# 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 Inclusion in the Proposal

### i) Cross-cutting considerations

The proposal should demonstrate how **gender equality and inclusivity, public-private partnerships, risk management and intellectual property issues will be addressed in the project**. Research projects led by women Principal Investigators are strongly encouraged. More weight will be given to a team that has female co-investigators during the review and selection process of the projects.

### ii) Results and Dissemination

Applicants should clearly define the major outputs expected from the research project and describe how the research findings will be disseminated or used. Who are the target audience/ beneficiaries? How will the findings be used to influence policy and practice? What media engagements plans are envisaged? Indicate how open access will be fostered. Relate the specific

dissemination method/approach to the target audience and briefly explain the rationale for the choice of the approach.

**iii) Team composition from applicant organizations**

All individuals who make a significant contribution to the intellectual direction of the research, and who may have some responsibility for financial aspects of the project should be listed. Team members from applicant organizations should be included. It is important to include the field of expertise of each individual, as well as the percentage of their professional time committed to the project. Do not include CVs of the entire research team but include a one or two paged CV for the Principal Investigators. Letters of support from the institutions of the PI should be included.

**iv) Budget**

This should include an explanation and justification for each line item in the detailed budget spreadsheet (available on the application portal). The maximum budget must not exceed the grant value. Presentation of detailed budgets is a must. Any allowable costs should include a clarification and a justification. All rates to be used for the budgeting purpose are the ones acceptable by the respective institutions of the Principal Investigators hosting the projects. Some of the project downstream budgetary items could include the following:

- Personnel
- Research Costs
- Equipment
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Knowledge Sharing and Research Uptake
- Training and Capacity Building
- Matching Support (if any)

**v) Project Management**

Briefly explain how the project will be managed. What is the composition of the research team, their qualifications and specific roles in the proposed project? Describe how any partnership is planned with other universities/ research institutes? How will the private sector or beneficiaries be involved in the design/management/execution of the project? What is the role of the university's/institute's management (if any) and how might this governance structure influence the success of the programme?

**vi) Proposed Project Chart of Activities and Timelines**

Provide a chart of key activities, timelines and key milestones.

**vii) Ethical clearance**

Where the project involves human participants and animal subjects, the Principal Investigator shall obtain ethical clearance from an appropriate NCST designated research ethics committee before any grant disbursement and implementation of the project. NCST will also ensure that the ethically cleared research projects have been inspected for ethical compliance in the field besides the ordinary monitoring and evaluation.

**viii) Intellectual Property Management**

To ensure that intellectual property (IP) generated through grant-funded research is appropriately identified, protected, owned and managed to safeguard the interests of researchers, institutions and the nation, the applicants shall be required to clarify IP ownership and management.

## 7.0 Proposal Preparation

These guidelines are provided to researchers to develop proposals for possible funding in any of the four research priority areas named above. 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 funding.

Projects that emphasise technology identification and generation, 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).**

## 8.0 Submission and Processing of Proposals

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. Applications after the deadline will be declined by the system

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

All attachments must be in PDF

i) All proposals must be submitted using the prescribed proposal template and will be reviewed based on their quality, merit and scientific rigour. A full proposal template is appended in the annexure 1.
ii) All documents (full research proposal, CV, detailed budget, support letters) have to be submitted in both PDF format.
iii) Applicants will be required to submit full proposals which will be screened for completeness by NCST before a technical review by an independent panel of reviewers.
iv) The evaluation, selection and approval of successful proposals will be communicated to applicants by **26th February 2027**.
v) All proposals will be received and processed in strict confidentiality. Complete proposals will be reviewed by a panel of external reviewers.

## 9.0 Contact Information

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

# ANNEXURE 1: Proposal Format/Template

The full proposal in any of the priority areas should be prepared in the following format and address elements therein.

## 1. Project Summary

This section provides a succinct high-level summary of the proposed project.

- Name of applicant institution of the PI
- Name of the PI
- Project Title
- Amount Requested
- Project duration.

## 2. Background and Problem Statement

- Describe the problem that is to be investigated and the questions that will guide the research process. Provide a brief overview of the body of knowledge related to the problem and indicate the knowledge gaps that the proposed research will fill. To show the importance of the problem, this section should discuss: how the research relates to the country's development priorities; magnitude of the problem and how the research results will contribute to its solution; the special importance of the project for the private sector; and the need to build up research capacity in the proposed area of research.

- Present the research and /or innovation issues the project intends to address within the framework of the relevant scope.

- Explain the novelty / originality of the proposed project, highlighting how it goes beyond the state of the art of the proposed topic. Show how the project aims at significant advances in the state of the art extending current knowledge and/ or filling the gaps identified.

- Highlight the multidisciplinary nature of the project

## 3. Project Overall and Specific Objectives

- The overall objective should state the development goal being pursued by the research.

- The specific objectives should indicate the specific types of knowledge (or other outputs) to be produced/realized, the audiences to be reached, the forms of capacity to be reinforced, and the partnerships to be established. These are the objectives against which the success of the project will be judged.

## 4. Project Methodology/ Approach

Explain how each specific objective will be achieved in sufficient detail to enable an independent scientific assessment of the proposal. This section should show how the research questions will be answered in the most rigorous way possible. You must be clear about the activities envisaged to achieve each objective. The methodology (which should be justified) should discuss the following details as appropriate:

- **Conceptual framework:** This part should demonstrate how the researcher conceptualises the research problem and how different elements are expected to interact in explaining the phenomenon under investigation
- **Theoretical framework**. This defines theoretical lens through which the researcher examines, interprets and explains the research problem.
- **User participation**. State who the beneficiaries are and how they were identified. State how they will be involved in the design and how the results will impact on them.
- **Data collection.** Indicate the approaches and methods that will be used to collect data as well as how the research instruments will be developed. If the research includes studies on human populations, indicate how ethical questions relating to confidentiality will be achieved (see below). Where applicable, details must be provided with regard to the collection and handling of biological samples, and all laboratory procedures and protocols must be stipulated.
- **Data analysis.** Describe the methods of data analysis and modeling to be used, if any. This should include any statistical processes/ software (if necessary) as well as how the data will be secured, accessed, shared, stored and archived.
- **Ethics:** Describe how ethical approval will be obtained, if applicable. All projects that include human subjects must ensure that their privacy, dignity, and integrity are protected. Projects that will collect corporate or personal information must detail how informed consent will be obtained and confidentiality maintained

## 5. Project Results

- Define the major outputs (e.g., publications, policy briefs, books, technologies, protocols, guidelines, etc.) expected from the research (please be **specific**.). Based on these outputs, define the outcomes expected. Outcomes are defined as changes in actions, behaviors, and relationships of the users and target audiences. What is likely to change as a result of research findings, to whom, when and where? Describe whether the project findings are likely to influence policy and at what levels (national, regional?) How will the project engage with policy and decision actors at these levels?

- Describe how the project plans to contribute towards both individual and organizational capacity building. How might post-graduate students (MSc. and PhD) be involved in the project? What other training activities are envisaged under the project? Are their plans to enhance the capacity of project partners (and if so, in what areas)?

- Describe how the research findings will be disseminated or used. Who are the target audience/ beneficiaries? How will the findings be used to influence policy and practice? What media engagements plans are envisaged? Is open access (OA) part of your university's/institute's policy? Relate the specific dissemination method/approach to the target audience and briefly explain the rationale for the choice of the approach.

## 6 Project Management and Team

- Briefly explain how the project will be managed. Describe the suitability of your host institution in coordinating this project by highlighting the specific factors that make it uniquely qualified. Provide an overview of the technical infrastructure, human capacity, and other resource endowments that demonstrate the existing capacity to undertake the proposed research. Describe whether the project plans to incorporate advisors to provide overall oversight. What is the role of the university's/institute's management (if any) and how might this governance structure influence the success of the programme?

- Describe any existing or anticipated links with the **private sector/industry** and other actors in the country/national system. Briefly demonstrate how this project will fit into the overall design of the university's/institute's overall research strategy.

- Describe the suitability of the private sector partner in the project. How will the private sector and other beneficiaries be involved in the design/ management/ execution of the project?

- Indicate possible risks of not achieving the objectives of the project and mitigation measures.

## 7. Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy

Describe the monitoring and evaluation strategy approach that the research team will use for monitoring and evaluation of the research project. What indicators will be tracked to assess progress of the project.

## 8. Gender Equality and Inclusivity,

Explain how gender and other special interest groups considerations are taken into account in the project and provide a gender approach.

## 9. Intellectual Property Management

Describe potential intellectual property (IP) outputs of the proposed research and proposed IP ownership arrangements, anticipated role in IP management, IP ownership and benefit-sharing arrangements among researchers, institutions and external collaborators, where applicable.

## 10 ATTACHMENTS

a) *Full Project Proposal*
b) *Budget Template*
c) *CV of the PI and Team Members (combined as one attachment)*
d) *Letter of Support for PI from the Host Institution*
e) *Letter of Support for the Private Sector Partner*
f) *Proposed Workplan and Project Timeline*
g) *Theory of Change and Logical Framework*

Provide a chart of key activities and timelines as below

| Project Activities | Outcomes | Year 1 | | | | Year 2 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | QI | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| | | | | | | | | | |
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## 13. LITERATURE CITED

Include key literature/references that have been cited in the proposal