only one PI and one or multiple co-PIs plus any additional research assistance teams
- Encourage broad-based participation in research areas of strategic relevance

Research Themes

The RDO has identified specific research themes in relation to Vision 2030 and have conducted consultations with governmental stakeholders and universities to validate the below themes. Researcher will be asked to demonstrate **the alignment to key themes** of the proposed research.

Key Themes	Policy Interests
Changing Family	The role of family is evolving, and influenced by modernization, deepening of reform and economic development. It is important to enhance our understanding of the impact of the changing nature of family and the related issues of early childhood education, domestic violence, etc., bearing in mind the historical, cultural and socio-political contexts of the Kingdom.
Society Empowerment	To empower all in Saudi society and sustain social mobility, it is important to understand what policies and methods (include but not limited to education and training policies) are most effective to combat poverty, drive social mobility and enhance community engagement.
Empowerment of Women	Tectonic shifts in Saudi society are helping women to reach the pinnacles of academic and professional success, and Vision 2030 expects further change. Hence, it is important to have a deeper understanding of the impacts of the empowerment of women and its implications for policy makers.
Future City	As urban development deepens, cities in the Kingdom are confronted with challenges like security & safety and drug abuse. At the same time, technological developments and changes also have implications on urban planning and design. Having a deeper understanding of such can inform policy and public actions in both domestic and global urban cities to build stronger societies that are safe, resilient and socially cohesive.

Leading Economy	As the Kingdom steps up the drive to diversify the economy away from its dependence on oil, there is a need for a deeper study of what strategies for growth, productivity and innovation are most effective in the Kingdom's historical and socio-cultural context. These include but not limited to strategies for job creation in non-profit and private sectors, human capital development, vocational education development and entrepreneurship encouragement.
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The research themes require **outcomes to shape future policy and practice** in the area. Therefore, the focus of the initiative is to fund empirically-based policy-related research where possible solutions to key challenges and problems are addressed.

Eligibility and Governance

This section outlines the eligibility criteria and requirements for some of the key parties involved.

Eligibility for Funding

Principal Investigators (PIs)

- PI must be established members (Assistant Professor or above) of a **KSA public university (Saudi and non-Saudi)** or those from a **KSA private or independent university (Saudi only)**.
- A researcher **can only apply for one grant as PI**. This can be **either type of grant**; however, that same individual can also be a Co-PI on **one** other grant application, which can also be for **either type of grant**.
- PI should be the person undertaking responsibility for directing the research and for observing the terms and conditions.
- All PIs and named research staff must be able to meet the time commitment to the project as stated in the proposal.

Co-investigators

- A researcher can be a Co-PI on **up to two proposals** given that the same individual **doesn't apply as PI** on any other proposals. These two proposals can be **either type of grant**.
- RDO encourages active collaboration between Saudi researchers and those in other countries.
- In the case of potential collaborative funding agreements with foreign partners or with domestic non-academic entities, the combined costs for them **must not exceed 30%** of the total grant amount.

Research Ethics

It is required that the research supported is designed and conducted in such a way that it meets specific ethics principles, and is subject to proper professional and institutional oversight in terms of research governance. Please refer to principles below:

- Research should aim to maximize benefit for individuals and society and minimize risk and harm
- The rights and dignity of individuals and groups should be respected
- Wherever possible, participation should be voluntary and appropriately informed
- Research should be conducted with integrity and transparency
- Lines of responsibility and accountability should be clearly defined

- Independence of research should be maintained and where conflicts of interest cannot be avoided they should be made explicit

The RDO will:

- Only fund research which has an adequate and appropriate ethics statement and which takes seriously the ethics dimensions of the research
- Consider reviewer or panel member disagreement with the suggested project approach to ethics as either grounds for a conditional grant or rejection of a proposal (where it calls into question researcher competence or the feasibility or validity of a proposal).
- Consider suspension of payments and grant termination if the review shows that a project requires major changes which will alter it so much that it can no longer retain RDO support.
- Only fund research organizations that have processes in place to follow the guidance in this framework and comply with the grant conditions and the RDO Policy and Guidelines.
- Call into account the university, principal investigator and researchers involved in upheld allegations of research misconduct and breach of compliance with the grant conditions in RDO-funded research. Sanctions may apply depending on the severity of the breach. This could result in the immediate suspension of the individual project and other projects based at or coordinated by the administering Research Organization (RO), and a halt to considering further proposal submissions from that RO.

Research Use Guidelines

The RDO expects those who receive funding to:

- Demonstrate an awareness of the wider environment and context in which their research takes place
- Demonstrate an awareness of the social and ethical implications of their research, beyond usual research conduct considerations, and take account of public attitudes towards those issues
- Engage actively with the public at both the local and national levels about their research and its broader implications
- Identify potential benefits and beneficiaries from the outset, and through the full life cycle of the project(s)
- Maintain professional networks that extend beyond their own discipline and research community
- Publish results widely - considering the academic, user and public audiences for research outcomes
- Exploit results where appropriate, in order to secure social and economic return to the Kingdom
- Manage collaborations professionally, in order to secure maximum impact without restricting the future progression of research
- Ensure that research staff and students develop research, vocational and entrepreneurial skills that are matched to the demands of their future career paths
- Take responsibility for the curation, management and exploitation of data for future use

Communication Policy

Effective communication is an integral part of maximizing the impact of quality research. RDO communication policy aims to enhance the communication of RDO-funded research to potential users and beneficiaries of the research - especially potential users outside of the academic community. Adherence to the policy is a condition of the receipt of funds from an RDO research grant. The communication policy includes the following obligations:

- Giving initial publicity for the grant, together with the host research organization(s)

- Acknowledging RDO support as far as possible, including all external communication, such as press releases, PowerPoint presentations, papers, stationery etc.
- Giving the RDO advance notice and sight of press releases at least two working days before they are distributed and, where possible, advance notice of likely newspaper articles or media appearances. Failure to comply with this requirement will be viewed as a serious matter which could lead to action being taken in respect of the Research Organization's ability to hold further research grants
- Communicating the research findings through publications, seminars, conferences, electronic outlets and the media, to both academic and non-academic audiences, potential users and beneficiaries (especially business, government, voluntary organizations, community groups and the public). Any communications activity must not be a lobby activity.
- Submitting details of outcomes from the grant and for up to five years after the end of the grant period.

Prior permission must be sought before the RDO's name can be used in connection with the title of any unit, center, department, etc. which the RDO is supporting either wholly or in part. The words 'RDO project' may not be used as a heading in correspondence, reports or questionnaires.

Scope

The usage of the funding is divided into three categories: **Mobility, Data collection, and Suppliers and materials.** It is the research team's decision to determine allocation with **clear justification**, as long as proposed expenses fall into one of the following:

Mobility:

- Travel
- Accommodation
- Living costs
- Salary buy back (*on a case by case basis*)

Data collection:

- Costs to generate and collect data*

Supplies and materials:

- Supplies and materials used in the performance of the project

*If the proposed research requires exceptional costs to generate and collect data, this should be noted for separate consideration by the RDO.

Submission Process and Timeline

The PI **must ensure** that the **Expression of Interest** is received by the RDO **by 4pm (16:00) on January 6th, 2019.** **Any incomplete application, late application, or one that does not meet the eligibility criteria of the grant will be rejected and no longer considered.** Submission method will be available in the coming weeks.

Based on the Social Science Research Initiative schedule, research teams must submit a number of documents over the course of funding.

The following documentation will be required throughout the initiative:

Pre-allocation:

- 1) Expression of interest
- 2) Research Proposal (For shortlisted researchers only)
- 3) Spend Plan (For shortlisted researchers only)

Post-allocation:

- 1) Expenditure Statement (Annual)
- 2) Interim Report (Annual)
- 3) Final Outcome Report

The summary of documentation is shown below:

Summary of Documentation

Document	Requirements
<u>Expression of Interest</u>	<p>Expression of Interest allows the panel to quickly evaluate initial applications and make a quick decision on which candidates to shortlist. It should provide details of the following information*.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research question for proposed research • Broad outline of scientific methodology to be used throughout research • Alignment to identified key research themes and Vision 2030 as well as expected benefits to the Kingdom (societal, economic, etc.) • Potential contribution to knowledge and practice <p>*List is not comprehensive. The final Application Form will be available along with submission method on Social Science Research Initiative website in the coming weeks.</p>
<u>Research Proposal (For shortlisted researchers only)</u>	<p>Final Research Proposal should contain the full details of the following information*.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research question for proposed research • Roles and responsibilities of Lead & Co-Principal Investigators • Summary knowledge in the field of research • Scientific methodology to be used throughout research • Proposed outcomes of the research • Alignment to research themes and expected benefits to the Kingdom (societal, economic, etc.) • Plans for involving and disseminating results to potential users (e.g., policy-makers) • Potential contribution to knowledge and practice • Compliance measures throughout Initiative cycle <p>*List is not comprehensive. The final Application Form will be available along with submission method on Social Science Research Initiative website in the coming weeks.</p>

<u>Spend Plan</u>	Provide cost estimates of resources with clear justification the research seeks to use over the Grant cycle.
<u>Expenditure Statement</u>	Provide the financial statement of expenditure* of the grant spending based on the proposed Spend Plan. *All expenditures listed in the Expenditure Statement must have an associated proof of purchase (e.g. receipt, sub-contract, salary statement, etc.) to be submitted to the RDO along with the actual Expenditure Statement
<u>Interim Report</u>	Provide an update on ongoing outputs, impacts, and outcomes as the Grant cycle progresses.
<u>Final Outcome Report</u>	Provide a final statement on outputs, impacts and outcomes at the conclusion of the Grant cycle.

Evaluation

Submitted proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Relevance:** Relevance to the identified key research themes;
- **Potential Impact:** Potential benefits of the research for Saudi Arabia;
- **Technical Merit:** Scientific and intellectual rigor, potential to create new and important knowledge, and appropriateness of the research design;
- **Capability-Building:** Potential to catalyze the development of domestic social science research capabilities;
- **Quality of Research Team:** Capabilities and track record of the proposed research team;
- **Execution:** Coherence in the proposed execution plans, feasibility of carrying out the research (e.g., data accessibility) within the given timeframe, and the cost effectiveness.

Reporting and Monitoring

It is a condition of RDO funding that the grant holder regularly submits details of research outcomes from their grant.

- The principal investigator must ensure that all outcomes arising from the grant are recorded in a timely manner as soon as practically possible after their creation. The principal investigator may delegate to co-investigators to prepare and submit records and the Research Organization may undertake to collate and submit records on behalf of the principal investigator.
- Information may be shared at any time after a grant has started, and should continue to be submitted up to five years after the grant end date and confirmed during the annual submission period. Failure to use the system to record the outcomes of RDO-funded research may result in ineligibility to apply for future funding from RDO for both the principal and co-investigators, and suspension of other RDO grants held by the principal investigator.
- The grant holder must complete the Final Outcome report within three months of the grant end date. The report will be checked for completeness and failure will result in a request to update the report.
- The grant holder must submit all research outcomes arising from the grant electronically for up to five years after the end of the grant period.
- It is the responsibility of the grant holder to ensure that all outcomes submitted do not breach the ownership of intellectual property rights held by persons or bodies other than the RDO.

- Details shared, including reports submitted during the final reporting process, may be made publicly available.

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