



THE UWI-TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IMPACT FUND

Operational Guidelines

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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1. Background

In the 2005/06 academic year, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT) signed an agreement establishing a fund dedicated to supporting research at the St. Augustine Campus of The University of the West Indies. Subsequent calls for proposals resulted in the award of grants to support new and ongoing research initiatives in the various Faculties.

2. New Framework

2.1 Given the strategic imperative for the UWI to enhance the relevance and impact of its research as the leading regional tertiary institution, coupled with the intense competition for research funding at the national and international levels, the UWI St. Augustine Campus is committed to supporting a more targeted, impact-oriented, multidisciplinary research agenda.

2.2 Following a Workshop entitled “Setting Research Priorities for the UWI St. Augustine Campus” held on November 30, 2011, **six (6) priority research areas** emerged:

1. Climate Change and Environmental Issues
2. Crime, Violence and Citizen Security
3. Economic Diversification and Sector Competitiveness
4. Finance and Entrepreneurship
5. Public Health
6. Technology and Society: Enhancing Efficiency, Competitiveness, Social and Cultural well-being

2.3 The selection of priority areas was an important first step in defining a more focused framework for the GORTT research grant. To clearly distinguish this Fund, it was re-named the UWI-Trinidad and Tobago Research and Development Impact Fund (RDI Fund), thus bringing further clarity and definition to the purpose of the Fund. This also positions the Fund as the primary source of national funding for the Campus’ research agenda and as such is intended to support projects that address pressing issues in society. At the same time, the Fund provides additional opportunity for the UWI St. Augustine Campus to demonstrate its actions and responses to development challenges and foster a greater appreciation, in our stakeholders, of the value and impact of research, innovation and knowledge transfer.

2.4 The new focus of the Fund is consistent with the UWI’s strategic mission and would serve to strengthen the recognition of the UWI as the leading research institution on matters related to the Caribbean.

- 2.5 The management of the RDI Fund shall be guided by a set of governance mechanisms approved by the Technical Evaluation Committee to preserve the integrity of the Fund's Application, Evaluation and Approval processes and to ensure transparency and accountability to the donor(s) and other stakeholders.
- 2.6 The Technical Evaluation Committee reserves the right to add new funding programmes, schemes and/or financing windows to facilitate strengthening specific areas of the Fund's mandate and funding priorities based on changes in the prevailing environment and the strategic goals of the university.
- 2.7 The Technical Evaluation Committee reserves the right to review and amend the Operational Guidelines as needed to provide an effective framework for the management of the Fund's activities by its Secretariat.

3. Objective

- 3.1 The RDI Fund will provide substantial grant funding to support multi-disciplinary projects under the 6 priority research areas of the UWI St. Augustine Campus.
- 3.2 It is expected that the projects supported by the RDI Fund will achieve recognizable and substantive impact in the short and medium term (3-5 years). The projects will also be expected to clearly demonstrate the synergy between scholarly quality and impact on policy and practice, for the benefit of communities in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean.
- 3.3 A key focus of the RDI Fund will therefore be on research-directed action, thereby placing knowledge transfer and the development effectiveness of research funding at the centre of UWI's research enterprise at St. Augustine.

4. Eligibility Criteria for Submitting and Executing Proposals

- 4.1 Full-time academic staff at UWI St. Augustine shall serve as Lead Researchers/Project Team Leaders for proposals submitted to the RDI Fund. Part-time Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers, Instructors, Demonstrators, Research Assistants, post-doctoral researchers, and UWI students, particularly postgraduate students, may serve as team members.
- 4.2 Project teams should include members from other Faculties/Departments to ensure a multidisciplinary approach in project design and execution. Project teams may also wish

to demonstrate collaboration with researchers from other UWI Campuses, public and private sector institutions, and/or international universities and research institutes. Inclusion of PhD students and post-doctoral researchers in the project teams is also strongly encouraged.

4.3 The Lead Researcher/Project Team Leader shall have responsibility for ensuring technical quality, and shall be accountable to the UWI St. Augustine Campus on all matters pertaining to effective and timely execution and reporting.

4.4 UWI research institutes, centres and units are eligible to submit proposals once the Lead Researcher/Project Team Leader is based at the St. Augustine Campus.

4.5 Components of the project executed by team members of other UWI Campuses and/or other institutions shall be channelled through the Project Team Leader for reporting purposes or the processing of disbursements related to the specific component.

4.6 Intellectual Property

The UWI Policy on Intellectual Property Management and Commercialisation and the University Financial Code shall be applicable to projects approved by the RDI Fund. The policy documents are available online at:

https://intranet.sauwi.uwi.tt/docs/Policy_Intellectual_Property.pdf and
http://uwi.edu/sf-docs/default-source/finance-docs/Revised_Financial_Code_Aug_13_2008.pdf?sfvrsn=0

4.7 Funding Acknowledgement

Resulting publications from projects supported by the RDI Fund must include a funding acknowledgement. While the exact wording will depend on the format stipulated by the publisher, the following text is recommended:

“This work was supported by The University of the West Indies - Trinidad and Tobago Research and Development Impact Fund.”

4.8 Research Ethics

The UWI Policy on Research Ethics shall be applicable to projects funded by the RDI Fund. This policy document is available online at:

<https://sta.uwi.edu/media/documents/2011/UWI%20Policy%20on%20Research%20Ethics.pdf>

4.9 Conflicts of Interest and Ethical behaviour

The UWI Statement of Principles/ Code of Ethics for Academic and Senior Administrative Staff and the University Bluebook shall be applicable to project team leaders and team members of projects supported by the I-POC Programme. The policy documents are available online at:

https://sta.uwi.edu/hr/documents/Statement_of_Principles_Code_Of_Ethics_for_Academic_and_Senior_Administrative_Staff.pdf and

<https://sta.uwi.edu/hr/documents/bluebook-may2015.pdf>

- 4.10 Submitted proposals must have the non-objection of the Lead Researcher's Dean and Head of Department. Proposals which are dependent on some action by their Department or Faculty must demonstrate the support of the Dean and Head of Department for such action. Should any issues arise between the grantee and their Department Head and/or Faculty Dean which impedes timely project implementation, the intervention and/or mediation of the Campus Principal should be sought.

5. Eligible Research Areas

- 5.1 Proposals shall seek to address some of the most pressing challenges under the following broad research areas:

1. Climate Change and Environmental Issues
2. Crime, Violence and Citizen Security
3. Economic Diversification and Sector Competitiveness
4. Finance and Entrepreneurship
5. Public Health
6. Technology and Society: Enhancing Efficiency, Competitiveness and Social and Cultural well-being

- 5.2 Each Concept Note submitted to the RDI Fund shall indicate under which priority area(s) the project falls.

- 5.3 Projects should demonstrate support for the key objectives of the proposed new framework for GORTT research funding outlined in the Concept Paper for the Workshop on Research Priorities available on the RDI Fund's website <https://intranet.sauwi.uwi.tt/rdifund/>.

- 5.4 Second-phase projects and/or projects that involve the scaling-up of already completed pilot projects shall be eligible for consideration and funding, once all RDI Fund Eligibility criteria have been met.

6. Financing and Eligible Expenditure Items

- 6.1 The maximum amount that can be requested in a single proposal is **TT\$ 2 million**. Proposals should include counterpart funds that are non-UWI funds.
- 6.2 The maximum duration of a project is **3 years (36 consecutive months)** from the date stated on the letter of approval from the Fund. The maximum execution time would only be granted for projects that present a compelling case for such an execution timeline.
- 6.3 Disbursements shall be linked to achievement of project milestones and these shall be outlined in the approved Project Proposal as part of the project implementation schedule.
- 6.4 Eligible Expenditure Items

A list of activities and items that are ELIGIBLE for funding is provided below:

- i. Consultancies/short-term contracts for services that are essential to achieving the outcomes earmarked in the various components of the project. This may include support for post-doctoral scholars and current PhD students performing the duties of Research Assistants. Research assistantships, consultancies and other types of service contracts (whether for an individual or a firm) shall be guided by the UWI Financial Code. Procurement of eligible and/or approved goods (materials, equipment etc.) shall also be guided by the UWI Financial Code.
- ii. Inputs/ingredients, chemicals and other materials related to the conducting of experiments and/or sample testing;
- iii. The organization of technical meetings, workshops, focus groups, stakeholder consultations, etc. linked to the achievement of the approved project objectives;
- iv. Educational and promotional material in print and electronic format;
- v. Project-related equipment (this expenditure should not exceed 40% of the total project budget and shall become the property of the UWI St. Augustine Campus and shall comply with the UWI Asset Management policy guidelines);
- vi. Expenses related to travel and/or the organization of meetings during the execution of project activities (this expenditure should not exceed 10% of the total project budget and shall be in keeping with existing UWI travel policies/guidelines). Travel expenses exceeding 10% of the total project amount shall require the submission of a written request with justification for the consideration of the Technical Evaluation Committee.

- vii. Expenses related to print, electronic or radio advertisement and/or other media promotion of activities related to the project's methodology shall not exceed TT\$100,000. Expenses exceeding that amount shall require special approval by the Technical Evaluation Committee.

6.5 Ineligible Expenditure Items

The following items are NOT ELIGIBLE for funding:

- i. Acquisition or upgrade of any land, property, vehicle or physical asset (capital expenditure);
- ii. Consultancies or short-term contracts for persons who are already full-time employees of the UWI;
- iii. Consultancies or short-term contracts for persons who are full-time employees of other institutions shall be consistent with the policies in force at those institutions or shall otherwise be deemed ineligible. In such cases, the written consent of the partner institution shall be submitted to the RDI Fund for the preparation of the relevant contracts;
- iv. Refreshments for meetings and conferences (this may be covered by counterpart resources);
- v. Honoraria and/or appearance fees for guest speakers at meetings, conferences or other project-related events;
- vi. Reimbursements for personal funds spent on project-related items or activities. [However, Faculty or Departmental advances, not exceeding TT\$10,000, which are related to approved project activities, shall be eligible for reimbursement].
- vii. Personal telephone bills, ICT tools and/or products such as cell phones, laptop computers, etc.
- viii. Contingencies shall not be recognized as an expenditure line item in RDI project budgets.
- ix. Departmental or Faculty charges not related to the execution of project activities as stated in the approved project proposal shall not be eligible for payment from RDI approved project funds.

6.6 Transfers between budget categories for approved projects may be considered by the Chair of the Technical Evaluation Committee following the submission of a written request with justification.

6.7 Project Team Leaders or their designates are responsible for categorizing each expenditure item according to their approved budget. The Spending Authorization

Template should be used to authorize all project related payments. The Template is available on the RDI Fund's website <https://intranet.sauwi.uwi.tt/rdifund/>.

- 6.8 Unexpended funds shall return to the RDI Fund.
- 6.9 No-cost extensions shall only be granted for extenuating circumstances and requests for such an extension should be made six (6) months prior to the expiration of an award for consideration by the Technical Evaluation Committee. Extensions will not be granted for more than 9 months.

7. Application and Evaluation Process

- 7.1 Applications shall be submitted in response to a Call for Proposals issued by the RDI Fund. The RDI Fund will not accept proposals submitted beyond the stipulated deadline for a Call for Proposals.

- 7.2 Project teams shall firstly submit a Concept Note outlining the proposed project for evaluation by the Fund's Technical Evaluation Committee. The template for the Concept Note is available from the RDI Fund Secretariat and on the RDI Fund's website <https://intranet.sauwi.uwi.tt/rdifund/>

- 7.3 The assessment of Concept Notes shall be based on the following criteria:

- Technical quality
 - clarity of purpose and objective(s)
 - description and suitability of methodology
 - critical nature of issue being addressed
 - soundness of project rationale
 - appropriateness of funding amount and project timeline
- Support for RDI Fund objectives
 - multi-disciplinary research
 - cross-Faculty/cross-Campus collaboration and/or other strategic partnerships
 - participation of graduate students engaged in research, PhD students and/or post-doctoral researchers
 - focus on research-directed action that will have an impact on policy, practice, products and/or services or that will contribute to shaping the intellectual discourse on a policy issue of national/regional importance
 - knowledge dissemination to enhance awareness, engagement and/or initiatives with the public and/or private sector

- opportunities for project sustainability, influencing policy/practice, or academic entrepreneurship/ research commercialisation
 - evidence of planning for impact
 - Anticipated project outputs and potential of these to generate impact in the short to medium-term (3-5 years). These include but are not limited to scholarly and creative outputs such as journal papers, books, curated exhibitions, films, prototypes, policy papers, proposed legislation, digital apps, data repositories, networks, communities of practice, etc.
 - Strategy for project execution
 - Creative approaches for stakeholder engagement, sensitization and/or knowledge dissemination, transfer, brokerage and mobilization;
- 7.4 Each Concept Note will be scored and ranked individually by members of the Technical Evaluation Committee, reviewed and considered during the deliberations of the Technical Evaluation Committee Meeting before arriving at a consensus on the Concept Notes to be approved.
- 7.5 Project teams whose Concept Notes are successful shall be invited to submit a detailed project proposal for review and consideration by the Technical Evaluation Committee. The template for the full Project Proposal is available from the RDI Fund Secretariat and on the RDI Fund's website <https://intranet.sauwi.uwi.tt/rdifund/>
- 7.6 Project teams whose Concept Notes were unsuccessful but whose projects were considered to have high potential and merit may be asked by the Technical Evaluation Committee to re-submit a revised and/or updated Concept Note to the subsequent Call for Proposals. Critiques of unsuccessful Concept Notes will not be provided.
- 7.7 Once submitted before the stipulated deadline, the Technical Evaluation Committee shall review the full Project Proposals and consider the extent to which each project proposal has adequately met the criteria outlined in point 7.3 and satisfactorily provided the additional details required in the full Project Proposal.
- 7.8 Letters of approval shall be forwarded to the project Team Leader within 1 week of the final decision of the Technical Evaluation Committee.
- 7.9 Approved Project Proposals must be submitted to the Head of Department of the Project Team Leader and the Dean of the corresponding Faculty for noting and non-objection.

7.10 The approved Proposal must then be forwarded to the Bursary for registration and the assignment of a Project Code in preparation for the commencement of project execution.

8. Governance

8.1 The RDI Fund is set up with a dual governance structure:

- i. The Secretariat is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Fund's activities and ensures that all business is conducted in a professional, efficient and transparent manner. The Secretariat is also responsible for disseminating general information on the Fund, compiling proposals, preparing evaluation packages for the Technical Evaluation Committee and drafting minutes of meetings as well as periodic reports on the performance of the Fund and its projects. A small percentage (5%) of the annual RDI Fund allocation will be used to support the administration of the RDI Fund Secretariat. Additionally, periodic financial audits, evaluations and impact assessments by independent experts shall be commissioned by the Secretariat to ensure monitoring and evaluation of approved projects and financial transparency and accountability.
- ii. The Technical Evaluation Committee serves as the Board of the RDI Fund and provides oversight of all Fund activities, sets policy direction for the Fund and conducts the technical assessment of eligible proposals. The Technical Evaluation Committee is the main decision-making body regarding the management of the RDI Fund and its Secretariat. The Technical Evaluation Committee is chaired by the Campus Principal (or his designate) and comprises the UWI Pro Vice Chancellor for Research, the Campus Bursar, the Campus Coordinator for Graduate Studies and Research, Chair of the Committee of Deans, Director of the Office of Research Development and Knowledge Transfer, a UWI Professor Emeritus (or retired professor)* and a representative from the public and/or private sector (business/industry)*.¹ The Technical Evaluation Committee will be assisted in the review and evaluation of proposals by specially invited technical experts where appropriate.

¹ The Committee Members with an asterisk (*) shall attend meetings of the Technical Evaluation Committee on the invitation of the Chair. They will be selected to draw on their technical expertise and experience as these relate to the main disciplines/thematic areas of the Concept Notes and Project Proposals submitted for specific Calls for Proposals.

- 8.2 To prevent potential conflicts of interest, members of the Technical Evaluation Committee shall not serve as members of project teams requesting funding from the RDI Fund. Given the mandate of the Office of Research Development and Knowledge Transfer to provide support to project teams in the preparation of the project proposals for both internal and external funding, the Director of the ORDKT (or his designate) shall participate as a 'non-voting' member in Evaluation Meetings of the Committee and as a full member in all other meetings. Similarly, the Chair of the Committee of Deans shall participate as a 'non-voting' member in Evaluation Meetings and as a full member in all other meetings.
- 8.3 Members of the Secretariat shall attend meetings of the Technical Evaluation Committee as observers to support the administration of the review and evaluation process and to document decisions taken. The Secretariat may also be asked to provide guidance on approved funding/approval/disbursement criteria and procedures, and other matters related to the management of the Fund and its reporting to the donor(s).
- 8.4 Meetings of the Technical Evaluation Committee
- i. **Evaluation Meetings** – These are convened within 2-4 weeks following the close of a Call for Proposals (subject to the availability of the members of the Technical Evaluation Committee) to select and approve successful Concept Notes. The approval of Full Applications will be done on a rolling basis (as the completed applications are submitted) with the technical review and final approval being conducted electronically via 'round robin'.
 - ii. **Progress Review Meetings** – These may be convened periodically for the Technical Evaluation Committee to be updated on progress made with the execution of activities within each approved project against approved project timelines and milestones. Project Team Leaders may be invited to deliver presentations to members of the Technical Evaluation Committee.
 - iii. **Special Meetings** – These may be called to review existing policies or guidelines that govern the activities of the RDI Fund and/or approve new policies, guidelines or activities. As an exceptional case, a member of the Technical Evaluation Committee may propose a motion to support funding a research project of crucial and strategic national/regional importance, outside of a Call for Proposals, which could be approved by consensus at a Special Meeting of the Technical Evaluation Committee.

- iv. **Meetings with the Donor(s)** – These meetings shall be held annually as part of the Campus Principal’s Annual Report to Council or may entail a separate briefing session between the Chair and the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (or his designate) and the representative of any other donor agency to support the RDI Fund.

9. Reporting Requirements

- 9.1. Project Teams shall submit progress reports to the Fund Secretariat every six (6) months and attend progress monitoring meetings with the Secretariat when requested. The template for the Progress Report is available from the RDI Fund Secretariat and on the RDI Fund’s website <https://intranet.sauwi.uwi.tt/rdifund/>. The Secretariat shall issue notices to alert project team members of the due date for the next Progress Report. Subsequent funding tranches shall only be disbursed following the receipt and acceptance of the respective Progress Reports.
- 9.2. Completion Reports shall also be submitted to the Secretariat within 2 months of the completion of a project. This report will highlight the major outcomes, outputs, findings and impact of the project. The template for the Completion Report is available from the RDI Fund Secretariat and on the RDI Fund’s website. The Project Team Leader and members of the project team shall be at the disposal of the RDI Fund to participate in press conferences, stakeholder forums, special distinguished lectures, etc. to promote their research work and the outcomes of the project.
- 9.3. Impact Reports shall be submitted to the Secretariat on an annual basis up to 5 years post the submission date of a project’s Completion Report. This Impact Report will highlight the major outcomes, outputs, and impacts, both anticipated and unanticipated, which have occurred since the completion of the project. The template for the Impact Report will be made available by the RDI Fund Secretariat.
- 9.4. During the first semester of project execution, the Project Team Leader shall submit a draft paper outlining strategies for engaging with stakeholders, communicating the value of the research being undertaken, disseminating information on the expected outcomes/results of the project, fostering knowledge uptake and mobilization among potential beneficiaries and planning for impact. The Fund Secretariat shall work in

collaboration with the Marketing and Communications Department and the Office of Research Development and Knowledge Transfer to coordinate sensitization and outreach activities and to provide general support for project teams in the area of public information, dissemination of research findings and showcasing of the outcome and impact of the research project.

10. Evaluation & Impact Assessment

In the final stages of completion of a project or cluster of projects, an independent technical expert would be contracted to prepare a comprehensive review of the achievement of project objectives, identify possible spillover effects or unintended benefits of the project, provide a technical assessment of the project's influence on policy or practice and/or the effectiveness of its reach to markets and/or beneficiaries. These findings would be documented, communicated and accessible via the RDI Fund's website.

11. Additional Funding Schemes

The Technical Evaluation Committee may introduce focused calls for proposals, financing windows, programmes or schemes within the framework of the RDI Fund to strengthen the overall performance of the Fund as it seeks to achieve its objectives while remaining responsive to the changing needs of the university and the society. Any additional schemes must be authorised and approved by the Technical Evaluation Committee and be guided by and consistent with the operational guidelines of the RDI Fund. Additional schemes will share the same overarching governance structure of the RDI Fund and must have documented rationale, application guidelines and criteria to guide the allocation of funds.