

Foreword

As a primary channel for funding basic research in China, the National Natural Science Fund mainly supports scientists in universities and research institutions in China having good research capabilities and potentials. NSFC, in order to implement the *National Guidelines for Medium- and Long-term Plans for Science and Technology Development*, formulated the *Development Plan of NSFC for the Eleventh Five-Year Plan Period* in 2006 that we must take supporting basic research, sticking to free exploration, playing the guiding role as our strategic task, implement the working principles of respecting science, carrying forward democracy, advocating competition, promoting cooperation, encouraging innovation and playing a guiding role, carry out the strategies of original innovation, scientific talents, innovative environment and excellence of management, and promote a balanced, coordinated and sustainable development of all disciplines of basic research in China. According to the national overall planning and the characteristics of NSFC's funding, we selected 13 interdisciplinary and a number of departmental priority areas. Relevant details will be described in this Guide and in the Guide in the following years.

According to the types of funding, the programs of the National Natural Science Fund consist of the following types: General Program, Key Program, Major Program, Major Research Plan, National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars, Joint Research Fund for Overseas Chinese Young Scholars, Joint Research Fund for Hong Kong and Macao Young Scholars, Science Fund for Creative Research Groups, National Fund for Fostering Talents of Basic Research, Special Funds, Joint Funds, Funds for International Cooperation and Exchange, etc. All of these categories have their preferential focuses and are complementary to each other, which form the current complete system of the National Natural Science Fund.

By March 31, 2006, NSFC received a total of 63,330 applications for all projects, which is 20.3% more than that in the previous year. Among them, 59,079 are for projects of General Program (including jointly funded projects), which is 20.1% more than that of the previous year, and 10,362 were approved, which is 13.73% more than that in the previous year. The average funding intensity is 261,500 yuan per project, which is a little higher than that in the previous year. Applications for Key Program projects amounted to 1,539 (including jointly funded projects); among which 284 were funded and the average funding intensity is 1,602,400 yuan per project.

To help scientists learn in due time the funding policies and select the correct type of programs to apply for funding to conduct creative research in basic sciences, NSFC compiles the *Guide to Programs of the National Natural Science Fund* (hereafter referred to as *Guide to Programs*) every year.

The *Guide to Programs* introduces various types of project applications to be accepted in the centralized acceptance period according to program types in 2007. Meanwhile, in the description of General Program, a general introduction of each scientific department and special notices in that department are also listed, which should be read carefully by the applicants.

According to the problems occurred in project application, acceptance and evaluation in the recent two years, here we emphasize again that applicants and their home institutions should pay full attention to the following points when applying for projects in 2007.

I. Before writing proposals, please read carefully the *Guide to Programs* and other documents related to NSFC projects, such as policies, procedures, notifications and announcement. When writing proposals, please fill in the relevant contents exactly as requested so as to avoid being rejected in the formality check due to not understanding the relevant regulations of NSFC. The home institutions should check carefully on the truthfulness of the proposals and bear responsibility on the qualification of the applicants. The following requirements in particular should be noted:

1. When writing proposals, one must carefully and correctly choose the application code, funding categories, notes to sub-categories and additional notes. Failing to do so will result in being eliminated in the preliminary check.
2. If there is a collaborator from another institution other than the home institution in the research team list, it will be treated as having a collaborative institution, so the information of the collaborative institution should be provided in the information table of the application, and the official seal of the collaborative institution must be affixed to the application at the appropriate page. If the collaborative institution is registered at NSFC, the registration seal should be applied. If the institution is not registered at NSFC, the legal person's official seal is needed.
3. If the applicant is a Ph.D. student, the supervisor must sign to show consent on the application materials, and can only be applied through the institution where he (or she) works.
4. The applicant and members of the research team must sign on the application form.
5. Applicants who have undertaken projects of the Young Scientists Fund (including small exploration projects) before are not eligible to apply for it again.

Any of the above mentioned problems appearing in the proposal would result in being eliminated in the preliminary check.

II. When writing proposals, applicants should be honest and precise. Exaggeration, untrue and inaccurate statements must be cleared out from the proposal. NSFC is always fighting against falsification.

III. When applying for Key Program projects, applicants should understand clearly the requirements stated in the *Guide to Programs*. Please pay attention to proposing concise contents and directions of research. They should try to avoid too big and too generalized research topics, and those lacking of in-depth studies. For Key Program projects that are categorized by “area”, one should distinguish the name of the area and the title of the project to be proposed. The project title should be chosen according to research contents, not research area. Meanwhile, one should note that the project title should match the research contents. Do not attempt to cover everything mentioned in the area.

IV. When applying for projects of the Joint Funds, please pay attention to the protection of intellectual property rights, scope of searching on the limitation of the number of projects allowed and other special requirements.

V. Applicants should observe the time requirement. Applications should be submitted through their home institutions. NSFC does not handle applications submitted by individuals.

VI. Those applying for the first time are advised to consult their institution managers or others who have experience before writing applications.

VII. The home institutions of the applicants should strictly observe the requirements indicated in the *Guide to Programs* and other regulations, rules and notifications and announcements of NSFC, organize, provide guidance and supervise applications by scientists of their institutions. In recent years, it has been found that one person submitted applications in different institutions at the same time. It is hoped that applicants and their home institutions pay attention to this. This phenomenon should be strictly prohibited. Even for those applying in different institutions of employment, relevant regulations should all be obeyed, such as, only one General Program project is allowed to apply to, and for those applicants having senior professional titles, the total number of projects that can be applied and undertaken is no more than 3, including projects of General Program, Key Program, Major Program, Major Research Plan, Joint Funds and other special funds that are administered as General Program or Key Program (including main members in the research group with senior professional titles).

In addition, due to the time delay in the publication, some information on the programs may fail to be included in the *Guide to Programs*, and will be announced separately in due time on NSFC website or in other forms. Please keep an eye on the documents, announcements, journals and booklets on other NSFC projects published by NSFC. In particular, please pay attention to NSFC website (<http://www.nsf.gov.cn>). Some important guides to programs will also be published in national scientific journals and newspapers.

During the process of application acceptance, assessment and project management, NSFC will adhere to the principles of “relying on experts, carrying forward democracy,

selecting the best to fund and being fair and reasonable”, emphasize on encouraging fountainhead innovation and research value, support the intercrossing and fusion of different academic ideas, observe pertinent regulations on the conflict of interests and protection of secrecy, and accept the supervision from the scientific community and the public. NSFC welcomes scientists throughout the country to propose research projects of high level and apply for the National Natural Science Fund.

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