PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP (PPP)-CALL FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS ON INNOVATION-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS IN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY, HEALTH AND BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH, ENERGY, AND ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE IN MALAWI

Call Opening Date: 3rd November 2026
Call Closing Date: 2nd December 2026

1.0 Background

The National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST) was established under the Science and Technology Act No.16 of 2003 with the mandate to advise Government and other stakeholders on all science and technology matters in order to achieve a science and technology-led development. Its mission is to promote, support, co-ordinate and regulate the development and application of research, science, technology and innovation so as to create wealth in order to improve the quality of life.

Since 2015, NCST has been participating in the Science Granting Council Initiative (SGCI) in Sub-Saharan Africa to strengthen its capacity, support research, foster innovation, and promote evidence-based policymaking to drive socio-economic development. Key details regarding the SGCI include:

a) *Funders Consortium:* Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), South Africa's National Research Foundation (NRF), the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the German Research Foundation (DFG), and Wellcome Trust.
b) *Progression & Evolution of SGCI*: The initiative has evolved from its inception in 2015 through Phase 1 and Phase 2, up to SGCI Phase 3 starting in 2026.
c) *SGCI-3 Key Focus & Objectives:*
    - Aligning national research priorities with the African Union's Science Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA)-2034.
    - Promoting co-funding of applied research through public-private partnerships (PPP).
    - Providing research grants over the next 24 months to local Malawian institutions.

In pursuit of its mandate, NCST has secured a research grant from the SGCI in Sub-Saharan Africa to support and manage research and innovation projects in the following key areas: ***Agriculture and Food Security***; ***Health and Biomedical Research***; ***Energy; and; Environment and Climate Change Resilience*** under the public and private partnership approach.

2.0 Rationale

STISA 2034, the African Union's Second Ten-Year Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy, provides a continental framework for socio-economic transformation and building a knowledge-based economy. Malawi's National Research Agenda (NRA) domesticates STISA 2034 by translating its priorities into national research priorities aligned with Malawi 2063, recognising Research, Science, Technology and Innovation (RSTI) as key enablers of the country's long-term development aspirations.

In this regard, the NRA identifies priority research areas addressing critical socio-economic challenges in agriculture, health, energy, and environment and climate change resilience. These include low agricultural productivity arising from high production costs, limited access to farming inputs, post-harvest losses and declining soil fertility; health challenges relating to communicable and non-communicable diseases, maternal and newborn health, weak health management systems, trauma and emergency medical services, and dependence on imported medicines and medical devices; energy constraints characterised by inadequate electricity generation (estimated at 451.55 megawatts nationally), high fossil fuel importation costs, overreliance on biomass and energy inefficiencies; and environmental challenges involving natural disasters, climate adversities, environmental degradation, weak regulatory enforcement, inadequate climate surveillance and limited awareness of environmental best practices and climate information services.

This Call for Proposals seeks to fund research and innovation projects that address these challenges through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) approach, fostering collaboration between universities, research institutions and industry. The Call places particular emphasis on bridging the gap between research and innovation by supporting the translation of research outputs, including technologies, improved crop varieties, prototypes and innovative business models, into marketable products and services.

Through this approach, the Call aims to strengthen the uptake, utilisation and commercialisation of research outputs, promote multidisciplinary collaboration among experts from diverse disciplines and institutions, and enhance the contribution of research and innovation to Malawi's socio-economic development.

3.0 Thematic Areas of Focus

Research and innovation project proposals that demonstrate public and private partnership in the following thematic areas will be supported;

- Agriculture and Food Security;
- Health and Biomedical Research;
- Energy; and
- Environment and Climate Change Resilience.

4.0 Funding Level, Duration and Allowable Costs

The maximum grant value for each research project proposal is **US$ 72,000.** Each research project will be implemented for a period not exceeding **twenty- four months (24 months) from 1st April 2027 - 30th March 2029**.

Allowable budget items include the following:

- Material costs, if they are directly linked to the research project, in particular, materials to be used in research, the cost of expendable items (e.g. printing paper, stationery and disinfectants), field expenses, travel expenses or third party charges.
- Direct costs incurred through the use of research infrastructure linked to the research.
- Costs of organizing conferences and workshops in connection with the funded research.
- Costs of national co-operation and networking activities directly associated with the funded research.

Note: Salaries and honoraria of applicants are not eligible costs.

5.0 Eligibility of Applicants

(a) Each proposal must have a Principal Investigator (PI) as a main applicant, based in Malawi, of Malawian nationality and must be affiliated to a Malawian institution with a demonstrated research capacity or relevant experience.

(b) Applications are open to public and private universities; Research institutes; Government agencies; Registered NGOs and innovation hubs; and Private sector entities from Malawi. A PI can only submit **one** application. There is no restriction on the number of proposals from an institution.

(c) A support letter from an institution of the PI is a prerequisite. Proposals without institutional approval through support letters will not be considered.

(d) A support letter from the Private Sector institution collaborating with the PI is a prerequisite.

(e) The Grant will fund **only applied research projects** in the listed thematic areas. Research proposals shall need to demonstrate the application of scientific principles or scientific discoveries to solve real life challenges. **Basic or purely theoretical research will not be considered.**

(f) A PI at the point of application must fulfil the following requirements:

- Hold a primary appointment in a public or privately funded institution (Minimum of 12 months' employment with a local institution);
- A project must be based at the PI's institution at the time of application. If the PI resigns or quits, the project team through the Co-PI should propose a replacement PI whose credentials shall be vetted by NCST.
- Have done previous research in any of the focus thematic areas and have some demonstrable results, and;
- Providing mentorship to research teams, as well as having productive research outcomes.

6.0 Proposal Preparation, Submission and Processing

These guidelines are provided to researchers to develop proposals for possible funding in any of the four thematic areas. These guidelines must be adhered to as failure to do so will result into the proposals not being reviewed for funding. Submission of a research proposal does not guarantee that the application is successful.

Projects that emphasise technology identification and development, packaging and dissemination for immediate impact on investment and productivity are encouraged.

The applicants are requested to use Times New Roman font, size 12, 1.5-line spacing using the **Research Proposal Template (Annexure 1).**

The mode of application and submission of the full application package (i.e. with all the required attachments) shall be through the **web-based online grants management system** (OGMS) hosted by NCST using the following link …….

The application package shall include a full proposal as shown in Annexure 1; Principal investigator's covering letter; letter of support from an institution of the PI; Letter of support from the collaborating private partner, work plan and budget proposal (using a guided template). Applications sent after the deadline will be declined by the system

7.0 Deadline for Submission of Proposals

The deadline for submission is **2nd December 2026 at 11:59 Central Africa Time.**

8. 0 Contact Information

Further enquiries should be directed to Lyson Kampira through lkampira@ncst.mw.