

## Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Collaborative Funding Call

### Foreword

This initiative is endorsed by the Global Research Council, given the collective agreement on the importance of sustainability for our collective future. With this call the GRC is committed to taking concrete steps towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through innovative research and actions.

The Global Research Council (GRC) is a virtual organisation comprised of science, research and engineering funding agencies from around the world. It is dedicated to the promotion and sharing of data and best practices for high-quality collaboration among funding agencies worldwide. Further, the GRC is committed to providing an opportunity for countries large and small to work in concert across national borders. The GRC believes that cooperation and collaboration can enhance the quality of science, avoid unnecessary duplication, provide economies of scale, and address issues that can only be solved by working collectively and collaboratively.

This is a pilot call aiming to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs, through the implementation of results from ongoing or recently finalised research and innovation projects to advance knowledge-based achievement of the SDGs, from local to regional scale. Projects will be funded through international consortia where researchers together with implementation partners and stakeholders collectively and collaboratively aim to improve research outcomes for impact. The research and outcomes of the projects funded should lead to impact on society and improve the livelihoods of people on the ground. The call is supported by 11 funding agencies spanning four continents.

<b>Call title:</b> Sustainable Development Goals Pilot Call 2022
<b>Short call title:</b> SDG Call 2022
<b>Aim &amp; topics:</b> Advancing implementation of 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, particularly in the topics of human well-being and capabilities; Sustainable and just economies; Food systems and nutrition patterns; Energy decarbonization with universal access; Urban and peri-urban development; Global environmental commons
<b>Budget:</b> Approximately 8,2 million €. Date for the exchange rate will be fixed by each country in their national annex. See each funder's national annex for local currency and budgetary limitations per funding organization.
<b>Participating funders:</b> Chile (ANIID), China (NSFC), Côte d'Ivoire (FONSTI), Kenya (NRF Kenya), Norway (RCN), South Africa (NRF), Switzerland (SNSF), Sweden (Formas), Tanzania (COSTECH), The Netherlands (NWO) and Turkey (TUBITAK)
<b>International consortia:</b> Applicants must form project consortia with eligible partner organizations from at least three different countries funding the call. Consortia must be based on previously or recently finalized research and innovation projects funded by the following countries: Chile, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Norway, South Africa, Switzerland, Sweden, Tanzania, The Netherlands and Turkey.
<b>Standard consortium size:</b> Three to six partners
<b>Funding:</b> Each funding agency will provide funds directly to their eligible applicants per consortia in accordance with the agencies' rules and regulations as stated in the national annexes
<b>Duration per project:</b> 2 to 4 years

## Background

If the timeframe set by the UN to achieve the SDGs by 2030 is to be realized, there will need to be unrivalled international collaboration within the political, scientific, and societal realms. A concerted effort internationally is needed to develop practical strategies and implementation plans, these then must be actioned at national, regional and global scales. Implementation of initiatives to realise the SDGs requires governments and all other relevant stakeholders to understand and engage with the scientific realities that underpin the relationship between human activity and the natural world. Scientific expertise and innovation can and should be brought to bear to deliver practical and appropriate results required for the necessary transformations related to the achievement of the SDGs.

As a basis for this initiative to be successful, it is imperative that global perspectives are developed, and this can only be done through a collaborative partnership between stakeholders from both the Global north and Global south, within the context of the 11 countries funding this initiative.

## Aims and objectives

This call aims to enhance impact of existing knowledge through innovative approaches towards the achievement of the SDGs, within the context of governance, societal structures and economy. The call seeks innovative approaches to development, adaptation, design or improvement of existing or new tools that promote and/or facilitate the achievement of the SDGs.

Projects applying for funding through this call must be based on existing or recently completed (completed in 2017 or later) research and/or innovation projects. The research and outcomes of the projects funded should lead to impact on society and improve the livelihoods of people on the ground.

Projects applying for funding should use a consortia approach with a diversity of partners co-designing the project. The project consortia should be based on equitable partnership(s). It is crucial that the project fosters societal ownership and empowerment of outcomes through the meaningful involvement of researchers, local authorities, communities, NGOs, i.e., relevant actors and stakeholders. Consortia should structure themselves in alignment with the thematic focus and objectives of the call, based on the eligibility criteria mentioned below.

## Call Topics

The SDGs are a framework for improving social, environmental and economic development on multiple scales. All 17 SDGs are dependent on each other, it is therefore important to consider both the intended and unintended consequences of any proposed implementation actions, while balancing social, economic and environmental sustainability.

Projects should consider the pledge of 'Leave No One Behind', and where appropriate the outcomes of the funded projects should benefit those most vulnerable. In striving to achieve the SDGs within the context of this call, consortia should be both pragmatic and realistic when designing their approaches and methodologies. Not only should the intended outcomes be considered but also broader unintended consequences and mitigation. Consortia need to look beyond academic impact and acknowledge multiple pathways to impact and implementation within the context of societal benefit.

The Global Sustainable Development report "[The Future is Now: Science for Achieving Sustainable Development](#)", published in 2019, states that current trends across the entire 2030 Agenda are not aligned. The report identifies six key 'entry points' (challenges) where focused and collaborative action by various stakeholders can accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs and bringing about the necessary transformations. Proposals for this call should consider the following challenges:

- Human well-being and capabilities
- Sustainable and just economies
- Food systems and nutrition patterns
- Energy decarbonization with universal access
- Urban and peri-urban development
- Global environmental commons

Each participating funder can specify some of the six challenges as its priority for the call, please see the national annexes for each funder. Each proposal should cover no more than two challenges.

## Project requirements

The call seeks to fund collaborative, transdisciplinary and cross-cultural consortia.

The consortia are to consider the following in terms of approaches and objectives/outputs:

- have a challenge approach with clear-cut implementation goals to effect and measure impact;
- use targeted and innovative action aimed at contributing towards the achievement of SDGs that are likely to have societal impact;
- that addresses a minimum of one and maximum two of the challenges described above
- based on results from one or more ongoing or recently finalized research or innovation projects (ongoing for at least two years or finalized in 2017 or later);
- facilitate international collaborative action that prioritises the practical relevance of research outputs and the ability to share data and deliver innovative implementation approaches geared towards impact;
- advance knowledge-based achievement of the SDGs at local or regional scale in at least one participating country within a consortium.

Eligibility requirements differ for each funder and can be found in the national annexes which are listed on the call web page.

## Consortia composition

To be eligible for funding applicants must form a consortium:

- that is transdisciplinary, where collaboration between research institutions and stakeholders such as local authorities, communities, NGO's, civil society, business etc is mandatory;
- consisting of at least three and maximum six applicants from at least three different countries that are funding this call;
- that consists of institutions from both the global north and global south;

- with an identified consortium lead for management and communication purposes. The consortia lead is responsible for submitting the Concept Note and full proposal. The consortia lead is responsible for all communication with the call secretariat.
- where each country in the consortium has a co- Lead (co-PI) in the consortium, excluding the country of consortium lead.
- where all partners in the consortium requesting funding are eligible to be funded as described in their respective national annexes;
- that is both gender diverse and diverse in terms of composition of the project's participants (established and emerging researchers).

Transdisciplinarity promotes impact and ownership of outcomes amongst all stakeholders and includes strong equitable partnership between academic and non-academic partners in co-designing and implementing the project.

Research only oriented applications are not eligible.

The duration of projects can be between two and four years, but this can vary from funder to funder. Please refer to the national annexes for budgetary and time constraints.

The consortia can include partners that are not eligible for funding from any of the participating funding agencies as long as they can secure their own funding. This type of participation will not be considered to fulfil the criteria above. Any in-kind contributions will be in addition to the funding commitment made by the consortia partner. See national annexes for specific requirements of your funding organization(s).

## Call procedures

A three-step process will apply, with a mandatory Concept Note as the first step, and submission of full proposals as the second step. The third step is decision on funding based on step 1 and 2.

Concept Notes must be submitted via email to the call secretariat at [CJ.Diederiks@risa.nrf.ac.za](mailto:CJ.Diederiks@risa.nrf.ac.za). Concept Notes must be submitted by the consortia lead. Confirmation of receipt of Concept Notes will be sent to the consortia lead.

Full proposals must be written in English and submitted electronically to the call secretariat via the NRF Connect system (link will be available in due course).

Applicants must have submitted a Concept Note in order to be allowed to submit a full proposal.

Some funders may require submission of Concept Notes and/or additional documents via their national agency portals. Please check your national annex.

### Stage 1: Concept Note

A call for Concept Notes will be launched on 10 May 2022. See Call timeline for full overview of the process.

Concept Notes must be submitted on the supplied template by the deadline of 23:59 GMT+2 on 25 August **2022**. to the call secretariat at [CJ.Diederiks@risa.nrf.ac.za](mailto:CJ.Diederiks@risa.nrf.ac.za).

Concept Notes received after the deadline, or failing to comply with the published call requirements, will be rejected. Incomplete Concept Notes and those not using the provided template will also be rejected. All submitted documents must be in English.

A Concept Note should use the template available and include information on:

- Countries, institutions, stakeholders/ or organisations and project participants involved;
- Ongoing or completed projects to be used in the initiative;
- Overview of challenge(s) selected and short project summary;
- Budget Overview.

The Concept Note will be used by the call secretariat (NRF), with assistance from participating funders, to verify the eligibility of the proposals according to eligibility criteria and criteria specified in the national annexes and to aid in the planning of the peer review process.

Only Concept Notes that fulfil the eligibility criteria will move forward to Stage 2: Full Proposals. Successful applicants will be notified by the call secretariat.

## Stage 2: Full proposals

Full proposals must be submitted via the NRF Connect system by the deadline of 20 January 2023 (final deadline will be announced after Concept Note submission). Link to the NRF Connect will be available in due course). Proposals received after the deadline, or failing to comply with the published call requirements, will be rejected. Incomplete proposals and proposals not using the correct template will also be rejected.

Proposals will be evaluated by an external expert panel. Each proposal is read and assessed by several members in the panel. The review panel is composed of researchers as well as users of research results qualified to assess the potential societal relevance and scientific quality. The review panel is appointed by partner country funding agencies.

For details on the evaluation process, please refer to the Guidelines for external expert panel.

### *Evaluation criteria*

The proposals are assessed based on their content with respect to both scientific and societal relevance. This includes the following three criteria *i) Relevance and potential, ii) Implementation, and iii) Competence and collaboration*. Each evaluation criteria is scored on a scale of 1-7 where 1 is the lowest and 7 is the highest score. All criteria are weighted equally.

### *Relevance and potential*

- To what extent does the project build on relevant knowledge addressing challenges in an innovative way?
- To what extent does the project contribute to implementing Agenda 2030/ the UN Sustainable Development Goals?
- To what extent can the project lead to societal impact?
- To what extent does the project employ transdisciplinary approaches and appropriate methods?

### *Implementation*

- To what extent are the methods realistic and innovative for achieving beneficial results?

- To what extent does the project have a realistic, clearly defined and relevant time frame, distribution of budget, work packages, milestones, roles and responsibilities in order to reach the objectives of the project?
- To what extent does the project include appropriate considerations of ethical issues, and/or gender and other diversity perspectives where relevant?
- To what extent has the project included communication and engagement activities with relevant stakeholders/users throughout the project period?

#### *Competence and collaboration*

- To what extent do the consortium lead and consortium have the necessary skills, competence and capacity for carrying out the project and achieving its objectives?
- To what extent is the project based on strong and equitable partnership(s) between the different participating partners and stakeholders in co-designing and implementing the project?
- To what extent are there plans to include and strengthen individual and institutional capacities in the consortia for knowledge generation and production across emerging and established researchers, stakeholders and partners and countries?
- To what extent is the project group as well as the distribution of influence balanced with respect to gender?

### **Stage 3: Decision on funding**

A total of 11 participating funders from diverse countries have committed in total *circa* 8.2 M€ of funding for this call. Based on the panel evaluation and ranking, and considering the available budgets, a funding decision will be made by the participating funding agencies. Successful projects will be announced on the call website within the month after the external expert panel meeting.

Award letters will be issued by the participating funding agencies.

Projects activities are expected to start within three months of the award letter being issued.

#### *Reporting*

All granted projects must adhere to the reporting requirements specified in the national award letters. Projects may be asked to participate in conferences or similar events in order to create synergies and platforms for learning and knowledge sharing.

### **Call timeline**

10. May 2022	Call for Concept Notes launched
25. August 2022	Deadline for Concept Note submission
September 2022	Concept Note eligibility check by national research institutions and selection of successful Concept Notes, and closed 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage call for full proposals by successful Concept Note applicants.
20 January 2023	Deadline for 2nd round of proposals: full proposals
February/March 2023	Panel meeting to assess proposals and select successful proposals (and/or request clarification/changes from applicants.

	Final decision made by funders no later than one month after the panel meeting. Successful applicants informed via call website.
April/May 2023	Funder's decision and announcement of successful projects

### Contact details

Please contact your national contact person as listed in the national annexes.

Otherwise contact call secretariat NRF at:

Email: [CJ.Diederiks@risa.nrf.ac.za](mailto:CJ.Diederiks@risa.nrf.ac.za)

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National contact person(s) and contact details (also listed in the national annexes):

#### **Chile (ANIID):**

<https://ayuda.anid.cl/hc/es> reference GRC SDGs

#### **China (NSFC):**

TANG Keshuang – [tangks@nsfc.gov.cn](mailto:tangks@nsfc.gov.cn) / +86 10 6232 8404

#### **Côte d'Ivoire (FONSTI):**

Tbc

#### **Kenya (NRF Kenya):**

Mr Bernard Mulatya

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