

Implementing the NSF Overseas Special Training Programme (OSTP) addressing the latest developments

Introduction

Overseas Special Training Programme (OSTP) is designed to enhance national capacities by providing opportunities for advanced training and for acquiring advanced laboratory skills, industrial experience and international exposure. The programme is aimed at scientists and technical personnel in academia, research institutions, government bodies or industry; and media personnel in relevant institutions. The main premise is that such skills development and industrial experience would not be available in Sri Lanka in the foreseeable future.

With the current economic context and government regulations of Sri Lanka, moving abroad in person for overseas training, whilst spending government funds is not permissible or justifiable. Accordingly, it is expected that OSTP could be utilized to train and build capacities of the scientists and technical personnel through facilitating short term online training programmes rather than for overseas visits in-person.

Eligibility

Applications will normally be considered from those working in a public sector institution or organisations. However, applications from the Private Sector will also be considered on a case by case and a matching funds basis, i.e. the NSF will fund up to a maximum of 50% of the total costs. Individuals working on their own will not be eligible for funding. Applicant must be affiliated to an institution on a permanent basis to be considered for a special OSTP grant.

All applicants must be citizens of, and presently working in, Sri Lanka and should be;

- i. Scientists and technical personnel who are presently working in a public or private research capacity, in a laboratory or in an industrial facility whose primary function is scientific research or scientific service
or
- ii. Science educators, science communicators, science administrators, IP managers, Technology managers and S&T policy makers, etc.

All applicants must have registered with the NSF's STMIS (Science and Technology Management Information System) prior to applying for the OSTP support.

Criteria for Selection

1. The proposed programme should be problem-oriented with relevance to capacity building geared towards economic development of in Sri Lanka.
2. The applicant's potential to strengthen the institution which he/she represents through the proposed virtual training has to be clearly indicated.
3. Each applicant will be required to demonstrate the scientific merit of the project, and a clear relationship to national development.
4. Preference will be given to national high priority areas given below with an aim of facilitating economic development of the country thereby consolidating limited resources in a frugal manner.
 - i. Eco-friendly and climate change resilient agriculture
 - ii. Improving agricultural productivity and quality
 - iii. Food quality and safety
 - iv. Reducing post-harvest loses
 - v. Health and indigenous medicine
 - vi. Value-added high quality products based on medicinal plants for export markets
 - vii. Biomedical innovations
 - viii. Climate change

- ix. Disaster mitigation and management
 - x. Waste management, circular economy and environmental sustainability
 - xi. Water security
 - xii. Energy security including green energy.
 - xiii. Food and nutrition security
 - xiv. Value addition to natural resources
 - xv. Community development and social innovations
 - xvi. Emerging technologies (IoT, Data Science, AI, Block chain, etc.) and transforming to 4IR
 - xvii. Enhance innovation capacity of SMEs
 - xviii. Biotechnology applications/solutions addressing high priority concerns/needs
 - xix. Import substitution
 - xx. Promoting high-tech exports
5. Interested applicants are first requested to fill the Google form through the following link to express their interest on a particular online training programme that they identify. NSF considers the Expressions of Interest (EOI) thus received case by case basis to select requests for further processing.
 6. Link to the Google form on EOI:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1GMkzRgtZpnmMO02ICNMvkzsPu0oEsa2lMYcmDWZFzQ/edit>
 7. Applicants from private sector organizations will also be considered on a matching funds basis.
 8. In evaluating applications for training fellowships, the following criteria will be considered:
 - ✓ B.Sc. Degree or above and at least three (3) years of relevant experience. Having postgraduate qualifications will be an added advantage.
 - ✓ an elaborative Project Statement in less than 500 words, describing the implementation plan of the gained knowledge and skills after the completion of the training, along with a Gantt Chart and time-bound milestones.
 - ✓ Proficiency in English (oral and written).
 - ✓ Publications in Indexed Journals, Peer reviewed Journals and Conference proceedings
 - ✓ In addition to the above, science educators, science communicators, science administrators, IP managers, Technology managers and S&T policy makers, etc. are requested to provide information on the following as well where applicable;
 - books written (with titles and year of publication)
 - science and technical outputs produced (science educational resource materials, science educational programmes, science related videos, S&T related media reports, any other)
 - patents obtained
 - ✓ meeting all the eligibility criteria above.
 9. All candidates should attach a comprehensive CV with their relevant personal, academic and professional details.
 10. Funding may cover a nominal registration fee (I.e. LKR 200,000/- per person per training) considered case-by-case basis. A 90% of the registration/course fee will be provided upon signing the OSTP agreement with the NSF and the remaining 10% of funds will be released upon successful completion of the programme and reporting requirements.
 11. A selected candidate will be awarded an 'NSF Training Scholarship' for a maximum of 03 months.

Administrative Procedures

- All awards will require an undertaking by the recipient that he/she will serve his/her institution on completion of the programme for a stipulated period as well as enter into a legally binding agreement with the NSF prior to start following the course.
- The statement from the Head of the Institution should include the following sentence:
"In the case of this OSTP being awarded and if the grantee fails to complete the training successfully, we agree to refund the total amount of the registration/course fee already paid to the grantee".
- Proof has to be provided for items no. 1-3 and 5 under 'criteria for selection' above along
- Proof of acceptance to the intended virtual training course, details about it and proof on the validity and recognition to that course have to be provided. The Head of the Institution/Department should also recommend the selection.
- All recipients, on their return, are required to submit a detailed report on their course/programme within a month of completion of same. The Report format is available at the NSF web site (www.nsf.gov.lk) under OSTP grants.
- Application procedure Application forms can be downloaded from the NSF website: (<http://www.nsf.ac.lk/index.php/researchers-a-academics/overseas-training.html>). The application form must be completed in full before submission to the NSF. Incomplete applications will be rejected. Canvassing of any kind will automatically invalidate the application. NSF will evaluate all applications and the decision of the Board of Management will be final. No correspondences will be entertained regarding rejected applications.
- The deadline for submission of applications is 30th of a given month. Applications should reach the NSF at least 45 days before the date of commencement of the virtual training programme. Once the application processing is initiated and proceeded, requests for re-scheduling training dates and revisions to budgets will not be entertained.
- Recipients are requested to acknowledge support from the NSF in their reports, publications and presentations as an indication of the use made by public funds towards scientific advancement and national capacity building.