SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR INTEGRATION OF FOREIGN SCIENTISTS TO THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA (INTEGRATION GRANT)

Information for Applicants

JANUARY 30, 2023

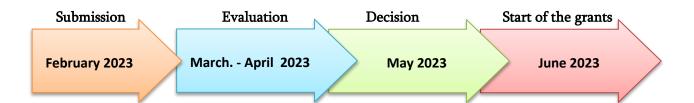Science Committee (**SC**) of the Republic of Armenia

Program overview

About
The INTEGRATION grant is addressed to talented scientists who are interested in establishing a research group and developing their professional career in research institutions of the Republic of Armenia. *The INTEGRATION grant* aims at creating new scientific units under the leadership of foreign scientists in research institutions of the Republic of Armenia. A successful Principal Investigator (PI) must have already shown a promising scientific track record of achievements and initiate an excellent research proposal.

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.

Timeline

Submission	Evaluation	Decision	Start of the grants
February 2023	March. - April 2023	May 2023	June 2023

Thematic areas

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 – Armenology 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

Eligibility

Eligible Principal Investigator

A successful candidate must have already shown research independence, 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.
- An applicant should hold a PhD or equivalent doctoral degrees. The first PhD shall have been awarded from January 1st of 2016 to present (Threshold 1 or Threshold 2) or from January 1st, 2003 to 2015 (Threshold 2).
- A competitive PI must have already demonstrated research independence with a promising track record of early achievements, appropriate to their research field, for example by having produced at least 4 publications in international peer-reviewed scientific journals of the respective field or 2 publications in international peer-reviewed scientific journals for **Armenology and Humanities**.
- 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 prior to the date of the call.

Eligible Research Groups

- The research group consists of 2-5 members.
- The PIs are free to select the research group members. National or international researchers may be part of the research team, and they must be at least third year Bachelor students.
- *The INTEGRATION grant* research program requires at least three group members for NS, ET, MS and AS thematic areas and at least two team members for SS and AH (including the PI).

- 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), and be at least third year Bachelor students.
- For NS, ET, MS and AS thematic areas 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 given an opportunity 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 recruitment and retention of the group members. The SC is not in a position to recommend group members, however, the SC will always be available to assist the PIs to connect them with contact persons in the research institutions.

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 (**in case of Threshold 1**).
- 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 (**in case of Threshold 2**). 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 the researcher 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 and with financial and administrative issues.
- The host institution supports the implementation of the program.

Foreign Partner/Collaborator

The INTEGRATION grant project must have a Foreign Partner/Collaborator, who holds a PhD or equivalent degree and works in a foreign scientific organization in a relevant field. A

collaborator is a person with expertise and experience on the research topic of the project proposal employed by a foreign research institution.

- A collaborator must have an H-index (Scopus) of at least 10 for NS, ET, MS and AS thematic areas and at least 3 for SS and AH.
- A 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.
- The collaborator is not a group member, and a remuneration is not provided.

Submission restrictions
The following general restrictions for *The INTEGRATION grant* apply:

- The PI and the group members can only be involved in one application funded by *The INTEGRATION grant.*
- Researchers who are already involved in the Integration, Remote laboratory, 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 PI, the allocation of eligible direct and indirect research costs.

In the proposal submission, the budget should be presented in the Armenian 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 €7,500 (ca. AMD 3,000,000) for the group
- For experimental investigations, additional funding of up to €50,000 (ca. AMD 20,000,000) for the group

Remuneration of the group members

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

- Remuneration of the PI with the monthly salary is.
- Living allowance of € 1000 (ca. AMD 400,000 gross) in case of **Threshold 1.**
- Living allowance of € 1500 (ca. AMD 600,000 gross) in case of **Threshold 2.**
- 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, PhD, Master and Bachelor students, technicians) should not exceed:
- €625 (ca. AMD250,000 gross) in case of **Threshold 1.**
- €750 (ca. AMD300,000 gross) in case of **Threshold 2.**

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 including:
    - 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.
- A single lump amount of €7,500 (ca. AMD3,000,000) can be requested in the proposal to cover the following eligible costs when these are necessary to carry out the proposed work:
- Start-up costs for PIs moving Armenia
- Purchase of major research equipment, which constitute host institution's fixed assets

Access to large facilities

- Additional funding up to €50,000 (ca. AMD20,000,000) can be requested, which include experimental investigations to cover the following eligible costs when these are necessary to carry out the proposed research:
    - Research equipment and supplies
    - Access to large facilities

- The external collaborator and the consultant are not considered as team members, and are not entitled to receive 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 is not applicable to the PI's allowance and the indirect costs, which cannot be changed.

Possible income opportunities for PI

- **Threshold 1** applicants (maximum Total €3400)
- INTEGRATION grant salary - € 1000 (plus family allowance € 375) and State-funded budget - up to €625
- 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 https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=167054
- The PI is free to get involved in the training of young scientists at local universities with a contract salary.

- **Threshold 2** applicants (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 the training of young scientists at local universities with a contract salary.

Expected results and outcome

- Strengthen independence of talented researchers by establishing a research group to develop a success career in a host institution in Armenia.
- Peer-reviewed scientific publications with international outreach.
- Initiate national and international collaborations and partnerships.
- Increase the potential of the PI and the host institution to succeed in applications for international and national funding.

- Training of young researchers and PhD students; Implementation of projects involving Master and Bachelor students; Organization and participation in summer schools and scientific conferences and workshops in Armenia; create new learning opportunities at local universities.
- After the initial 35 months at least 3 scientific publications in peer-reviewed, international publishing venues or at least 3 book chapters in publications included in WOS Book citation Index for NS, ET, MS, AS and SS thematic areas. The requirement for AH thematic areas is to have at least 2 scientific publications in peer-reviewed, international publishing venues indexed in SJR or 1 monograph indexed in WOS Book Citation Index.
- At the stage of the final report, at least 10 scientific publications in peer-reviewed, international publishing venues (from which at least 2 in Q1 and 2 in Q2 quarters of "Scimago Journal & Country Ranking") for NS, ET, MS, AS and SS thematic areas. The requirement for AH thematic areas is at least 6 scientific publications in peer-reviewed, international publishing venues or one monograph.
- Meeting the afore-mentioned requirements as well as the failure to do so will add/subtract 5 percentage points to the final results which are considered for future project proposals by the PI or team members submitted to the SC.
- At the stage of the final report, at least one submitted grant application to an international funding agency for at least €62,500 (ca. AMD25,000,000) for NS, ET, MS, AS and SS thematic areas. The requirement for AH thematic areas is €37,500 (ca. AMD15,000,000).
- During the implementation of the project, the team members ensure the outreach, public engagement, including 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 general public).

Application Process

The application submission deadline for *The INTEGRATION grant* is **February 24th, 2023, 18:00 Armenia time (UTC +4)**. Please keep in mind that it is not possible to make any changes in the proposal once it is submitted.

Proposals are submitted by the applicant via a web-based online proposal submission system at irf-2023-armenia.scs.am.

The INTEGRATION grant proposal should include an abstract, a summary for the general public, full project descriptions outlining research methodology, PI's research track record including a copy of PhD diploma and a requested budget. The language of the proposal is English. Supporting documents by the host institution, the foreign collaborator must be provided.

The following elements need to be included in the fellowship application:

- PI's application ([template](#))
- Budget ([template](#))
- Project description ([template](#))
- Extensive summary - Evaluated at the first stage of examination ([template](#))
- An abstract for the general 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, 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),
- Project foreign collaborator's CV, including academic research track, list of publications, experience of supervising research and a letter of confirmation,
- PI's CV, including academic research track and publications
- A copy of PI's PhD 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 (**for Threshold 2 applicants**).
- A letter from the host institution, signed by an authorized representative stating that the host institution will employ the PI at least for the entire duration of *the grant* (**for Threshold 1 applicants**).
- A declaration signed by the foreign collaborator of the project, stating 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.).

Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria of *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 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, 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

The SC makes every effort to guarantee the ethics and transparency of the criteria-based selection process of the best researchers and projects.

The SC forms a Panel Committee for the evaluation of the applications.

Initially, all applications are screened by the SC office in order to ensure that the eligibility requirements are met. After that, the proposal evaluation is divided into two steps.

Step 1 - Remote Expert Evaluation

For the first step of the evaluation, the panel committee, taking into account the extensive summary, PI'S track record, CV, the compliance of the host institution and the collaborator with the objectives of the Project, forms the list of applications that passed the first stage based on the principle of consensus.

Step 2 - Panel Evaluation

Each proposal that passes the evaluation at step 1, is now evaluated by at least two external reviewers, who may also be members of the Panel Committee. The reviewers carry out their evaluation based on the complete data included in the proposal.

The panel committee discusses the individual reviews and conducts interviews with the applicants. The interview can be conducted online. The interview provides the input to further clarify the proposal and, in particular, to provide explanations to questions and criticisms submitted by the external reviewers. The panel committee evaluates the applications and provides a final evaluation and score for each application based on the opinions and scores of the external reviewers, panel experts and interviews. Both scores of the external reviewers and the panel experts account for 50% of the final score.

Evaluation process

The panel committee compiles a ranking list of all applications that passed the evaluation at step 1, based on the final scores. The applications will be funded for in the order of ranking based on the corresponding budget of SC.

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.

The formal funding decisions or rejections are issued by the head of the SC. Each applicant receives the evaluation summary report that reflects the final score for the proposal. The comments and marks must give sufficient and clear reasons for the score and should the project be retained for contracting, if appropriate, recommendations for modifications.

Contracting of grants

Allocation of program

Based on the ranking list and the funds allocated for this call, the SC makes a decision on granting or rejecting the application.

A decision on rejecting the application at step 2 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 particular call
- If certain conditions prescribed by the expert panel are not consented 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*. The group members involved in the program enter into a Supplementary Agreement with the PI, that specifies the duties and obligations of members. The Agreement is concluded for the initial period of 5 years, and can be cut off after 3 years by the SC on the basis of the triennial report.

Reporting

The PI, in cooperation with the host institution, is required to submit a launch, intermediate and final reports to the SC.

- *Intermediate report* should be submitted within the 12th, 24th and 48th months of fellowship implementation and should include the following:
- the results in accordance with the objectives of the program
- a list of published articles as a result of implementation of the program
- a list of conference, workshop, seminar presentations of the project results, teaching and public outreach activities
- A report on the use of funding

- *Triennial report* should be submitted upon 35 months of the project implementation and should include the following:
- the results in accordance with the objectives of the program

- a list of published articles as a result of implementation of the program
- a list of conference, workshop, seminar presentations of the project results, teaching and public outreach activities
- a report on the use of funding
- a report on the international recognition of the research group, impact on the research field

An extension of the project duration is possible based on the report and the Board decision.

- *Final report* should be submitted no later than 1 month after the end of the program and should include the following:
- the results in accordance with the objectives of the program
- a list of published articles as a result of implementation of the program
- a list of conference, workshop, seminar presentations of the project results, teaching and public outreach activities
- a report on the use 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, 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 in a possible restriction on participation of the researcher to any of the programs funded by the SC.

Disclaimer

The English version of this call is intended for guidance and information purposes. It does not constitute a certified translation of the legal source. In case of any doubts as to the interpretation of the call's provisions, the Armenian version should prevail.

FAQ

1. When is it possible to apply for The INTEGRATION grant?

Applications for *The INTEGRATION grant* are only possible if it has been advertised.

2. On which target groups does The INTEGRATION grant focus?

This program is particularly suitable for young applicants who have already completed an excellent PhD, who are at the beginning of an independent research career and who would like to now head a group to elaborate their own research ideas in one of the research institutions in Armenia.

3. What resources are available for The INTEGRATION grant?

The INTEGRATION grant offers competitive packages for personnel, start-up money, and yearly operating costs. The PI's salary is similar to that of junior professorships in Armenia. The PI is employed at one of the research or educational institutions in Armenia, where together with the research group they can make use of the infrastructure, resources and excellent research environment. 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 is not on the list of the formal requirements. However, a PI is free to get involved in the training of young scientists at a local university.

5. Is there any age limit?

Yes, *the grant* is aimed at talented young scientists. Applicants should have been born on or after January 1st of 1973 and have completed their PhD on or after January 1st of 2003.

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

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

7. Which publication status must the submitted publications have reached?

In general, only published papers or papers that are in the press are counted. The status of papers that have been submitted to date must be clearly indicated and attached to the application.

8. Should the applicant contact the preferred host Institution prior to 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 necessary premises and resources.

9. What is the composition of the expert panel?

Each panel consists of experts, leading scientists of the specific research field. These panels are responsible for the pre-selection of applicants as well as for the final recommendation based on the evaluations of the external experts.