



The NSF Overseas Special Training Programme (OSTP)

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NSF Overseas Special Training Programme (OSTP)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

Recognising that scientific knowledge and its applications are central for national development at all levels, the NSF introduced an Overseas Special Training Programme (OSTP) which will enable scientific and technical personnel, as well as science communicators, to acquire the necessary skills and expertise to promote institutional strengthening and capacity building in order to meet the challenges of an industrialising society. Therefore this programme is specially designed to build the capacities of young personnel in S&T allied areas at specialized institutions abroad. A low Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) (maintained at less than 0.2%) during the past 10 years has compounded the problems associated with harnessing science and technology for human development and economic growth. Even if the country wants to progress from an agriculture based economy¹ to a more industrialised one, it presently lacks the critical mass of adequately trained personnel to make the transition². While many developing countries have adopted the triple helix³ model for advancing scientific and technological development, Sri Lanka has yet to do so.

The objective of the OSTP is to enhance national capacities by providing opportunities for advanced training and for acquiring advanced laboratory skills, industrial experience and international exposure. The programme is aimed at scientists and technical personnel in academia, research institutions, government bodies or industry; and media personnel in relevant institutions. The main premise is that such skills development and industrial experience would not be available in Sri Lanka in the foreseeable future.

Furthermore, it would be expected that the professional links established between the host and home institutions would continue after each training programme itself has ended.

Without precluding the possibility of funding in other scientific fields, preference will be given to thrust areas (Ten Thrust areas) identified by the Ten by Ten Matrix of focus areas and interventions under National Research and Development Investment Framework i.e,

¹ presently, 10.1% of GDP is derived from the agriculture sector

² UNESCO Science Report, 2005

³ cooperation among the private sector, knowledge institutions and government bodies

Matrix 10x10		Interventions									
		Policy Studies	Research	Innovation	Nanotechnology	Biotechnology	Indigenous knowledge	IPR & Standardization	Capacity Building	ICT	Marketing & Popularization
Focus Areas		i	ii	iii	iv	v	vi	vii	viii	ix	x
1	Water										
2	Food, Nutrition and Agriculture										
3	Health										
4	Shelter										
5	Environment										
6	Energy										
7	Textile Industry										
8	Mineral Resources										
9	Software and Knowledge Services										
10	Emerging Technologies and Traditional Knowledge										

Scientific advances in these fields can add value to natural resources and promote industrialisation, thereby contributing towards reducing poverty and improving the country's economic competitiveness.

More specifically, the programme will:

- (i) fill void of trained personnel in specific disciplines,
- (ii) provide opportunities for scientists & technologists to familiarise themselves with emerging technologies, relevant infrastructure and applications,
- (iii) enable a new generation of skilled people to assume leadership roles in science technology, innovation and allied areas towards sustainable development.

The NSF allocates funds through a separate budget for the OSTP.

The number of fellowships and scholarships awarded in a given year will be subject to the availability of funds. Generally the maximum duration for a fellowship or award is twelve (12) months.

1.2 Expected outcomes

The main outcomes of the Programme would be to develop capacities in the above mentioned priority areas to build a state of the art capabilities amongst scientific, research and innovation community so that they could provide a stronger contribution to the national development.

2.0 Criteria Relevant for Submission and Processing of Applications

2.1 Eligibility

Applications will normally be considered from those working in a public sector institution or organisations. However, applications from the Private Sector will also be considered on a case by case and a matching funds basis, i.e. the NSF will fund up to a maximum of 50% of the total costs. Individuals working on their own will not be eligible for funding. Applicant must be affiliated to an institution on a permanent basis to be considered for an OSTP grant.

All applicants must be citizens of, and presently working in, Sri Lanka and should be

- (i) scientists and technical personnel who are presently working in a research capacity or in a laboratory whose primary function is scientific research or scientific service
 - or
- (ii) senior scientists, engineers, managers or directors at a scientific institution / industrial facility
 - or
- (iii) science educators, science communicators, science administrators, IP managers, Technology managers and S&T policy makers, etc.
 - or
- (iv) Postgraduate students who are not permanent employees of the Universities and Institutions, registered for research degrees, provided that the application is submitted with the recommendation of the Supervisor and the Head of the Institution. Full time Research Scientists on contract can also apply under any relevant type of award mentioned below.

All applicants must have registered with the NSF's STMIS (Science and Technology Management Information System) on-line registration for scientists prior to applying for the OSTP support.

Processing of Applications will commence on the dates given below*. Therefore, the original application with a complete set of relevant documents should reach the NSF through registered post or submitted by Hand, **before the given dates of commencement of Application processing.** Late applications will be considered at the next round of evaluation only. Advanced copies of the full set of documents have to be sent to ostp@nsf.ac.lk. The applicants must send the complete application with all relevant attachments addressed to the Director General, National Science Foundation, 47/5, Maitland Place, Colombo - 07.

Month of the Board Meeting	Date of Commencement of Application Processing*
March	16 th February 2017
April	23 rd March 2017
May	20 th April 2017
June	18 th May 2017
July	22 nd June 2017
August	20 th July 2017
September	24 th August 2017
October	21 st September 2017
November	19 th October 2017
December	23 rd November 2017
January	21 st December 2017

2.2 Types of Awards

The programme will assist government institutions, universities, research institutions, industries or private laboratories as well as public or private media institutions, by providing

- (i) NSF Training Fellowships - for senior scientists & technologists and allied personnel with post graduate qualifications to obtain specialized training at internationally recognized institutions for a period up to 12 months.
- (ii) NSF Travelling Fellowships - for senior scientists & technologists and allied personnel with post graduate qualifications to visit specialised institutions and research facilities for short term training or to develop collaborative programmes. The duration of the NSF travelling fellowship is up to one month.
- (iii) NSF Training Scholarships - for S&T allied personnel without post graduate qualifications and postgraduate students conducting full time research to obtain training in specific areas. Generally the NSF Training Scholarship will be provided for a maximum of 12 months. However training/ studies up to a maximum of 36 months will be considered on a case by case basis.

2.3 Criteria for selection

In order to be considered for support, the proposed programme - training fellowship, travelling fellowship or training scholarship - should be problem-oriented with relevance to capacity building in Sri Lanka. Each applicant will be required to demonstrate the scientific merit of the project, and a clear relationship to national development.

Also preference will be given for those programmes that are in alignment with thrust areas identified by the Matrix (Ten by Ten) of focus areas and interventions (mentioned above) and in areas for which the exposure is not available in Sri Lanka.

The applicants are required to provide information on all the ongoing research/ collaborative programmes they are currently involved in and whether the training/ study/ collaborative activity has any liaison to a particular ongoing programme.

Applicants are also requested to provide a complete list of publications with under categories of peer reviewed and indexed, published within last five years. Also if a manuscript is accepted for publication please provide authenticated proof stating thus.

Where relevant in the category of “NSF Training Scholarships” applicants are requested to provide information on the following as well

- ① books written (with titles and year of publication)
- ① science and technical outputs produced (science educational resource materials, science educational programmes, science related videos, S&T related media reports, any other)
- ① patents obtained

Following aspects will also be considered when considering for an OSTP grant.

- ① Availability of alternative funding sources
- ① Recipient of honours at national level
- ① Having contributed to NSF work as a Committee member/ reviewers/ or given his/her contribution to any other NSF task.

3.0 THE AWARDS

3.1 NSF Training Fellowships

The NSF Training Fellowship is for senior scientists & technologists and allied personnel with post graduate qualifications to obtain specialized training at internationally recognized institutions for a period up to a maximum of twelve months. This programme is on a fellowship basis only so that the activity would further professional growth as well as capacity building in the above specified fields. Additionally, it would be expected that the scientific links established between the two institutions would continue after the training fellowship itself has ended. Applicants must provide documentary proof of having obtained their post graduate degree from a recognised university. Records of official transcripts may be required prior to confirmation of the NSF award.

Before any applicant requests financial support from the NSF, the applicant must satisfy all administrative and academic requirements of the institution where the training fellowship is to take place as well as provide a letter/statement from his/her supervisor justifying the requirement for the particular type of training fellowship.

All applicants must complete the relevant application form which requests, *inter alia*, a statement in less than 500 words on how the proposed research –based training fellowship will contribute towards national and institutional development.

In evaluating applications for training fellowships, the following criteria will be considered:

- (i) a relevant post-graduate degree and at least three (3) years of relevant experience
- (ii) an elaborative Project Statement in less than 500 words, describing the benefits to the applicant’s institution & to the country.

- (iii) the potential for ongoing links between the host and home institutions / organisations.
- (iv) how the applicant would share the knowledge and skills gained after returning to the country.
- (v) and meeting all the criteria as mentioned in the criteria for selection (2.3) of this document.

Funding may cover any combination of the following: subsistence allowance according to the Government/NSF regulations, bench fees, and return airfare by the most economical route.

3.2 NSF Travelling Fellowships

Typically, the NSF travelling fellowship is for senior scientists & technologists and allied personnel with post graduate qualifications to visit specialised institutions and research facilities for short term training or to initiate/ participate collaborative programmes. The duration of the NSF travelling fellowship is up to one month. The beneficiaries of such visits are very senior scientists who serve in an advisory capacity to scientific / industrial institutions; chairmen or directors at such institutions; academic faculty at universities; senior managers and senior scientific officers; or science communicators/ educators. Applicants must provide documentary proof of having obtained their post graduate degree from a recognised university. Records of official transcripts may be required prior to confirmation of the NSF award.

Before requesting any financial support from NSF, the applicant must satisfy all administrative requirements of the institution where he/she is due to visit as well as provide a letter/statement from his/her reporting authority justifying the requirement for the particular type of fellowship. Applicants must be proficient in English.

All applicants must complete the relevant application form which requests, *inter alia*, a statement in less than 400 words on how the proposed travelling fellowship will contribute towards the applicant's professional advancement or institutional strengthening / capacity building at his/her institution and the national development.

In evaluating applications for travelling fellowships, the following criteria will be considered:

- (i) A well thought out Project Statement, in less than 400 words, describing the benefits of undertaking the chosen visit that, ideally, is relevant to either the applicant's needs and interests or to those of the institution which the applicant represents;
- (ii) Either the applicant's ability to participate at a higher level in his/her chosen profession and the wider scientific community or the applicant's potential to strengthen the institution which he/she represents; and
- (iii) The potential for institutional strengthening at bilateral level and ongoing international collaboration.
- (iv) A postgraduate degree and at least three years of professional experience in the relevant field.
- (v) And meeting all the criteria as mentioned in the criteria for selection (2.3) of this document.

Funding may cover any combination of the following: subsistence allowance according to the Government/NSF regulations, bench fees and return airfare by the most economical route.

3.3 NSF Training Scholarships

This training programme is for S&T allied personnel without post graduate qualifications and postgraduate students conducting full time research to obtain training in specific areas. Generally the NSF Training Scholarships will be provided for a maximum of 12 months and the minimum is few days. However training/ studies up to a maximum of 36 months will be considered on a case by case basis.

Before any applicant requests financial support from the NSF, the applicant must satisfy all administrative and academic requirements of the institution where the training will be conducted as well as provide a letter/statement from his/her supervisor justifying the requirement for the particular type of visit, emphasizing on the capacity building of the researcher, Institutional development and the development of the country. Applicants must be proficient in English (oral and written).

This training programme also covers sandwich PhD/ MPhil programmes for exceptional postgraduate students. Funding would cover return airfare, one year tuition fee at a recognized university abroad, and living expenses for the student for a period of twelve months. Also funding for full degree programme will be considered under exceptional circumstances if there are no capabilities within Sri Lanka in the particular area.

In evaluating applications for training scholarships, the following criteria will be considered:

- i. All applicants must complete the relevant application form which requests, *inter alia*, a Project Statement in less than 400 words on how the proposed training will improve the quality and accuracy of their analytical / communication capabilities, upgrade their knowledge/ skills/ technical competence and relevance of the training to the institution, national development and the applicant.
- ii. Full time postgraduate research students have to provide a letter from their supervisor mentioning the suitability of the proposed training for capacity building of the student and the institution.
- iii. Under this category the applicants are requested to provide information on the following as well where applicable
 - ⓪ books written (with titles and year of publication)
 - ⓪ science and technical outputs produced (science educational resource materials, science educational programmes, science related videos, S&T related media reports, any other)
 - ⓪ patents obtained
- iv. Publications in Indexed Journals, Peer reviewed Journals and Proceedings in CV
- v. And meeting all the criteria as mentioned in the criteria for selection (2.3) of this document.

Funding may cover any combination of the following: training or bench fees where applicable, subsistence allowance according to the Government/NSF regulations, and return airfare by the most economical route.

4.0 ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

4.1 NSF Requirements

All awards exceeding 1 month will require an undertaking by the recipient that he/she will serve his/her institution on completion of the programme for a stipulated period as well as enter into a legally binding agreement with the NSF (see 4.4 below). Additionally, those trained in nanotechnology may be required to serve SLINTEC for a maximum period of one year when the need arises and called upon to do so.

Proof of proficiency in English / working language of the programme (oral and written) is mandatory. The Head of the Department must confirm the working language proficiency of the applicant. It is preferred if the applicant could provide documentary proof for competency in working language of the programme.

The applicant must submit evidence that the particular institution is recognized and also state reasons for selecting the particular institution to the OSTP. The Head of the Institution should also recommend the selected institution

Preference will be given for training/ collaborations in relevance to the thrust areas mentioned in the Matrix (Ten by Ten) of focus areas and Interventions.

All recipients of OSTP awards will have to sign a legally binding document with NSF obligating them to return and work in Sri Lanka for a stipulated period after their training.

Recipients will be **eligible to apply again after two (2) years from the date of submission of their final report.**

Applicants who are applying for programmes exceeding one month under the OSTP are required to face an interview with NSF Board of Management as an when necessary.

4.2 Application procedure

Application forms can be downloaded from the NSF website (www.nsf.ac.lk).

The application form must be completed in full before submission to the NSF

Incomplete applications will be rejected

Applications may be received at any time during the year, but decisions will be taken monthly

Canvassing of any kind will automatically invalidate the application

A Committee comprising members of the Board of Management will evaluate all applications and the decision of the Board will be final.

No correspondences will be entertained regarding rejected applications

No applications for fellowships or training may be entertained for reimbursements, except where prior approval of the Board has been granted

4.3 Allowances and payments

Allowances will be granted as per the relevant Government /NSF regulation(s). Payments will be made according to the Government Financial Regulations and relevant public administration regulations.

4.4 Agreement with NSF

All OSTP recipients will be required to enter into legally binding agreements with the NSF prior to release of funds & leaving the country.

4.5 Reporting

All recipients, on their return, are required to submit a detailed report on their programme/participation **within a month of their return**. The Report format is available at the NSF web site (www.nsf.ac.lk) under OSTP grants. Those who fail to submit reports within the specified time may be disqualified from receiving further grants.

Also the applicants are required to furnish progress reports once in every six months if the period of training is more than six months.

Recipients are requested to acknowledge support from the NSF in their reports, publications and presentations as an indication of the use made by public funds towards scientific advancement and national capacity building.