

SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR INTEGRATION OF FOREIGN SCIENTISTS INTO THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA (INTEGRATION GRANT – 2023/2)

Information for Applicants

Disclaimer

The English version of this call is intended for general guidance and information purposes. It does not constitute a certified translation of the legal source. For a detailed description of the grant please follow the Armenian version.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

About

The integration grant is addressed to talented scientists who are interested in establishing a research units and developing their professional careers in the research institutions of the Republic of Armenia. *The integration grant* aims to create new research units under foreign scientists' leadership in the Republic of Armenia research institutions.

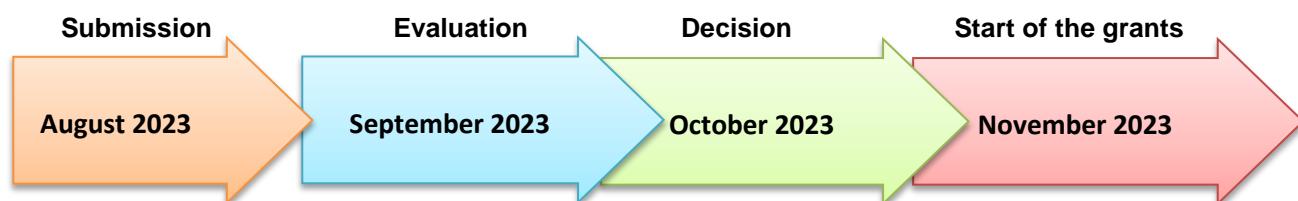
Research fields

The integration grant applicants may submit proposals based on individual research plans that can be within the research topics of the specific host or open-topic field of fundamental or applied research. We particularly welcome pioneering proposals addressing new and emerging fields of research and proposals of multi- or interdisciplinary nature which cross the boundaries between different fields of research.

NS – Natural Sciences	ET – Engineering and Technology	SS – Social Sciences
Mathematics	Urban Planning and Architecture	Psychology
Computer Sciences and Informatics	Mechanics	Pedagogical Sciences
Physics and Astronomy	Electrical Engineering and Information Technology	Economics and Business
Chemistry	Mechanical Engineering and Machine Building	Sociology
Earth and Environmental Sciences	Chemical Technology	Law
Biological Sciences	Material Science	Political Sciences
	Biotechnology	Socio-Economic Geography
	Medical Devices	Mass Media and Communication
	Nanotechnology	
	Ecology	

MS – Medical Sciences	AS –Agricultural Sciences	AH – Armenian Studies and Humanities
General Medicine	Cattle Breeding, Veterinary Medicine	History, Archaeology
Clinical Medicine	Crop Production	Linguistics, Literary Studies
Medical Biotechnology	Soil Science, Agro-Chemistry, Plant Protection	Philosophy, Ethics
	Agricultural Biotechnology	Geology
		Arts

Timeline



Eligibility

Eligible Principal Investigator

A successful candidate must have already shown research independence and should be able to demonstrate a promising track record of achievement appropriate to the research field to become the Principal Investigator (PI) of the project.

The integration grant is open to researchers of any nationality who meet the following admissibility and eligibility criteria:

- An applicant must have been born on or after January 1st of 1973.
- Got Ph.D. degree after January 1st of 2003.
- For the research fields of NS, ET, MS, and AS and SS PIs should have at least 4 papers or book chapters published during the last 5 years and indexed in one of the following Web of Science collections - “Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE)”, “Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)”, “Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI)”, “Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI)” or indexed in the portal “Scimago Journal & Country Ranking”. Papers can be replaced by a monograph or collective monograph (one monograph is tantamount to 4 papers) published by one of the Publishers included in the Web of Science Book Citation Index. The requirement for the field of AH is equal to 2 papers or 1 monograph.
- An applicant must relocate to the Republic of Armenia for the duration of the grant and must not have resided, studied, or been employed in Armenia for more than 12 months in the 4 years before the date of the call.

Eligible Research Groups

- The research group consists of 2-5 members.
- PIs are free to select the research group members. National or international researchers may be part of the research team and must be at least third-year Bachelor students.
- **The integration grant** research program requires at least three group members (including the PI) for NS, ET, MS, and AS research fields and at least two group members (including the PI) for SS and AH.
- At least two of the group members (including the PI) must have been born on or after January 1st of 1988 (the eligibility can be extended for certain properly documented circumstances such as for maternity and paternity leave or national service). These two members may be at least third-year Bachelor students.
- For NS, ET, MS, and AS research fields the group members can be at least first-year Bachelor students if they have received at least a third-class diploma in the 11th or 12th class at the national stage of the school subject Olympiad.
- One of the young performers should not be an employee of any state-funded research institution of the Republic of Armenia.
- The PI is allowed to expand the research group with two new under-35 members after the initial period of 12 months subject to the SC approval.
- It is the responsibility of the PI to identify suitable group members. The host institution provides support for the recruitment and retention of the group members. The SC is not in a position to recommend group members.

Eligible Host Institutions

The integration grant research program should be conducted at a state-funded research or educational institution in the Republic of Armenia.

- The host institution employs the PI at least for the entire duration of **the grant** for the implementation of the research tasks and the training activities.
- A scientific laboratory led by the PI and the group members must be established in the research institution no later than 24 months after the start of the grant. After establishing the laboratory, the research group members will also receive a salary from the state-funded budget in addition to **the integration grant** salary.
- The host institution provides researchers with full access to the infrastructure and facilities of the institution.
- The host institution may appoint an administrative contact person for the duration of the grant, who will help the PI with the relocation or financial and administrative issues.
- The host institution supports the implementation of the program.

Foreign Partner/Collaborator

The project must have a Foreign Partner/Collaborator, who holds a PhD or equivalent degree in a relevant field. The collaborator must have expertise and experience on the research topic of the project proposal employed by a foreign research institution.

- The collaborator must have an H-index (Scopus) of at least 10 for NS, ET, MS, and AS research fields and at least 3 for SS and AH.
- The collaborator must visit the host institution in Armenia for at least 25 days for the entire duration of the fellowship and must host the group members for at least 25 days for the entire duration of the fellowship.
- One of the required publications must be with the co-authorship with the collaborator.
- The collaborator is not a group member, and remuneration is not provided.

Submission restrictions

The following general restrictions for *the integration grant* apply:

- PI and the group members can only be involved in one application.
- Researchers who are already involved in the Integration 2022 (2023), Remote Laboratory 2022 (2023), Starting, Consolidating, or Advanced research grants funded by the SC may not be recruited as group members.

Funding

The integration grant includes the remuneration of the group members and the allocation of eligible direct and indirect research costs.

In the proposal submission, the budget should be presented in the Armenian Dram currency (AMD). The project costs are to be calculated based on the exchange rate of € 1 = AMD 400.

The budget is composed of the following elements:

- Remuneration of the group members
- Other research costs of € 2,500 (ca. AMD 1,000,000) for each group member per year
- A single lump amount of € 37,500 (ca. AMD 15,000,000) for the first 12 months to develop the laboratory infrastructure.

Remuneration of the group members

The proposed budget of remuneration should be the same for the entire duration of the project. It should not vary from year to year.

- Remuneration of the PI with the monthly salary is:
Living allowance of € 1500 (ca. AMD 600,000 gross).

Family allowance of up to €375 (ca. AMD 150,000 gross) for researchers whose families (partners and dependent children) will stay in Armenia during the funding period.

- The average monthly salary of the group members (PostDocs, Ph.D., Master and Bachelor students, technicians) should be €750 (ca. AMD 300,000 gross).

Possible income opportunities for PIs

- Maximum total €4275
- Integration grant salary - €1500 (plus family allowance €375) and State-funded budget - up to €1000
- The PI may additionally apply for up to 2 SC grants, each with a salary of up to €700
- The Program of the Ministry of Economy of the RA - €1000
<https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=167054>

The PI is free to get involved in training young scientists at local universities with a contract salary.

If other research costs such as buying new equipment are necessary to sustain the progress of the project, the PI is allowed to cut some of the remuneration budget.

- Other research costs of up to €2,500 (ca. AMD 1,000,000) for each group member per year include:
 - Research supplies and consumables
 - Costs of research equipment
 - Travel and subsistence costs for group members
 - Travel and subsistence costs for the external collaborator and the consultant
 - Open Access publication and dissemination costs, monograph publication costs with prior approval from the SC.
 - Total indirect costs of up to €6,250 (ca. AMD2,500,000) to be used to provide the PI with a working space. Indirect costs are managed by the host institution.

External collaborators and consultants are not considered team members and are not entitled to receive a salary.

After the initial period of 12 months, the PI can recruit two additional members under 35, subject to SC approval, whose salary will be €375 (ca. AMD 150,000) per month. This funding will be provided by the SC in addition to the grant budget.

The PI is given budgetary flexibility for proper management of the project. A reallocation requires an amendment to the grant agreement subject to approval by the SC before the date the modification should take place. Note, budgetary flexibility does not apply to the PI's allowance and the indirect costs, which cannot be changed.

Expected results and outcome

- After the initial 35 months teams from the research fields of NS, ET, MS, AS, and SS must have at least 3 published papers or book chapters indexed in one of the following Web of Science collections - “Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE)”, “Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)”, “Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI)”, “Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI)” or indexed in the portal “Scimago Journal & Country Ranking”, or one monograph or collective monograph (one monograph is tantamount to 4 papers) published by one of the Publishers included in the Web of Science Book Citation Index. For the research field of AH, the requirement is equal to 2 papers or 1 monograph.
- At the stage of the final report teams from the research fields of NS, ET, MS, AS, and SS must have at least 10 published papers or book chapters indexed in one of the following Web of Science collections - “Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE)”, “Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)”, “Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI)”, “Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI)” or indexed in the portal “Scimago Journal & Country Ranking” (at least 2 of the publications must be in Q1 and 2 in Q2 journals) or 2 monographs or collective monographs published by one of the Publishers included in the Web of Science Book Citation Index. For the research field of AH, the requirement is equal to 5 papers (at least 2 of the publications must be in Q1 and 2 in Q2 journals) or 2 monographs.
- Publications within the framework of this project must have the following note:

This work was supported by the Science Committee of RA (Research project № _____).

- Not meeting the abovementioned requirements will subtract 5 percentage points from future project proposals. 1 percentage of points from every team member, a maximum of 5 percentage points. Points reduction will be diminished if the conditions are thereafter fulfilled.
- At the final report stage, at least one submitted a grant application to an international funding agency for at least €62,500 (ca. AMD25,000,000) for NS, ET, MS, AS, and SS research fields. The requirement for AH research fields is €37,500 (ca. AMD15,000,000).
- During the implementation of the project, the team members ensure outreach, and public engagement, including the creation and dissemination of popular science materials on the topic, promoting public awareness, and understanding of science (public talks, publications in popular science journals, participating in science fairs, making science resources accessible to the public).

Application Process

The application submission deadline for *the integration grant* is **August 25th, 2023, at 18:00 Armenia time (UTC +4)**. Please keep in mind that it is not possible to make any changes to the proposal once it is submitted.

Proposals are submitted via a web-based online proposal submission system at <https://irf-2023-armenia.scs.am/>

The following elements need to be included in the application:

- PI's application

- Budget
- Project description
- Extensive summary
- An abstract for the public (up to 2 pages including figures and references)
- The conclusion of the scientific council of the host institution or faculty, which should contain information on the relevance and importance of the project to the scientific directions of the organization
- Copies of the last diplomas of the group members, and in case of being a student or graduate student, the relevant reference(s)
- Foreign collaborator's CV, including academic research track, list of publications, experience in supervising research, and a letter of confirmation which states that they are familiar with the project description, and are aware of the scope of their functions such as hosting the group members and participating in joint events (scientific experiments, discussions, seminars, etc.).
- PI's CV, including academic research track and publications
- A copy of PI's Ph.D. Diploma
- A letter from the host institution, signed by an authorized representative stating that a new scientific laboratory, funded by a state-funded budget, led by the PI and the group members, will be established in the research institution no later than 24 months after the start of the grant and that the host institution will employ the PI at least for the entire duration of the grant.

Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria for *the integration grant* are:

1. **Scientific quality of the project:** originality and innovative nature of the project; scientific impact; relationship to the state of the art of research in the field; scientific methods and techniques, research tools, equipment, and devices to be used; expected results, potential for high-quality research outputs; sufficiency of the infrastructure and budget.
2. **Qualification of the applicant:** the capacity to implement the project; scientific achievements of the applicant; important contributions to the field; research performance and research output including the number of research publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals; research experience gained abroad including number and type of stays.
3. **Assessment of the host institution and impact of the project:** quality and suitability of institutional environment, and equipment; mutual gain from transfer of knowledge, technology, and expertise between the applicant and the host institution; the quality of mentor's supervision based on their research track record and previous supervision experience.

Evaluation

Step 1 – Technical Evaluation

Initially, all applications are screened by the SC office to ensure that the eligibility requirements are met. After that, the Extensive summary, PI's track record, CV, and the appropriateness of the host institution are evaluated by the panel members. PIs of rejected applications will be informed about that.

Step 2 - Panel Evaluation

For the second step of the evaluation, the proposals are referred to at least two experts. The experts carry out their evaluation based on the complete data included in the proposal. After the external reviews are submitted, the panel committee discusses the individual reviews and conducts interviews with the applicants. The interview provides input to further clarify the proposal and to provide explanations to questions and criticisms submitted by the experts. The panel committee evaluates the applications and provides a final evaluation and score for each application based on the scores of experts, and interviews. Both scores of the external experts and the panel experts account for 50% of the final score.

Evaluation process

The panel committee compiles a ranking list for all applications based on the final scores. The compliant applications will be granted in the order of ranking until the depletion of the funds allocated for this call.

In the final evaluation, the panel committee may prescribe certain conditions that the host institution and the applicant are required to fulfill upon receiving the grant.

Each applicant receives the evaluation summary report reflecting the proposal's final score. The comments and marks must give sufficient and clear reasons for the score.

Contracting of grants

Allocation of program

Based on the final proposal and evaluation received from the panel committee, the SC makes a granting or rejecting decision.

A decision on rejecting the application may be made in the following cases:

- Based on the results of the evaluation and the threshold score
- The proposal cannot be funded due to the limited budget for the call
- If the certain conditions prescribed by the expert panel are not consented to by the applicant or the host institution

For each funded proposal, a Tripartite Agreement between the SC, the host institution, and the PI is concluded for the funding term. The Agreement entails the rights and responsibilities of the parties within the scope of **the integration grant** program. The group members involved in the program enter into a Supplementary Agreement with the PI, that specifies the duties and obligations of members.

Reporting

The PI in cooperation with the host institution is required to submit progress reports to the SC. The extension of the project duration is possible based on the report and the Board's decision.

- **Intermediate report** should be submitted within the 12th, 24th and 48th months of fellowship implementation and should include the following:
 - the results following the objectives of the program
 - a list of published articles as a result of the implementation of the program

- a list of conference, workshop, and seminar presentations of the project results, teaching, and public outreach activities
- a report on the usage of funding
- Triennial report should be submitted upon the 36th month of the project implementation and should include the following:
 - the results of the objectives of the program
 - a list of published articles as a result of the implementation of the program
 - a list of conference, workshop, and seminar presentations of the project results, teaching, and public outreach activities
 - a report on the usage of funding
 - a report on the international recognition of the research group, its impact on the research field, and possible directions of future research
- Final report should be submitted no later than one month after the end of the program and should include the following:
 - the results following the objectives of the program
 - a list of published articles as a result of the implementation of the program
 - a list of conference, workshop, and seminar presentations of the project results, teaching, and public outreach activities
 - a report on the usage of funding
 - a report on the potential applicability of the results for Armenian research and economy
 - a report on the international recognition of the research group, its impact on the research field, and possible directions of future research

Research integrity

Cases of evident intentional false information, fraudulent activities, and scientific misconduct such as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or misrepresentation of data may result in the rejection of proposals and a possible restriction on the participation of the researcher in any of the programs funded by the SC.

FAQ

1. When is it possible to apply for the integration grant program?

Applications for ***the integration grant*** program are only possible if they have been advertised.

2. On which target group does the integration grant program focus?

This program is particularly suitable for excellent active applicants who hold tenured professorship or equivalent permanent positions outside Armenia.

3. What resources are available for the integration grant program?

The integration grant program offers competitive packages for start-up money, personnel, travel, and yearly operating costs. The PI's research group carries out the project program at one of the state-funded research institutions in Armenia, where they can use the infrastructure, resources, and excellent research environment with the research group. Moreover, the PIs are bestowed a great deal of individual flexibility, and if necessary, can employ additional funds from other programs of the SC according to need and progress.

4. Is participation in teaching activities expected?

Participation in teaching is not on the list of formal requirements. However, a PI is free and encouraged to get involved in training young scientists at a local university.

5. Is there any age limit?

There is no age restriction for the PI.

6. Is it possible to apply for the integration grant program with a host institution where the applicant is/was already employed?

Yes. However, an applicant must not have been studied or employed in Armenia for more than 12 months during the last 4 years.

7. Should the applicant contact the preferred host Institution before an official application?

Yes, in any case. In this way, common research areas of interest can be identified with the institute, and it can be determined whether an institute is fundamentally interested and able to provide the necessary premises and resources.

8. What is the composition of the expert panel?

Each panel consists of experts, leading scientists of specific research fields. These panels are responsible for the final recommendation based on the evaluations of the external experts.