

**NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION**  
**CENTRAL GAP FUND – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**A. Objectives**

**1. What type of projects does the Central Gap Fund support?**

The Central Gap Fund (“Central Gap”) supports translational and commercialisation projects. Projects must aim to develop early technologies into working prototypes or functional processes that are closer to market, and demonstrate clear market need and demand in order to attract private sector investments and/or commercialisation receptacles.

Pure research and/or academic projects will not be supported by Central Gap.

**2. What is the difference between Decentralised Gap funding and Central Gap? Can the team apply for both at the same time?**

The Decentralised Gap funding is administered by A\*STAR, MOE and MOH and implemented by their respective Innovation and Enterprise Office (IEOs)<sup>1</sup>. It is similar to the Proof-of-Concept grant administered by NRF previously. The team should approach their respective IEOs for more information on Decentralised Gap funding.

The Central Gap complements Decentralised Gap funding by providing a national-level platform to resource impactful and preferably collaborative projects. While similar in concept, Central Gap provides a central platform to resource collaborating institutes.

A Central Gap project may be equally co-funded by Decentralised Gap for the first \$500k of qualifying project costs.

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<sup>1</sup> An “IEO” here refers to an office that takes on technology transfer and commercialization functions, as well as education and training for such professionals, for the Host Institution. The office of the Director of Research or its equivalent can be designated to take on the role of an IEO for the purposes of the Central Gap Projects, subject to NRF’s approval.

## **B. Application**

### **3. What should the Project Leads and IEOs do before submitting the proposal?**

#### Approach possible collaborators

Teams are required to scan the landscape for similar and/or complementary projects, and to approach these projects for possible collaboration. The Project Lead will need to briefly describe the efforts that were made to engage these collaborators, or why they were found unsuitable.

#### Conduct a preliminary technology/intellectual property (IP) scan

Teams are required to do a preliminary scan to identify existing technology and/or IPs that may affect the team's ability to protect and exploit the technology developed as a result of the project.

#### Develop and submit an initial business plan

The team should perform a preliminary industry and market assessment, and identify preferred pathways for commercialisation. Endorsements from potential customers and/or investors will be looked upon favourably.

There is no fixed template for a business plan. Teams which need help drafting a business plan should approach a business mentor or undergo entrepreneurial education programmes such as the Lean LaunchPad programme or relevant bootcamps before applying for Central Gap.

### **4. When can the team submit proposals for Central Gap?**

Proposals can be submitted throughout the year and will be processed on a needs basis.

## 5. Which organisations are eligible to apply for Central Gap?

Publicly-funded research performers and government-linked corporate entities are eligible for Central Gap. Entities listed below are automatically eligible to apply for Central Gap. Applications from entities not within the list will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### List of Eligible Entities

- A\*STAR Research Institutes
- Local public research centres and consortia
- CREATE entities
- Local public hospitals, public health institutions and National Specialty Centres
- Local autonomous universities, polytechnics and Institute of Technical Education
- Research Centres of Excellence hosted by local publicly-funded universities
- Temasek Life Sciences Laboratory

## 6. Which are the designated IEOs for Central Gap and what are the responsibilities of the IEOs?

### List of designated IEOs

- A\*CCELERATE
- National Health Innovation Centre (NHIC)
- SMART Innovation Centre (SMART IC)
- SGInnovate
- IEOs within the local autonomous universities, polytechnics and Institute of Technical Education

The IEO is expected to:

- Evaluate and endorse proposals;
- Act as single point-of-contact with CIEO;
- Assess and endorse (or approve<sup>2</sup>) variation requests;
- Assess and endorse progress and review reports;
- Ensure drawdown requests, claimed expenditure, etc. is in order and in line with NRF guidelines; and
- Ensure all submissions are timely.

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<sup>2</sup> Within specified limits. More details can be found in the Application Guidelines and Award Guidelines.

**7. If the Host Institution<sup>3</sup> does not have an IEO, may the team apply and liaise directly with NRF?**

The team should first check with the Central Innovation and Enterprise Office (CIEO)<sup>4</sup> whether a suitable IEO has been identified for the Host Institution (the IEO may not reside within the Host Institution). All communication should be made through the designated IEO.

For public hospitals, public health institutions and National Specialty Centres, the National Health Innovation Centre (NHIC) will act as the central IEO for the purpose of managing Central Gap projects.

For CREATE entities, the SMART Innovation Centre (SMART IC) will act as the central IEO for the purpose of managing Central Gap projects.

**8. The Project Lead had previously been awarded Decentralised Gap funding and/or funding from Enterprise Singapore. Is the Project Lead eligible to apply to Central Gap?**

The Project Lead has to declare all current and prior funding sources in their application, and it would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

**9. What is the funding quantum supportable for each project?**

Central Gap provides funding for projects of quantum greater than S\$250K. Requested quantum of funding must commensurate with the expected impact of the project.

Over-budgeting is strongly discouraged – the requested funding support shown below should be expended within the original term of the project.

- i For projects with approved qualifying costs less than or equal to S\$500K: the IEO and Central Gap will equally co-fund the qualifying costs.
- ii For projects with approved qualifying costs greater than S\$500K: The IEO will co-fund S\$250K and Central Gap will support the remaining qualifying costs.

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<sup>3</sup> “Host Institution” means the body or institution or administering organization employing or hosting the Project Lead.

<sup>4</sup> The Central Innovation and Enterprise Office (CIEO) is the programme office administering Central Gap.

**10. Does Central Gap support developmental activities overseas or by private entities?**

Inter-institution and public-private collaborations are encouraged. However, Central Gap will only be able to support local developmental activities by the publicly-funded research performer.

**11. How long is the term of a Central Gap project?**

Each project can be supported under Central Gap for up to 24 months. Extensions of up to 12 months (cumulative) will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**12. Is collaboration a requirement for Central Gap?**

Collaboration is preferred, but not a requirement.

**13. Is having an industry partner a requirement for Central Gap?**

It is strongly recommended for the team to have industry partner(s) that will be committed to help with the commercialisation of the technology.

**14. Why is an experienced business development resource in the team required?**

One objective of Central Gap is to catalyse the commercialisation of research outcomes into applications. The business development resource will provide the necessary expertise to achieve the commercial and industrial outcomes expected of a project supported by Central Gap.

**15. Can the team propose new impact metrics aside from those listed in the 'Application Template'?**

The list of possible impact metrics and associated tracking indicators provided is non-exhaustive and meant to serve as a reference only. The team should identify and propose impact metrics suitable for their project. The impact metrics proposed must capture the expected socioeconomic impact of the project on Singapore.

## **C. Selection of Proposals**

### **16. How will proposals be evaluated?**

Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by a Standing Oversight Committee (SOC) with inputs from subject matter experts. The SOC will be guided by five main criteria; i) project scope, ii) commercialisation potential, iii) team, iv) technical innovation and v) institutional support. Shortlisted teams may be requested to present their proposal to the SOC.

More details on the evaluation criteria can be found in the Application Guidelines.

## **D. Awarded Projects**

### **17. Can the team request to make the executive summary confidential?**

No. The executive summary is made public to encourage collaboration and attract investment. The team should not include confidential information in the executive summary.

### **18. Why do certain positions require Singapore citizens or Singapore Permanent Residents to be hired?**

One of the objectives of Central Gap is to build STEM and I&E capabilities and manpower in Singapore. Hiring and grooming Singapore citizens and Singapore Permanent Residents for certain roles are necessary to achieve this objective. However, we understand that certain positions which require in-depth expertise in a particular technology field may not be available in Singapore. In such cases, we are prepared to hire international talent, with the broader objective of building capabilities in Singapore as a whole.

### **19. I have some funds left in my Central Gap project. May I purchase new equipment or consumables for my next project using the remaining budget?**

No. All equipment purchases (based on invoice date) must be made within the first half of the project term. All expenditure claimed from Central Gap should be used for the purpose of the awarded project only.

**20. What are the reporting requirements for an awarded project?**

Half-yearly progress reports, a final progress report, and a post-project review report (1 year after the project term) should be submitted. The team may be required to present their post-project review report to the SOC.

The Host Institution and IEO shall also keep and maintain full and detailed records and accounts relating to the project, including all items of expenditure incurred, and submit a Final Statement of Account at the end of the project.

**21. What is the fund disbursement structure?**

Fund disbursements will be made in 6-monthly tranches based on each half of the Financial Year (FY) starting 1 April and ending 31 March.

The first fund disbursement, covering the term from the project start date to the end of the prevailing half of the FY will be made at the start of the project (this may be less than 6 months).

Subsequent fund disbursement requests should be submitted together with the progress reports 1 month after the end of each half of the FY.

The final fund disbursement, covering the term from the start of the last half of the FY to the project end date will only be made after the submission of the Final Statement of Account and accompanying audit report.

Claim submissions are not required for the disbursement of funds. The Host Institution and the IEO are responsible for ensuring that all project expenditures are in line with the guidelines set for the Central Gap. The expenditure should be further verified by internal or external auditors.

**22. What are the audit requirements?**

Audit reports covering each FY must be submitted to NRF 6 months from the end of each FY (i.e. 30 September).

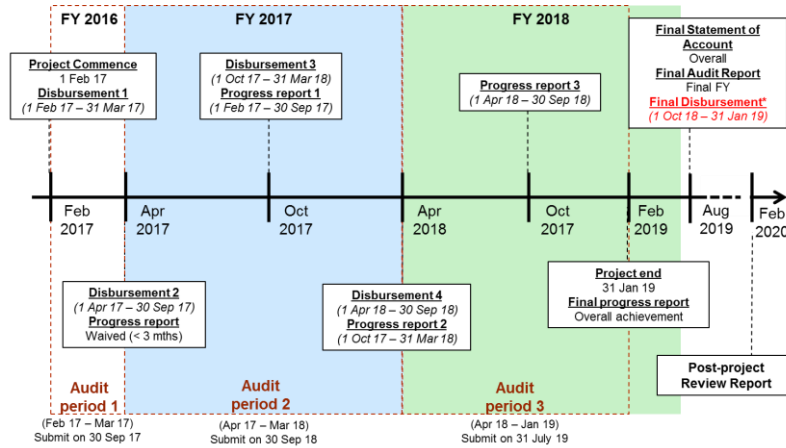
The final audit report, covering the term of the prevailing FY to the project end date, should be submitted within 6 months from the project end date together with the Final Statement of Account.

The audit should be conducted in accordance with the Terms of Reference set out in the project administration guidelines. The audit can be conducted by the Host Institution's internal or external auditors.

**23. What are the timelines for report submission and fund disbursement?**

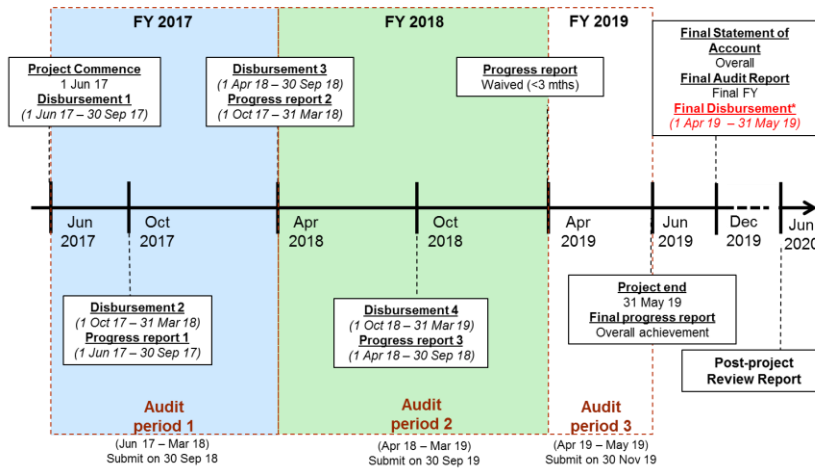
Two simple examples are illustrated below with the timeline for report submission and fund disbursement.

**i) Project duration – 1 February 2017 to 31 January 2019**



\* Final disbursement will only be made after the submission of the Final Statement of Account and accompanying audit report.

**ii) Project duration – 1 June 2017 to 31 May 2019**



\* Final disbursement will only be made after the submission of the Final Statement of Account and accompanying audit report.

**24. Must NRF approval be sought for all project variations?**

No. The authority to approve variation requests (within specified limits) is delegated to the respective IEOs. Variation requests beyond the authority of the IEO to approve must first be assessed and endorsed by the IEO before seeking approval from NRF. Please refer to the project administration guidelines for details.



**25. Who may I contact if I have further queries?**

The respective IEOs should serve as the first point of contact for queries relating to Central Gap. Please contact National Medical Research Council (NMRC) for projects relating to clinical trials.