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## Guidelines for ICBE Research Proposals

The Investment Climate & Business Environment (ICBE) Research Fund awards research grants in three categories: small, intermediate and large. The current research proposal guidelines follow the same basic format as in the first phase, but with some slight differences. The amounts of the grants for the second phase are:

- (1) [Small Grants](#) of up to \$10,000
- (2) [Intermediate Grants](#) of up to \$50,000
- (3) [Large Grants](#) of up to \$100,000

Applications for research grants should follow the guidelines outlined below. The proposal should not exceed 10 pages plus a cover letter.

### (1) SMALL GRANTS

Proposals for small research grants should contain the following elements:

- **Cover letter** – providing a concise statement about the purpose of the project and the amount of the funding request. It should be not more than one page.
- **Abstract** – summarizing what the proposal is about and how the research would be conducted. It should provide the reader with a clear and concise idea about the problem being addressed.
- **Introduction and background** – describing the context of the proposed research.
- **Research problem or issue** – providing a concise statement of the research issue, including literature review showing contribution to the perceived gap in knowledge.
- **Justification** – articulating the importance of the research, the value it would add, and what may change as a result of the project.
- **Objectives** – concisely stating the main and specific objectives of the research.
- **Methodology** – stating the method to be used in achieving the stated objectives, including a good theoretical framework, data collection and analysis.
- **Output and outcomes or results** – describing the expected contribution to knowledge and public policy.
- **Dissemination** – describing how the findings and recommendations would be disseminated through various channels, such as conference papers, journal articles, policy briefs, etc.
- **Budget** – stating detailed expenses by main items.

- **Timeframe** – noting the expected completion date with estimated times for each component of the project.
- **References** – Make sure the references are complete, accurate, and relate only to what is cited in the research proposal. They should include the authors' names, correct date, full and accurate title, and complete publishing information.

## (2) INTERMEDIATE GRANTS

Proposals for intermediate research grants should include the following components:

### a) Cover Letter

- Provide a clear, concise overview of the organization(s), the purpose of the project, and the amount of the funding request.
- Describe how your proposal aligns with the objectives and goals of the ICBE Research Fund.
- Either in the cover letter or in an appendix, include a declaration of support from the applicant's institution indicating that all grant resources will go to the research project (with the maximum 13 percent institutional allowable for overhead costs).
- The cover letter should be a maximum of one page.

### b) Cover Sheet

- **Project title:** Choose a suitable title that: (i) people can understand; (ii) honestly presents the proposal and reflects the problem to be studied, and (iii) helps the Secretariat to choose the best Peer Reviewers and appropriate Jury reviewers.
- **Applicant(s) names and contact information:** Provide the names and organizational affiliation of the principal applicant(s). Provide e-mail, phone, fax and mailing address for contacting the lead applicant.
- **Executive Summary (Abstract):** Briefly describe the nature of the proposal and summarize all key information. Provide the reader with a clear and concise idea about the problem being addressed, the specific aims, objectives, methods, activities, and the significance of the proposed project. Identify how the proposal is consistent with the stated purpose, objectives, and priorities of the ICBE Research Fund. A maximum of one page and should be convincing. It should be included on the cover sheet of the proposal with the title, applicant(s) name and contact information.

### c) Main body of proposal or proposal narrative

#### 1) Introduction and background

- Provide background information readers need to understand the proposal.
- Give the policy context of the proposal.
- Keep it brief, to the point, and interesting so that it captures the reader's attention.
- This section helps the reviewer to understand the purpose and objectives of the project with respect to how it addresses a problem or need.

#### 2) Research problem or issue

- State the central issue or problem for the project as well as the research questions and how they are to be addressed. Explain the theoretical and

practical significance of this problem for various constituencies. Describe the specific aims of the project along with well-defined objectives and criteria for determining success.

- Include a review of the literature in the area and how the project is situated.
- Indicate the contribution to be made or the value added by the project.
- Demonstrate your understanding of the important issues by citing relevant and current research and events. Present the knowledge gap to be addressed and show the uniqueness of your approach. If you have preliminary data, briefly describe it to show the feasibility of your proposal.

### **3) Significance/rationale**

- Identify the intended beneficiaries of the research project — and what will change as a result of the project.
- Emphasize the creative aspects of your proposal. Stress how your work is new and exciting, and let your enthusiasm for the project come through in your writing.

### **4) Objectives and aims**

- Summarize the research problem section above while pointing out the questions to be answered.
- Formulate the objectives in operational terms relating to the issues the research focuses on as well as on the research questions.
- State general objectives (the overall aims of the project) as well as specific objectives that are directly addressed by the methodology.

### **5) Methodology**

- This is the most important component of the research proposal, so what is written here is critical. It should detail the research design and what procedures will be followed in addressing the research objectives.
- Provide a model where necessary that explains the variables or elements to be captured or measured.
- Describe the sample or population, criteria and sources of data to be used.
- Discuss the limitations of these data sources.
- State what types of analysis are to be done.

### **6) Expected results or output and outcomes – evaluation**

- State the kind of impact and results expected from the project.
- Outcomes could be stated in relation to the resolution of the specific research problem; contribution to knowledge in the particular area of the research; contribution to the development process in a particular locality; process of policy formulation.
- Results implementation or application.

### **7) Forms of dissemination and dissemination plan**

- Describe plans for disseminating project results. This can include: submitting reports to relevant parties; publishing articles in professional, academic or other publications; presenting results to policy makers involved in influencing public policy; presenting at conferences; organizing workshops.
- Describe the expected impact of the results.
- The intent is to demonstrate that the knowledge obtained as a result of the project will have a wide and relevant impact.

## 8) Research plan

- Describe the method and process of accomplishing goals and objectives, as well as the intended scope of work with expected outcomes, an outline of activities and a description of personnel functions.
- Include: (i) the sequence and duration of activities; (ii) a justification for methods to be used, including who will perform the activities and a time frame for the project; (iii) an honest assessment of the difficulties and pitfalls of your research design and how you plan to deal with them; (iv) an account of how potential ethical issues, such as the involvement of human subjects, will be addressed; (v) an explanation of how you will evaluate success in achieving the specific aims of the project.

## 9) Qualifications of applicants

- *Who* proposes to conduct a project is just as important as *what* is being proposed, because a grant is an investment rather than a contract.
- Reviewers need to be convinced that the applicant(s) has the competence, expertise and availability to successfully complete the proposed project.
- Summarize the qualifications and experience of key personnel such as the principal investigator, co-investigators, and research partners. Highlight education and experience (specific expertise, track record) relevant to the project and eliminate any information that is not relevant. Identify how the research team will work together, who will take primary responsibility for various aspects of the project, how the research team will coordinate work activities, and if applicable whether members have worked together before and in what context.
- Curriculum vitae may be included as appendices, but each should be kept to one page in length.

## 10) Research budget

- Budgets are cost projections. They are also an indicator of how projects will be implemented and managed.
- Well-planned budgets reflect carefully thought out projects.
- The Jury will use these factors to assess budgets: (i) Can the job be accomplished with this budget? (ii) Are costs reasonable for the market — or too high or low? (iii) Is the budget consistent with proposed activities? (iv) Is there sufficient budget detail and explanation?
- **Salary Costs:** Reasonable stipend or salary costs for researchers, including the principle applicants, will be considered a legitimate budget item. However, a case will have to be made for this salary support and final decisions regarding the appropriateness of researcher salaries will be made by the Jury.
- **Ineligible Costs:** The budget should contain only costs required to achieve the research objectives of the project. The following items are ineligible: (i) Tuition and course fees; (ii) Purchase or rental of standard office equipment such as desks, chairs, filing cabinets, photocopiers, facsimile machines and answering machines; (iii) Membership fees for professional associations; (iv) The purchase of land; v) Entertainment costs.

- General departmental and administrative expenses should not exceed 13% of direct project costs.

**SAMPLE BUDGET SUMMARY**

<b>Expense Categories</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<i>A. Personnel (salaries/stipends)</i>	
Applicant/Co-applicants	
Students	
Undergraduate	
Graduate (Masters and Doctoral)	
Non-students	
Postdoctoral	
Other	
<i>B. Travel and Related Subsistence Costs</i>	
<i>C. Professional and Technical Services/Contracts</i>	
<i>D. Equipment</i>	
<i>E. Supplies</i>	
<i>F. Other expenses (specify)</i>	
<b>TOTAL PROJECT COSTS</b>	

**10.1) Points to remember**

- *Be precise and specific—clearly delineate costs to be met by all funding sources.*
- *Be realistic and reasonable about how much money you will need. If you ask for less than you actually need, you run the risk of not having enough money to meet your proposed objectives. If you ask for far more money than you actually need, you risk a negative response to inflated expense estimates.*
- *Expense items must be consistent with the proposal description and plan of activities.*
- *Ensure that project expenses are logical and reasonable.*
- *Know what costs are ineligible.*
- *Use a “Budget Justification” section to give a brief but clear rationale for all budget categories and most budget items.*
- *Check for inconsistencies between the budget and other parts of the proposal.*

## Sample Budget Justification

### A. Personnel Costs (Total = XXXX)

- List each category of personnel (e.g., applicants/co-applicants, undergraduate students, graduate students, staff, consultants); the number of persons involved in each category; the salary rate/stipend rate, and amount of time to be devoted to the project.
- Compensation rates for grant activities must be consistent with that paid for similar work within the applicant's institution/organization. Describe activities to be performed by different categories of personnel.

### B. Travel and Related Subsistence Costs (Total = XXXX)

- Itemize travel expenses of project personnel by purpose (e.g., field interviews, conference attendance to communicate research results). Show the basis of computation and identify the location of travel, if known.
- For travel, include an estimate of economy rate fares.
- Subsistence costs must be justified by research needs and may only be applied to time spent away from one's home. Subsistence costs include: accommodation (number of nights x rate), per diem for meals and miscellaneous expenses.

### C. Professional and Technical Services and Contracts (Total = XXXX)

- Generally, these expenses relate to external contracts for services needed to conduct the research. They could include computer services, access to library databases, consulting fees for expert advice to resolve technical problems, cost of subcontracts, costs involved in providing personnel with training and/or development in techniques required to conduct the research project. For each, identify the nature of services to be performed and their estimated cost.

### D. Equipment (Total = XXXX)

- List nonexpendable equipment items to be purchased. Nonexpendable equipment is tangible property having a useful life of more than two years (e.g., computer hardware, tape recorders, cameras, video equipment). Such equipment must not be currently available at one's institution/organization. Explain how the equipment is necessary for the success of the project.

### E. Supplies (Total = XXXX)

- Generally, supplies include any materials that are expendable or consumed during the course of the project.
- List items by type (e.g., office supplies, training materials, copying paper, postage, telephone, duplicated material, printing/photocopying expenses, monthly charges for use of Internet from office, expenses for field work), and expendable equipment items (e.g., books, computer software) and show the basis for computation.

### F. Other Expenses (Total = XXXX)

- List other costs and describe their relationship to the research project.

*Indirect Costs.* One item in this section could be an indirect cost such as a percentage of the direct costs of a grant that is assigned to help cover the

organization's administrative overhead costs—including utilities, personnel offices, accounting, and so forth—which are necessary to operate the project but cannot be directly charged to the project (note that the organization's administrative overhead costs may not exceed 13%).

*In-kind contributions* are gifts of goods or services instead of cash. They can include donated space, materials or time. If you list them as income in your budget, you must also show the corresponding expenses. In-kind contributions can be important for a number of reasons, including: (i) They show all the ways in which the community is supporting your project, even though not everyone is giving cash; (ii) They show the true cost of the project—what you would have to spend without the community support. You can show in-kind contributions in the budget, or simply add a footnote to the bottom of the budget.

*Note that for the final project report, you will need to provide supporting documentation for all eligible expenses. Documentation for this report must include original receipts or invoices as well as a statement justifying the expenses in the context of the program of research.*

#### **11) References**

- References are not the same as a bibliography. This section should therefore include only the publications or documents referred to in the text. Make sure the references are complete and accurate, with the authors' names, correct date, full and accurate title, complete publishing information, which include location of publication, publishers for books; and full journal title, volume, number and pages for journal articles.

#### **12) Appendices and Supporting Materials**

- Supporting materials are not required, but if included, should be in an appendix. These materials may endorse the project and the applicant, provide certifications, add information about project personnel and consultants, exhibit tables and charts, contain CVs, etc. For projects that include collaborations or partnerships, endorsements from the partnering agencies can be included. Ideally, appendices should be limited to 3 pages, although there is not a hard and fast limit on the number of appendices allowed to accompany the proposal.

#### **Very Important**

Single-space text with a minimum 12-point font and one-inch margins. The cover letter and the cover sheet should each be a maximum of one page in length. The proposal narrative (main body of the proposal) should not exceed 10 pages in length (not including the appendices). The appendices should be limited to 3 pages.

#### **(3) LARGE GRANTS**

See [large grant application template](#).