

# USAID Agriculture Higher Education Project Announces call for proposal under the Competitive Research Grants for Students

**Call Announcement Date: 17 June 2024**

**Call Submission Deadline: 22 July 2024**

## INTRODUCTION

USAID Agriculture Higher Education Project aims to award research grants to research students in AFU pursuing research activities in their **Masters' and PhD program**, addressing Nepal's food and nutrition security. The grant envisions high potential research within AFU. It aims to support ecosystem to disseminate science by encouraging research students to publish and/or protect their research findings.

We invite the innovative research students of all disciplines to apply to pursue research work. Female researchers and researchers from marginalized groups are highly encouraged to apply. **Faculty pursuing PhD will not be considered for this grant.**

## QUANTUM OF GRANT

Each grant will be **up to a maximum of NPR 1,00,000** for Masters' and PhD students.

## KEY TIMELINES

RFA announcement date	17 June 2024
1 <sup>st</sup> Online Q&A Session for any queries	26 June 2024
2 <sup>nd</sup> Online Q&A Session for any queries	3 July 2024
3 <sup>rd</sup> Online Q&A Session for any queries	10 July 2024
Deadline for submission of a complete application	22 July 2024
Anticipated Final Award of the Research Grants	6 September 2024

All applications must be submitted before 8 pm Nepal time on the above date. Written questions regarding this solicitation must be submitted to [AFUresearchgrants@gmail.com](mailto:AFUresearchgrants@gmail.com).

## KEY FEATURES OF THE CALL

The purpose of the Competitive grants is to:

- Foster high potential research in the university,
- Foster an ecosystem to disseminate science by encouraging research students to publish and/or protect their research findings,
- Encourage research students to present their research results in scientific forums.

## WHO CAN APPLY?

Research students pursuing Masters' and Ph.D. programs (**excluding PhD pursuing faculty**) are eligible to apply for the research grants as a single applicant or with an additional co-applicant. The co-applicant can be a graduate or an undergraduate student.

## WHAT CAN THE RESEARCH BE ON?

The research theme should be aligned with the priorities of the food and nutritional security of Nepal.

## DURATION OF GRANT

Maximum of 12 months from the Award.

## SCOPE OF COMPETITIVE RESEARCH GRANTS

The competitive research grants will support scientific research work by funding:

1. Procurement of consumables/labware, software & database subscriptions, etc. for use in research by the applicants
2. Research Studies/surveys relating to the proposed research area
3. Prototype development and validation by (applicant) researchers
4. Use of infrastructure/ services within or outside the university
5. Cost of publication and/or protection of intellectual property of research results
6. Submission of research results in scientific forums.

The competitive research grants **will not** support the following:

1. Salary/stipend
2. International travel
3. Office or Lab Equipment procurement
4. Mere attendance at conferences without any presentation of research results by applicants

## PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

### Mode of submission:

1. Proposals are required to be submitted online only. The applications may be submitted here: <https://forms.gle/zmgxsFGWcG13BtDY7>
2. You must log in with your Gmail account to fill out the online application form.

### Type of submission

- The online application will open on **17 June 2024 at 8:00 am** Nepal Time and close on **22 July 2024 at 8:00 pm** Nepal Time.
- Only one application submission per lead applicant will be allowed.
- The Lead applicant can be a co-applicant in an additional application.

### General instructions:

- The applications have to be in English
- Only completed forms will be considered

## **Form Guidelines:**

### **Title Page**

- Project Title & Summary
- Duration of the project:

The number of months for the project must be specified. It should not exceed more than 12 months.

- Total budget requested (NPR)

Total budget requirement for the project not exceeding NPR 1,00,000 for both Master's and PhD students.

### **Technical Narrative**

- Clear project-specific objectives
- A brief overview of the technical approach, the rationale for the approach, and anticipated results and impacts

### **Timeline**

- Schedule or timeline of activities over the life of the project (1 year – M1 to M12)
- Timelines must include deliverables and milestones of the project for one year.

### **Budget**

The applicant must submit a detailed budget highlighting the details of each cost component for the following in the online application:

1. Procurement of consumables/labware, software & database subscriptions etc., for use in research by the applicants
2. Research Studies/surveys relating to the proposed research area
3. Prototype development and validation by (applicant) researchers
4. Use of infrastructure/ services within or outside the university
5. Cost of publication and/or protection of intellectual property of research results
6. Submission of research results in scientific forums.

Budget Justification of budget expenditures by way of narrative for each expenditure component with the cost elements.

## **EVALUATION AND DECISION MAKING**

The process of evaluation broadly comprises the following steps:

- Complete and compliant proposals will be reviewed and scored to shortlist the eligible proposals.
- External experts will review applications.
- Applicants with tie in scores or applications in which clarifications are needed may be called for a presentation by the committee.
- Final grants will be awarded to selected applicants.

## **DISBURSEMENT OF GRANTS**

Each annual grant disbursement will be disbursed in one or more instalments based on the research plan approved.

The Project reserves the right to modify any terms during the grant, including the scope, amount, duration, criteria for selection, and other terms of the award.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What are the areas supported under this grant?  
Areas of research supported under this grant may relate to any discipline at all the AFU campuses.
2. Can I apply as an undergraduate student?  
No, the researcher grant is not for undergraduate students. But you can be a co-applicant.
3. Can I apply as a Master's student/ PhD student of any discipline?  
Yes, both the above categories are eligible to apply.
4. Can I apply as a Faculty pursuing PhD in any discipline?  
No, faculty pursuing PhD are **not eligible** to apply.
5. What is the duration of the grant?  
The duration of the grant is maximum of one year, but it will be decided on case-to-case basis.
6. Should we have a guide/mentor?  
The students pursuing research must have a guide or mentor.
7. I'm thinking about applying for Competitive Research Grant. Where should I start?  
Please visit <https://forms.gle/zmgxsFGWcG13BtDY7> and apply online. Please upload the details regarding the project, approach and methodology in the prescribed format. If you have any doubts, please email us at: [AFUresearchgrants@gmail.com](mailto:AFUresearchgrants@gmail.com).
8. When can I submit my application?  
Applications will be accepted once the call is active till the submission deadline on **22 July 2024**, 8:00pm Nepal time.
9. Do I have to use the online application system?  
Yes, proposals for this call are only accepted when submitted by filling the Google form here: <https://forms.gle/zmgxsFGWcG13BtDY7>
10. Are there deadlines for submitting applications?  
Yes, the deadline for this application is **22 July 2024**. As our deadlines are strict, please be sure to submit before the specific time, which is 8pm Nepal Time. Any applications submitted after the cut-off time will automatically be deferred to the next round of applications.
11. When can I submit my application?  
Applications will be accepted once the call is active from **17 June** till the submission deadline on **22 July 2024**, 8:00 pm Nepal time. In order to avoid last minute technical challenges, we advise filing of the application ahead of the deadline.
12. Does my application have to be in English?  
Yes. Please note that applications are judged by the content and quality of their proposal, not by English fluency. To be able to effectively review the application, the applications must be submitted in only English.
13. Can I submit more than one application at the same time?  
No. We do not accept more than one application at a time from a lead researcher for each call.
14. Can I make updates to my application after submission?  
No, you cannot update an application once it has been submitted.

15. Can I submit the application with a co-applicant?  
Yes, you may submit your application with a co-applicant. Having a co-applicant is optional and not mandatory.
16. What needs to be included as part of my application?  
A complete application will include filing the details in the online form including:
  - a. Proposed project summary
  - b. Technical approach
  - c. Timelines for the project
  - d. Budget of the project
17. Should I include supplementary materials?  
No, you should not include any materials in your proposal other than those details listed above.
18. Can I request funding for a project I am already working on?  
Yes. The project can be a part of your PhD research or Masters' research. The project may also be completely different from your ongoing research. But the objective of the current proposal should be aimed at research elements that are not funded by any other agency.
19. What are the maximum budget amounts of funding for each proposal?  
Each proposal, if selected will receive a maximum funding of up to NPR 1,00,000 for both Master's and PhD students.
20. Are there budget restrictions on salary or other forms of support?  
The budget may be used for services but not for salaries or equipment (lab & office). The grant will not support international travel. It will only support the travels approved in the proposal.
21. Does the Grant fund conferences and workshops?  
The Grant does not support travel to international conferences and mere participation in conferences. But the grant will support conferences where the applicant is presenting their work.
22. How does Competitive Research Grant select grantees?  
The panel will shortlist the Competitive Research grantee.
23. When can I get to know the final decision made by the evaluation Panel?  
After the applications close, the panel's final decision will be announced on the website. For any update inquiry, please contact: [AFUresearchgrants@gmail.com](mailto:AFUresearchgrants@gmail.com)
24. Can I still apply if my research is for over a year?  
Yes, you can apply. However, commitment for funding will be limited to 1 year with a well-defined milestone of deliverables. There is no guarantee that the grantee will secure additional years of funding in any future call. The grantee will be able to seek further funding in case of a potential future call.
25. Will I have to present my proposal?  
Only few applicants, in case of a tie or if any clarifications are needed by the review committee, may be invited to present their proposal.
26. What are the expectations if I am selected for the grant?  
Successful applicants whose proposals are selected for funding support and who successfully complete an internal due diligence check will be expected to sign a contract which memorializes the terms and conditions specified at the beginning of the application process which you acknowledged. Once the contract is signed, you will be expected to submit quarterly progress reports, and a final report 12 months after the project's completion date.



27. I have another question that is not listed in the FAQ, who should I contact?

If you have further questions, please contact us by email at [AFUresearchgrants@gmail.com](mailto:AFUresearchgrants@gmail.com).

Alternatively, you may attend the online Zoom Q&A session scheduled on 26 June 2024, 3 July 2024 and 10 July 2024, Wednesday

Time: 2 pm – 4 pm Nepal Time

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89382610487?pwd=jmLBibq7UH81Jf2l89twy3UkxnfTpw.1>

Meeting ID: **893 8261 0487**

Passcode: **389114**