

The Pilot Directions for NSTC Grant for the Columbus Program

Promulgated on August 11, 2022

Article 1

These Directions are established by the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) to encourage young research fellows and scholars to engage, on a long-term basis, in research with potential, important, and innovative ideas; to conduct research and exchange with research institutions overseas; and to establish international collaboration teams, in order to broaden international horizon and establish international influence.

Article 2

Eligibility of application institutions (execution institutions): Domestic public and private colleges and universities approved by NSTC for grants as per the directions for units applying for NSTC grants.

Article 3

The applicant (principal investigator) must be no more than 38 years old, hold a doctorate degree, and fulfill one of the following requirements.

- (1) Applicants who are working at a domestic public or private college or university at the time of application:
 1. Applicants must be a full-time faculty member holding an assistant professor (assistant research fellow) or higher position of a domestic public or private college or university at the time of application.
 2. Applicants must be a full-time faculty member or research fellows holding an assistant professor (assistant research fellow) or higher position hired by a public college or university as per the enforcement principles for hiring research fellows and staff hired with the national university endowment fund or by a private college or university as per mutatis mutandis the selection and hiring requirements in the enforcement principles for hiring research fellows and staff hired with the national university endowment fund.
- (2) Applicants who are not hired by a domestic public or private college or university (including by an overseas academic/research institution) at the time of application: They shall fulfill the above requirements during project execution.

Principal investigators of research projects granted (funded) by the Einstein Program of NSTC fulfilling the qualifications in Article 3, Paragraph 1, Section 1 and have executed an entire granted research project that will expire within one year may apply for grants under the Columbus Program.

Article 4

Applicants may apply for the following funds as per actual project needs.

(1) General expenses

1. Personnel fee

- a. The maximum monthly allowance for a principal investigator shall be NT\$50,000.
- b. The pay (including the year-end bonus reserve, the employer's labor insurance and National Health Insurance contributions, and termination pay savings) or part-time hourly pay (not exceeding the original total teaching hours of the principal investigator) for the teaching staff taking up the teaching work of the principal investigator during the project period.
- c. Pay and temporary wage for the full-time and part-time personnel for the execution of the project shall be applied in the proposal and are subject to the notice for hiring contract assistant in NSTC-granted research projects.

2. Consumable, articles, books and miscellaneous expense: Other fees directly relating to the research project.

3. Hosting Expenses for Foreign Researchers: The fees for inviting foreign or Chinese scholars to visit Taiwan for project execution.

(2) Equipment: Equipment required for and directly related to project execution with a unit price over NT\$10,000 and a lifespan over two years.

(3) Travel Expenses for International Destinations: The expenses for traveling overseas or mainland China for project execution.

1. Overseas visits, exhibitions, or competitions: Team members of project participate in exhibitions or competitions related to project execution.

2. International collaboration and research study abroad: Overseas collaborative research, experiment, fieldwork, sample collection, or use of overseas research facilities by research team members for the project needs.

3. Participation in international conferences: Team members of projects participate in international conferences, including publishing research papers, delivering keynote speeches, or acting as a conference moderator.

(4) Management costs: The fee required by the research execution institution for executing the research project. The administration fee shall be planned and spent by the research execution institution without violating related government requirements. The maximum amount shall not exceed fifteen per cent of the total project fund.

The grant amount shall not exceed NT\$10 million per year. If the annual grant amount is rejected or decreased by the Legislative Yuan, NSTC may reduce the grant on the basis of the Legislative Yuan's decision. In cases where large instruments or equipment are required, the grant amount may be increased after review.

Article 5

Maximum number of granted projects of Columbus Program:

- (1) The maximum number of granted projects of Columbus Program is 30. The project duration shall be three to five years.
- (2) A principal investigator may not execute other NSTC-funded projects during the execution of the Columbus Program project, with the following exceptions:
 1. During the final year of the Columbus Program project execution;
 2. With the approval from NSTC, the restriction may not apply under the following circumstances:
 - a. The project in question is an industry–university cooperative research project or a joint project that involves a third party or whose termination jeopardizes collaborative overseas research and performance integrity.
 - b. The project in question is a planning project presided over by a discipline coordinator or a critical planning project that has been approved for continuance following the submission of an explanation.

Article 6

An applicant or an institution shall file an application by the deadline specified by NSTC. Late applications or incomplete or unqualified documents will not be accepted.

- (1) Applicants meeting the requirements in Article 3-(1)-1 or in Article 3, Paragraph 2: An application shall fill in the project proposal via NSTC's Academic Research Service Portal before sending the research project to the application institution. After an application institution examines and approves the research project, an applicant shall produce the application list, the declaration of qualifications of the principal investigator, and institution cooperation undertaking before send them to NSTC.
- (2) Applicants meeting the requirements in Article 3-(1)-2: After producing the following documents, an applicant shall upload the application documents to NSTC's research project online system.
 1. Project proposal.
 2. Certification of identity (ROC citizens shall submit a photocopy of their citizen ID card, and aliens shall submit a photocopy of their passports).
 3. Certificate of doctoral degree. New graduates may submit a project proposal and the following documents to file an application to NSTC:
 - a. Applicants who earn their doctorate overseas must submit the temporary certification of degree: the certification of pass of the oral review issued by the overseas university or institute and their dissertation. All documents shall be provided with a Chinese translation.
 - b. Applicants who earn their doctorate from a domestic university must submit the temporary certification of degree: the certification of pass issued by the

PhD degree review committee affixed with the seal of the issuing department/institute and the oral review record.

Article 7

The process and main criteria of proposal review:

- (1) Experts and scholars of related fields will be selected to be members of the review panel to review the proposals and documents.
- (2) Foci of review
 1. The research aim involves science or social topics awaiting a solution and with a theoretical background.
 2. Applicants must demonstrate their ambition, macroscopic view, and past research performance.
 3. International collaboration experiences and future plan about playing an important role in international academic societies or professional associations.
 4. Planning for establishing and cultivating a research team.

Article 8

Applicants of rejected applications may not file an appeal.

Article 9

The contract execution and grant disbursement of a funded project shall be implemented in accordance with the NSTC letter of approval.

Article 10

After an application filed as per Article 3-(2) has been approved, the applicant who receives the NSTC notice shall be officially hired by the application institution meeting the requirements in Article 2 prior to the project inauguration day in the next school year. Failure to produce documentation that proves official employment of the applicant by the application institution shall be considered as given up the funding. Under specific circumstances, an applicant may be exempted from this requirement with prior NSTC approval.

Within 1 month after the date of employment, the application institution shall submit the following documents to apply for project approval to NSTC: the appointment certificate, doctorate certificate (for new graduates), letter of commitment for the NSTC Columbus Program, documents related to the research ethics review, and photocopy of the NSTC notice. The NSTC notice will become invalid if the application institution fails to submit the specified documents by the deadline.

Where the approval of an Institutional Review Board (IRB) is required in the research ethics review, an application institution may extend the deadline for submission of

related documents for approval to up to 3 months from the date of employment. Under specific circumstances, this deadline may be disregarded with prior NSTC approval.

NSTC will send a letter of approval to an application institution after the application is approved. The project period and the contract execution and disbursement of project funding shall be subject to the details indicated in the letter of approval.

Article 11

Matters relating to project change:

- (1) When there are unexpected challenges on the research topics or research process during project execution, an institution may flexibly adjust the direction and expense of research through its internal procedures.
- (2) No change of the principal investigator shall be allowed under this Program.
- (3) After the transfer of a granted project to another execution institution, this new execution institution shall submit the institution cooperation undertaking as prescribed in Article 2. The application for an institution transfer shall be subject to the procedures prescribed in the NSTC Directions for Research Project Grant.
- (4) The cancellation, termination, suspension, or extension of a funded research project and the utilization change, transfer, or supplementation of project funds shall be subject to the NSTC Directions for Research Project Grants and the NSTC Principles for Handling Research Project Grants.

Article 12

When executing a granted research project, the project principal investigator shall utilize the grant as per the purpose(s) of granting. The project principal investigator shall assume full responsibility for the authenticity of the expense vouchers as per the nature of expense. The project principal investigator shall also assume full liability for providing false vouchers.

Article 13

Reporting and balance return of grants:

- (1) An execution institution shall complete grant reporting within three months after the project duration expires.
- (2) An execution institution shall audit de facto the expenses of the research project grant. An execution institution shall not approve any expenses not used as per the grant purposes by the principal investigator and shall request the principle investigator to make improvements. When detecting a principal investigator reports false accounts or inflates the amount of an account, if any, an execution institution shall take appropriate actions and report to NSTC the results of such actions.

(3) The balance, if any, of a research project grant shall be returned to NSTC.

Article 14

Project audit

- (1) An execution institution shall request a principal investigator to submit a progress report two months prior to the end of each year.
- (2) An execution institution shall request a principal investigator to submit a mid-term report as per the deadline specified by NSTC. After the annual evaluation,
 1. The annual subsidy and subsidy duration of each project may be re-evaluated.
 2. For the Columbus Program projects that meet the project types and principal investigation qualifications of the NSTC ‘2030 Cross-Generation Young Scholars Program’, NSTC may issue a letter of approval to notify the principal investigators to execute their projects further under the 2030 Cross-Generation Young Scholars Program. The specifications of annual project number and subsidy duration indicated in the 2030 Cross-Generation Young Scholars Program may not be applicable to the approved Columbus Program projects.
- (3) An execution institution shall request a principal investigator to submit a closure report within three months after the project period ends as per Article 19 of the NSTC Directors for Research Project Grant.
- (4) Where applicable, NSTC may request a principal investigator and an execution institution to submit data relating to project execution and project outcomes.

Article 15

Cooperation of and penalties for execution institutions:

- (1) An execution institution shall arrange supports for the space, manpower, equipment, administration, and general affairs (including accounting and personnel) required by the granted research project. An execution institution shall also reduce the workload unrelated to the granted research project of a principal investigator, such teaching or administration work. In addition, an execution institution shall flexibly support the following activities of a principal investigator: visits on overseas research institutions for international collaboration and assuming an important position in international academic societies or professional organizations, in order for the principal investigator to focus on research.
- (2) Where an execution institution fails to cooperate with such, NSTC may request it to return the project administration fee by a deadline, deduct or discretionarily reduce the proportion of the project administration fee in the next term.

Article 16

Other related regulations:

- (1) To demonstrate the benefits of cultivating domestic sci-tech research fellows,

applicants fulfilling the qualification requirements specified in Article 3-(1)-1 or in Article 3, Paragraph 2 shall not apply for a grant as per Article 3-(1)-2. NSTC will cancel the research project grant and request applicants to return the full amount of a grant by a deadline for applicants who violate this requirement.

- (2) Applicants shall not repeatedly apply for granting of same research project to NSTC. NSTC will take actions against applicants who violate this requirement as per the NSTC Directions for Handling and Reviewing Research Ethics Cases.
- (3) If an application for the Columbus Program submitted by an applicant per Article 3-(1)-1 or Article 3-(2) is rejected and the applicant has not applied for NSTC Project Grants in that year, then the applicant may apply for NSTC Project Grants within 2 months following reception of the rejection notice. NSTC may include this application among the applications to be reviewed within that year.
- (4) If an application for the Columbus Program submitted by an applicant per Article 3-(1)-1 or Article 3-(2) is rejected and it is the first an applicant applied for the Program, this application will not be counted toward ‘have never submitted a proposal to NSTC’ as stated per Article 10-(1) of the Operation Guidelines for NSTC Research Grants.
- (5) The maximum period of overseas sojourn of a principal investigator for project execution shall be half of the total project period.
- (6) If the Columbus Program project ends before January 31st 2022 and the principal investigators do not execute NSTC Project Grants in the same year, principal investigators may apply for NSTC Project Grants 3 months before or 2 months after the end date of their Columbus Program projects.
- (7) The ownership, management, and utilization of the research outcomes and income earned by a principal investigator from project execution shall be subject to the Fundamental Science and Technology Act, Government Scientific and Technological Research and Development Results Ownership and Utilization Regulations, NSTC Scientific and Technological Research and Development Results Ownership and Utilization Regulations, and related laws and regulations.
- (8) The NSTC Directions for Research Project Grant, the NSTC Principles for NSTC Principles for Handling Research Project Grant, the research project grant agreement, the research project execution agreement, and other related regulations shall apply mutatis mutandis to matters not provided for in these Directions.