

**INTERNATIONAL CALL FOR COLLABORATIVE PROPOSALS IN COVID-19 RESEARCH**

**Guidance for Applicants**

**Call status:** Open

**Closing date for Applications:**

16:00 o’clock Beijing Time, November 10, 2020

23:59 o’clock Moscow Time, November 10, 2020

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1. **Summary**

On March 11, 2020, the coronavirus outbreak was declared a global pandemic by the WHO. The spread and potential lasting existence of the COVID-19 pose severe threats to the world. In face of the global challenge, joint efforts of science funding agencies, based on the principles of equality, openness and mutual benefits, are urgently needed to accelerate the R&D activities against the novel coronavirus. To mobilize scientific communities and facilitate research responses to COVID-19, National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) and Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR) are opening a call for collaborative proposals in COVID-19 research.

The purpose of the call is to build on the combined strengths of academic research groups within China and Russia to work together on collaborative research that will advance the understanding of the coronaviruses (SARS-CoV-2) and the illness it causes (COVID-19), in order to contribute to the global response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Applicants are invited to submit **bilateral** collaborative research proposals comprising eligible researchers from China and Russia. All proposals will be required to have a Chinese Principal Investigator and a Russian Principle Investigator. This call for proposals will require applicants to work together in partnership within transnational teams on research projects where each country’s component is funded by participating funding agencies in their respective countries. Eligibility to apply is determined by each agency’s eligibility rules and the nature of the resources requested must also adhere to each agency’s guidelines. Further information is presented below and within **Annexes**. Applicants wishing to apply to the call must use the specific **Joint Project Description (JPD) Template** associated with this call (Annex 2).

Project duration is 2 years.

**The deadline for receipt of proposals is: November 10, 2020 for applicants.**

1. **Scope of the Call**

Based on the research agenda defined by the WHO[[1]](#footnote-1), the priorities identified by the participating funding agencies, as well as the research capacity in China, Belarus and Bulgaria, the scope of bilateral or multilateral collaborative research between researchers from China, Belarus and Bulgaria will include:

• Screening and development of broad-spectrum anti-coronavirus drugs;

• Research and development of anti-coronavirus vaccine;

• Etiology and pathogenic mechanisms of action of animal-derived viruses and protective immune mechanisms against virus;

• New technologies for rapid and precise diagnosis of coronavirus

The funding agencies wish to develop and strengthen transnational collaborations across the countries involved and to support collaborations which will have a real impact in this field. Applicants must successfully demonstrate the sustainability of the collaboration and the potential impact of the activities proposed.

1. **Funding available**

The applicants from the above-mentioned countries will be funded by their respective funding agencies (**NSFC and RFBR**). The projects will be supported with grants in accordance with the respective national funding regulations. Details are set out in the relevant country annexes.

**NSFC:** Chinese teams can receive up to 1,500,000 RMB for each project. NSFC-funded costs of each grant will be issued and managed by NSFC according to its funding guidelines and procedures.

**RFBR:** Russian teams can receive form 3,000,000 to 4,000,000 RUB per year for each project.

1. **Eligibility**

Each collaborative research proposal must involve one eligible Principal Investigator based in the China and one eligible Principal Investigator based in Russia.

All applicants must adhere to national eligibility rules for research proposals as set out in the relevant country annexes and national call guidelines. Any queries concerning eligibility should be addressed to the contact persons of the respective funding agencies.

Principal Investigators need to ensure that they, and any Co-Investigators included on the application are eligible. **Applications involving any ineligible applicants** (from China or Russia) **will result in the whole application being rejected.**

1. **Application**

For each proposal, the Chinese PI must apply using NSFC’s ISISN system (http://isisn.nsfc.gov.cn/egrantweb/) by completing a standard NSFC grant application along with the JPD in English. The applicant from Russia must apply to their country’s funder respectively (<https://www.rfbr.ru/rffi/ru/contest/n_812/o_2109210>). Details are set out in the relevant country annexes.

Please note the JPD must be jointly composed by all the consortia. The applicants must submit the JPD to their country’s funder respectively. The JPD will be the most important material for evaluation. A template of the JPD is presented at **ANNEX 2**.

**Additional specific instructions for collaboration among China and Russia are provided in the individual Annex for each country. Please ensure you read the annexes of the countries concerned.**

***Collaboration Agreement***

As the research projects will be carried out by all the project partners, the basis of collaboration between the project partners, including ownership of intellectual property (IP) generated during the project and rights to exploitation, and IP management is expected to be set out in a collaboration agreement between the Principal Investigators involved. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigators to put such an agreement in place **before the research begins**. The terms of collaboration must not conflict with the funding agencies terms and conditions and national law.

Arrangements for collaboration and/or exploitation must not prevent the future progression of academic research and the dissemination of research results in accordance with academic custom and practise and the requirements of the funding bodies.

Details of key issues included in the Collaboration Agreement, for example management of IP, should be described in JPD. The full Collaboration Agreement must be available to be shared with the funders once the project is approved.

1. **Evaluation**

Each funding agency will carry out eligibility and internal checks and agree which proposals will go forward for assessment. Only proposals that fit to the call topics mentioned in Part II of this call will be evaluated and funded.

Eligible proposals will be subject to the independent evaluation by the funding agencies to which the proposals are submitted. Both funding agencies will first establish its respective ranking list of proposals according to the evaluation result. Then a common ranking list will be developed based on a joint panel meeting with panellists recommended by NSFC and RFBR. The final decision on projects to be funded will be made based on the common ranking list and within available budget of respective funding agencies. Each funding agency will have one administrative panel member and a certain number of panel members experts in the call thematic areas. The number of experts from each country will be determined by the funding agencies depending on the number of proposals

**Assessment Criteria**

To be funded, proposals must be internationally competitive and at a standard equivalent to that normally expected to be supported by each funding organisation.

For further information about the assessment process, please refer to Annexes.

In addition to the assessment criteria, applicants should carefully demonstrate within the JPD that their projects:

* Represent true collaborative partnerships between transnational research teams; the added value of such collaborations should be clearly highlighted within the proposals.
* Contain an integrated work plan and an equal commitment to the project (in terms of hours dedicated to the project rather than project costs). Projects that appear to be working in parallel with little interaction between countries will not be supported.

Applicants who receive funding from this call must be prepared to contribute to workshops and/or other networking activities associated with this call.

1. **Additional Considerations**

***Ethical issues***

Proposals that involve experiments on animals and/or human must be conducted in such a way that is in accordance with the laws and regulations that is applicable in each country.

All countries where research will be undertaken should be identified. The following special issues should be taken into account:

* If the project involves ethical content, the applicant must provide the Ethical Approval from Ethics Committees of their own or relevant authority as the attachment to the proposal.
* If the project involves Informed Consent Form, the relevant regulations must be followed.

***Data management and transfer of materials***

Collection and exchange of data and materials must be in strict compliance with the funding agencies terms and the legislation in effect in the respective countries.

1. **Reporting**

The projects will be monitored through progress reports and the final report by respective funding agencies for its content and progress.

1. **Timetable**

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| Call Opens | Sept 22, 2020 |
| Call Closes | Nov 10, 2020 |
| Grants start | March-April (For RFBR)  March (For NSFC) |

1. **Contacts**

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| **Funding Agency** | **Contact** |
| NSFC | Mr. ZHONG Qi  Email: [zhongqi@nsfc.gov.cn](mailto:xujin@nsfc.gov.cn)  Telephone: +86 10 6232 7005 |
| RFBR | Mr. Dmitry Mazin  Email: [mazin@rfbr.ru](mailto:mazin@rfbr.ru)  +7 (499) 995-14-69 |

**Annex**

**Additional guidance for Chinese applicants**

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| **Funding Agency** | National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) |
| **Eligibility** | Standard NSFC eligibility conditions apply to this call.   1. Have a senior academic rank (title) 2. Have/had been the Principle Investigator of on-going or completed NSFC research project with the duration of no less than 3 years 3. One application per year: Applicants (as the Principle Investigator) shall only apply for one International (Regional) Joint Research Program in a year. 4. Principle Investigator of a running NSFC-funded international joint research project shall not apply for one new international joint research project. 5. Have a supporting institution: The Chinese applicant should submit the application through the supporting institution 6. Other restrictions in the 2020 Guide to Program |
| **Budget** | Chinese partners that are eligible for funding can receive up to ￥1.5 million for projects of 24 months. NSFC-funded costs of each grant will be issued and managed by NSFC according to its funding guidelines and procedures. |
| **Eligible costs** | It is expected that applications to this call will be International (Regional) Joint Research Projects as defined in the call notice, and NSFC will fund the Chinese component(s) of any successful bilateral or transnational collaboration. The eligible costs are as follows:   * Equipment   1. Purchase   2. Trial   3. Modification and rental * Materials and supplies * Test/calculation/analysis * Power consumption * Travel/ Conference/ International cooperation * publication/Reference/ Dissemination of info/Intellectual Property * Labour Cost * Consulting * Miscellaneous |
| **Documents required** | The Chinese PI must apply using NSFC’s ISISN system (<http://isisn.nsfc.gov.cn/egrantweb/>) by completing a standard NSFC grant application. The following documents must be uploaded to ISISN by the Chinese PI as the attachments:   * The JPD in English jointly prepared by all partners. * Ethical Approval from Ethics Committees of their own or relevant authorities if applicable. |
| **Submission process** | After submitting the proposal and all attachments in the ISISN system, the Chinese Principal Investigator must inform his/her host institution to confirm the application in the ISISN system and finish the entire submission process to NSFC. There is no need to submit any hard copy of the proposal to NSFC. |
| **Assessment** | There will be a two stage evaluation process.  At the first stage, each proposal will be reviewed by at least 5 peer reviewers.  At the second stage, a joint panel will develop a final ranking list of all proposals based on the evaluation results of all funding agencies. |
| **Contact** | Mr. ZHONG Qi  Email: [zhongqi@nsfc.gov.cn](mailto:zhongqi@nsfc.gov.cn)  Telephone: +86 10 6232 7005 |

**Additional guidance for Russian applicants**

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| **Funding Agency** | Russian Foundation for Basic Research |
| **Eligibility** | Russian participant submits a national application to the RFBR in accordance with the accepted national rules (in Russian). |
| **Budget** | Up to 4,000,000 RUB per year |
| **Eligible costs** | 1. Reimbursement of the organization's expenses for providing conditions for the project implementation (no more than 20%).  2. Travel expenses related to the implementation of the project, outside of the settlement where team members lives.  3. Organization and registration fees for participation in the activities of team members in order to present the results of the project.  4. Expenses for facilities and equipment.  5. Expenses for the publishing services.  6. Transport expenses.  7. Expenses for the animal nutrition and veterinary services.  8. Expenses for the manufacture of an experimental equipment, maps, diagrams, diagrams, sketches, layouts, etc. items.  9. Expenses for the research work performance (no more than 20%).  10. Expenses for the contracts performance  11. Expenses for the scientific instruments, equipment, incl. flash cards (computers, laptops, tablets, electronic books, etc. refer to equipment), spare parts, components for scientific equipment, instruments, computing and office equipment, consumables.  12. Expenses for the medicines, dressings and other medicinal products, soft equipment and uniforms, sleeping bags, special clothing and special footwear, space communications equipment, fuels and lubricants, etc.  13. Expenses for the experimental animals and products food for these animals, biological objects for experiments, etc.  14. Expenses for the safety gear during project implementation.  15. Expenses for the scientific and technical literature for the project implementation (except for library funds).  16. Expenses for the subscription of scientific and technical literature on the subject project, access to electronic scientific information resources.  17. Expenses for the software licenses, the acquisition and updating of reference and information databases.  18. Expenses for the publication of the results of the project implementation, and for intellectual property rights.  19. The cost of using the resources of the Shared Use Centers (SUC) in the implementation of the project.  20. Expenses for digitizing and photocopying archival materials  21. Expenses for communication and Web.  22. Expenses for the PI personal consumption. |
| **Documents required** | According to national rules published at RFBR website (Call’s terms) |
| **Submission process** | Through RFBR system (KIAS) according to the instructions |
| **Assessment** | There will be two-stage evaluation process.  At the first stage, each proposal will be reviewed according to a national procedure for evaluation.  At the second stage, a joint panel will develop a final ranking list of all proposals based on the evaluation results of both foundations. |
| **Contacts** | Mr. Dmitry Mazin  Email: [mazin@rfbr.ru](mailto:mazin@rfbr.ru)  Tel:+7 (944) 995-14-69 |
| **Link to the call:** | <https://www.rfbr.ru/rffi/ru/contest/n_812/o_2109210> |

1. https://www.glopid-r.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/who-2019-novel-coronavirus-global-research-roadmap.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)