

THE PASET REGIONAL SCHOLARSHIP AND INNOVATION FUND

Call for Proposals for Innovative Research Projects in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (The RSIF Research Award)

Closing date: 31 May 2021, 23:59hrs EAT

1. Introduction

The [Partnership for skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology](#) (PASET) is an African-led initiative to strengthen skills in applied Sciences, engineering and technology and further socio-economic transformation in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The [Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund](#) (RSIF) is a flagship program of PASET. The primary objective of RSIF is to train high quality PhD and post-doctoral scientists to address the human resource gap in the fields of applied sciences, engineering, and technology (ASET)¹ and to contribute to improving research and innovation capacities in those fields in SSA. RSIF supports PhD students, post-doctoral scientists and universities in SSA to establish a high-quality training, research and innovation environment and to develop their institutional capacity for the benefit of the continent.

RSIF is currently funded by contributions from African governments, the World Bank, The European Union and the Government of Korea; and implemented by the [International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology](#) (*icipe*), Nairobi, Kenya, as the RSIF Regional Coordinating Unit (RCU).

2. About RSIF Research Grants

RSIF uses competitive grants for research to support knowledge generation, scientific excellence, and the use of knowledge for development impact. Two types of research grants are awarded competitively. Type 1 grants are awarded to faculty engaged in PhD training in African Host Universities (AHUs) in SSA, also referred to as *RSIF- Research Awards (RSIF-RA)*; and Type 2 grants are awarded to RSIF graduates who obtain a post-doctoral or permanent position in an academic institution or research centre in SSA, also referred to as *RSIF Junior Investigator Research Awards (RSIF JIRA)*. **This Call for Proposals is for the RSIF Research Awards Grant.**

3. Subject of the RSIF RA call

The **RSIF RA grants** aim to support faculty at the [RSIF AHUs](#) who are involved in teaching and supervising RSIF PhD scholars in SSA countries to undertake research that responds to key development challenges of their countries and the continent. Proposals which provide solutions to contemporary challenges in SSA such as COVID-19 are encouraged as long as they are aligned to the PASET thematic areas. Faculty are encouraged to collaborate with international peers (e.g. African scientists in the Diaspora) in developing their proposals and responding to this call. Applicants should develop research proposals with a scope that is wide enough to support RSIF PhD student's research projects as part of the grant (applicants should list possible student research topics – see section 6 b

¹ PASET Thematic Areas include; ICTs including big data and artificial intelligence; food security and agribusiness; minerals, mining and materials engineering; energy including renewables; and climate change.

below). **The RSIF RA** allows faculty of RSIF AHUs to undertake research activities to be implemented in collaboration with the RSIF PhD students they supervise. The faculty and students may use these grants to advance their research careers and contribute solutions to the development challenges of their countries and the region.

Beneficiaries of the **RSIF RA** grant will gain access to high-quality complimentary capacity building and professional development opportunities to foster talent, build networks and encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Applicants who are currently receiving RSIF research grants as lead applicants are not eligible to apply for this grant.

4. Grant size and duration

The size of each grant is US\$ 90,000 for a **maximum period of 2 years from the time of award**.

5. Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible, an applicant must:

- a. Be a member of faculty of an [RSIF AHU](#) participating or intending to participate as supervisors in the RSIF PhD program for doctoral students.
- b. Apply as a team comprising at least one international partner², and at least one other partner from a relevant college/faculty/department within the AHU. The lead applicant, who should be from the RSIF AHU, must demonstrate her/his capacity to undertake the research and elaborate how the research project will advance her/his role as a mentor of graduate students. Qualified female faculty are encouraged to apply. Priority will be given to excellent proposals that integrate female faculty and show gender balance and inclusiveness.
- c. Submit only one proposal where he/she is the project leader and may also be a co-applicant in only one other proposal submitted. The applicant should not appear in more than two proposals submitted. The project proposal must be linked with the RSIF PhD program in the African Host University.
- d. The Project team should ensure that it is multi-disciplinary, comprising of at least two (2) and not more than five (5) members (including partners).

6. Proposal Guidelines

- a. Project proposals must be aligned with PASET priority thematic areas. The **PASET priority thematic areas** are:
 - ICTs including big data and artificial intelligence;
 - food security and agribusiness;
 - minerals, mining and materials engineering;
 - energy including renewables; and
 - climate change.

² An international partner may be from one of the universities or institutions already enlisted as an international partner institution or from one of the AHUs (see list on the RSIF website) or another institution with a similar profile.

- b. The proposal should have the following sections: introduction, problem statement, objectives, expected outcomes and outputs, methodology, description of activities, gender integration, a risk analysis, ethical considerations, team composition, budget, matching support, and references. Its scope should be wide enough to accommodate at least two RSIF PhD students whose research should be relevant to the theme and objectives of the project. To the extent possible, the proposal should outline the topics, which RSIF PhD students would work on for their doctoral studies. The proposal should be no more than 15 pages including references. It should be written in Times New Romans font, size 12, single spacing, normal margins.
- c. The lead applicant should submit a letter of support from the AHU signed by the Dean or Principal of the School or College that is hosting the RSIF PhD program.

7. Budget Guidelines

- a. The applicants should use the budget template, which can be accessed from this [link](#). Applicants should indicate a cash or in-kind matching funding contribution of at least 15% of the total grant amount requested from RSIF. The matching funding may be from a variety sources, including RSIF AHU, and international partner organization. The budget requested from RSIF should not exceed **\$90,000**.
- b. Activities that can be financed include direct research costs (equipment and consumables), faculty and student participation in short courses or/and training; fee for conferences; intellectual property (IP) protection, and knowledge transfer and dissemination. The applicant’s organization of affiliation may charge overhead not exceeding 10% of direct project costs. The organization may wish to waiver overheads and consider it as in-kind support to the project. See budget template for more details.

8. Evaluation process and criteria

a. Evaluation Process

- All proposals are evaluated against the criteria stated below. Each proposal is reviewed by at least 3 internationally recognized independent experts.
- Evaluated proposals are submitted to the RSIF Grants Independent Technical Committee (GITC) for the final assessment, selection and recommendations to PASET Executive Board for funding.
- The PASET Executive Board makes the final decision on the selected projects to be funded in line with the recommendations of the RSIF GITC.
- The list of the projects selected for co-financing shall be published on the RSIF website.

b. Evaluation criteria (Table 1)

Table 1. Criteria for evaluation of proposals

No.	Criteria	Max Score
1	Scientific/technological quality of the proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound scientific quality, including methodology and originality of the proposed project. • Clarity of the goals and objectives of the project 	40

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity of the work plan and budget. 	
2	<p>Contribution to national or regional development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential contribution to country strategies/ goals, economic development, environment and societal impact Innovativeness, usefulness, and practicality of the research to be undertaken to solve key developmental challenges for SSA. Gender considerations including likely impact on men and women including gender balance in the research team. 	30
3	<p>Mentoring potential of the applicant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scope of proposed research proposed is able to accommodate at least 2 PhD students Quality of scientific publications Demonstrated capacity to mentor PhD students. 	20
4	<p>International collaborators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research experience and capacity of international partners relevant to the project Quality of scientific publications Potential for professional mentoring 	10
	Total Score	100

9. Ethical issues

In the process of preparing the grant application, the applicant is obliged to observe ethical principles and rules and describe how ethical issues in the application will be addressed. The applicant should indicate plans to obtain ethical approval from relevant bodies if the proposed project involves human or animal subjects.

10. Risk analysis

The applicant should provide a risk analysis and contingency plan, including specific risks related to COVID-19 measures. This should include the potential physical, environmental, political, economic and social risks expected from the conduct of the research and mitigation strategies. The proposal should be submitted along with the completed environmental and social screening template that is provided.

11. Application templates

- i. Complete the online application and submit together with the required supporting documents this link [Application for RSIF Research Award - 2021 \(rsif-paset.org\)](https://rsif-paset.org)
- ii. Refer to the Proposal Outline template for guidance when completing your proposal application.
- iii. Please, contact rsifgrants@icipe.org, if you encounter any challenges with the online system.
- iv. The online system will accept the following file types doc, docx, pdf, rtf, zip, rar, jpg, jpeg, png, bmp, tif. The maximum file size accepted for any single file is 5 MB.
- v. Refer to the [list of approved RSIF African Host Universities](#) and the respective approved thematic areas to establish partnerships.
- vi. The proposal must be written in English or French.
- vii. Applications should be submitted no later than **31 May 2021, 23:59 hrs EAT**

viii. The table below is a checklist of the documents required for a complete application:

Documents required for RSIF -RA application	
1.	Complete proposal using template provided
2.	Budget using the budget template
3.	Workplan and Result Matrix using template provided
4.	A letter of support signed by the Dean or Principal of College or School hosting the RSIF PhD Program at the RSIF African Host University
5.	Curriculum vitae of key research team members
6.	Letter of support from collaborating international partner (s)

12. Additional Information

- a. Letters rejecting or accepting proposals, with statements of opinion, will be sent to all applicants within three months after the application deadline.
- b. The summaries of successful proposals will be published on the RSIF website.
- c. Please, note that the submission of project proposal does not establish any form of legal claim or responsibility of RSIF nor *icipe* as the RCU. All decisions of the PASET Executive Board are final and are not subject to further claims or revisions, with exception of administrative mistakes.
- d. All selected applicants will be required to sign a Project Grant Agreement with *icipe*. The Agreement provides general and specific terms and condition for the efficient and effective management of the grant. All applicants are encouraged to review the Project Grant Agreement and the RSIF Research and Innovation Grants Manual which can be found [here](#).

13. Contact Information and Support

A webinar session to provide clarifications on the call will provided. Register in advance on <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUvcempqjojHdHfQy5mA-r1PTW2ifJeMWf>
 After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. For more information visit <https://www.rsif-paset.org/>.

Further enquiries can be sent to rsifgrants@icipe.org
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