



# **FRAMEWORK**

**FOR**

**COMPETITIVE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH GRANT SCHEME**

***AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF NIGERIA***

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## ***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Government has made significant contributions towards agricultural research for development, but dependable access to operational funding is a perennial problem. This is not only a question about the level of funding, but also about its predictability and timing. Furthermore, funding is not linked closely enough to performance, as a result, incentives to perform are often inadequate and resources are wasted on poor performers at the expense of those who could deliver more. Also, in most instances, agricultural research and development is not sufficiently demand-driven. Even when research is scientifically sound and well executed, it may not be relevant to farmers' needs.

Competitive funding is one of several instruments to fund research. Competitive grants are increasingly being used in developing countries to fund research on agriculture and natural resources. Policymakers and donors see competitive funding mechanisms as effective tools to redirect priorities, lower research costs, and strengthen the participation of universities, foundations, and other non-public and private-sector research organizations.

When competitive funding complements institutional funding, it has the potential to improve research performance. This document describes the ways in which this can happen.

### **2. Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN) and the National Agricultural Research System (NARS)**

The Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN), which supervises the National Agricultural Research System [NARS], was established with the main mandate of coordinating, supervising and regulating agricultural research institutes. Nigeria has the largest and most elaborate National Agricultural Research System (NARS) in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

The Council advises the Federal Government on national policies and priorities in agricultural research, training and extension activities. It supervises and coordinates the research, training and extension activities of research institutes. It also prepares annual budget for agricultural research, training and extension programmes of the institutes under its aegis and receives grants for allocation to the institutes for the implementation of the annual programmes and to universities and other bodies for special research or training projects.

### **3. Competitive Agricultural Research Grant Scheme**

#### ***Objectives of the scheme***

The Competitive Grant Scheme for agricultural research seeks to harness under-utilised research capacity that directly brings significant benefits to end-users. The Competitive Agricultural Research Grant Scheme will be operated at a national level and provides competitive grants for contracts to address national agricultural research priorities. The objectives of establishing the competitive grant scheme are to:

Strengthen the national agricultural research system (NARS) through mobilizing the best available scientific expertise in the public and private sectors to work on specific high priority projects in accordance with the national agricultural development strategies.

Promote research partnerships and collaboration between national and international, private and public institutions to maximize complementarities among different institutions or disciplines in the conduct and management of agricultural research.

Make research more demand-driven by involving clients in setting priorities, executing research and evaluating outputs.

Improve research quality and innovation by selecting projects based on rigorous technical review, sound work plans and expected results.

This manual explains how the Competitive Research Grant Scheme (CRGS) through the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN) will be established and operated.

### **4. Details of Competitive Research Grant Process**

The Competitive Research Grant Scheme will consider applications from scientists in the public (Agricultural Research Institutes, Universities and other Institutions of higher learning) and private (privately owned research laboratories/establishments, etc) sectors. The research grants are intended to provide funds to support research projects outside the core programmes of research institutes, and funds for universities to carry out studies that meet certain criteria for priority, without necessarily conforming to the requirements for postgraduate thesis.

#### ***a) Eligibility***

The guiding principle for assessing eligibility of research proposal shall be merit as judged by the relevance of the project proposal to national development, or contribution to knowledge of the particular field of specialization. Such projects may include those that are designed to solve some pressing agricultural problems, whose results can be immediately beneficial to the Nigerian farmer; projects that can be completed in the specified period; and research projects whose results will enable other priority research to go ahead more quickly.

Assessment of proposals/applications for grants shall be by peer review, using prescribed format.

***b) Pre-proposal submission evaluation and selection process***

As a minimum requirement all projects must be consistent with the national agricultural research strategic plan and with the priorities established by the Council as part of the implementation of this plan, relevant to the present call. In this context all projects must focus on agricultural development, contribute to economic growth and development, respond to market opportunities and enhance the natural resource base. In addition the project must be relevant to national issues and concerns and should address a major constraint, issue or opportunity.

The projects presented to the Council must demonstrate a partnership among stakeholders in planning and implementation. Each project must demonstrate involvement of at least two "different kinds of entities" conversant with agricultural research. The research team may include international research centres, NGOs, NARIs, Universities, the private sector or other relevant stakeholder organisations.

The project document must clearly identify the entity that will serve as the principal institution and those that will serve as partners. The project should indicate the knowledge and experience that the principal investigators have in the research subject.

The project proposal must adhere to the project period and funding limits established in the guidelines and by any other project guidelines issued by the Council.

Projects will indicate clearly the inputs of human, material and financial resources to be provided by the principal executing agency and the various partners involved in the project.

Proposals must follow the guidelines established in the Proposal Preparation Guidelines. All projects must include information requested, including a detailed budget, work plan, and monitoring and evaluation plan.

***c) Evaluation criteria***

All projects that meet the general submission criteria will be evaluated according to technical criteria to determine the overall feasibility of the project. The Council will employ five levels of technical criteria to evaluate the projects under the competitive grant system namely, (1) general institutional capability, (2) technical and scientific merit and quality, (3) social and institutional impact, (4) economic impact, and (5) communications strategy. All projects will be measured against these various criteria and ranked and scored according to importance.

Each project will include funds for monitoring and evaluation and project approval will be based on the inclusion of an effective monitoring and evaluation plan among other things.

***d) Size of the award (Funding)***

ARCN will establish maximum funding amounts for the competitive grant program. Maximum funding amounts will be established in each call for proposals. In most cases grants under the competitive grant scheme may not exceed N50, 000,000.00 (Fifty million Naira) over a three-year period.

The grant scheme will not normally provide funding for core or permanent salary costs, overheads or for large capital items, such as vehicles. The program also will not finance investment in construction of buildings or research facilities.

**5. Management of the Fund**

The Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN) will be responsible for managing the Fund and approve all projects for funding. This will involve calling for proposals, pre-qualifying the proposals, arranging for proposal reviews, preparing and submitting proposal review reports to the Council, disbursing grants and arranging for M&E of projects in accordance with the provisions of these guidelines.

**6. Guidelines for the preparation of project implementation contracts**

***a) Project Proposals Preparation***

All research projects submitted to the Council for a particular call for proposals should address the research priorities identified in the national strategic plan and strategic objectives chosen for the call.

The process begins with a list of priority strategic research objectives derived by distilling the stated research needs of research client groups. A statement of a research opportunity plus the related research requirements will be prepared by the Council.

***b) Submission of Proposals***

All the research proposals should be submitted to ARCN which will scrutinize the proposals to ensure that they have been properly completed and conform to the conditions of the award.

Applications that satisfy the guidelines will be processed. Each application will be sent to two independent evaluators to be selected.

Following Council's decision, applicants will be informed of the success or otherwise

of their proposals and, if successful, of any modifications of proposals required and the conditions and timing for disbursement.

## **7. Monitoring and Evaluation procedure for the scheme**

The Council needs to determine the effectiveness of its project financing through project evaluation and will undertake routine monitoring and external evaluations of all projects, either through its own Secretariat or through outsourced services. The format for project monitoring form will be provided. The Council will also evaluate the results of the funded research projects at the end of the project execution period.

## **8. Disbursement of Funds and Accounting for funds**

All grants/funds shall be paid to the Bursar's Department of the recipient's employer (i.e. research institute or university) or organisation (private sector). Withdrawal of funds by the researcher will be controlled by the financial system of the recipient's employer's institution or organisation. However, other necessary regulations for disbursement and monitoring of funds as deem fit by ARCN may be applied.

In every case, a satisfactory progress report must be recorded by the project before further cash advance are authorized.

All statements of accounts or cash advance retirement and supporting documents (receipts, etc.) shall be prepared in triplicate. One of these, including the original receipts, should be sent to the Chief Financial Officer or Bursar of the grantee's Institution or organisation, who will file it; the other one is sent to ARCN. The third copy is retained for filling by the grantee researcher.

## **9. Reporting**

Progress reports shall be made on the prescribed forms every 6 months outlining the progress achieved so far in pursuit of the objectives of the approved proposal. Each report must include a financial statement showing the amount of funds approved, itemized expenditure and balance in the budget. Satisfactory progress will be a pre-requisite for disbursement of further funds in the project.

End of project final report, including financial statement supported with receipts shall be sent to ARCN Secretariat. Any unexpended balance of the grant shall be returned to ARCN.

## **10. Sanctions**

Progress reports are due 15 days after the end of each six-month period. If the progress report is not received within two weeks after the due date, the principal investigator/Head of submitting institution will be notified to suspend disbursement of funds until the report is received. ARC management will not approve further disbursement of grant funds until the situation is satisfactorily remedied.

# COMPETITIVE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH GRANT SCHEME

## 1. Introduction and Background

Agriculture plays an important role in the economy of the country as it employs about two-thirds of the total labour force, contributes about 40% of the Gross Domestic Products (GPD) and provides 88% of non-oil earnings. It also provides a livelihood for the bulk of the rural population (nearly three-quarters of the poor live in the rural areas).

However, more than 90% of the agricultural output is accounted for by small-scale farmers with less than two (2) hectares under cropping. Thus, the sector's contribution to economic growth and sustained rural development remains to be fully exploited. Nigeria remains highly vulnerable to hunger and poverty. This food insecurity is as a result of our inability to exploit the full national agricultural potentials.

Increase in agricultural productivity can not be fully achieved without (i) the benefits of safe and responsible use of cutting-edge science, (ii) advances in technology development, (iii) capacity building, (iv) technology dissemination, (v) policy research and implementation to promote the development, adaptation and dissemination of new technologies (vi) a genuine and deliberate coordination and involvement of all relevant stakeholders involved in the design, funding and implementation of programmes and projects in agricultural research and development. This will require a de-fragmentation of research programmes, increased and sustained investment in the agricultural sector and effective financial resource use.

Although the Government has made significant contributions towards agricultural research for development, the NARS is struggling with severe constraints:

- i. Dependable access to operational funding is a perennial problem. This is not only a question about the level of funding, but also about its predictability and timing.
- ii. Funding is not linked closely enough to performance. As a result, incentives to perform are often inadequate and resources are wasted on poor performers at the expense of those who could deliver more.
- iii. Agricultural research and development is not sufficiently demand-driven. Even when research is scientifically sound and well executed, it may not be relevant to farmers' needs.
- iv. The adoption of improved technologies is often constrained by factors that go beyond research and extension. Access to planting materials and complementary inputs are often a bottleneck.

## **2. Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN) and the National Agricultural Research System (NARS)**

The Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN), which supervises the National Agricultural Research System [NARS], was established by decree No 44 of May 26, 1999, now an act of National Assembly, but effectively took off in 2007 with the main mandate of coordinating, supervising and regulating agricultural research institutes.

### ***A) Vision Articulation for ARCN***

- To develop a dynamic, highly motivated and intellectually up to date agricultural research network with a sharp focus for lifting Nigeria's agricultural potentials to self-sustenance and export. The research system shall be guided by the principles of excellence, creativity, hard work, accountability, integrity and shall at all times apply modern methods and best practices towards its responsibility to all stakeholders.

### ***B) Functions of ARCN***

1. Advise the Federal Government on national policies and priorities in agricultural research, training and extension activities.
2. Prepare periodic master plans for agricultural research, training and extension and advise the Federal Government on the financial requirement for the implementation of such plans.
3. Ensure the implementation of the approved master plans by the appropriate research institutes, universities and other bodies.
4. Supervise and coordinate the research, training and extension activities of research institutes establish under section 14 of the ARCN decree.
5. Prepare annual budget for agricultural research, training and extension programmes of the institutes under its aegis and receive grants for allocation to the institutes for the implementation of the annual programmes and to universities and other bodies for special research or training projects.
6. Maintain an up-to-date record of all existing facilities for research, training and extension in the agricultural sciences in Nigeria and advise the Federal Government on their adequacy and efficient utilization.
7. Advise the Federal Government on the re-organization of existing institute, including the creation of new ones, as are required to implement or further the efficiency of research, training and extension in the agricultural sciences.

8. Promote collaboration between scientists engaged in research in the agricultural sciences in Nigeria and their counterpart in other countries or international bodies.
9. Establish and maintain a National Agricultural Sciences Library and Documentation Center and publish or sponsor the publication of the research results in the agricultural sciences.
10. Carry out such activities as may, in the opinion of the council, further the advancement of research, training and extension in the agricultural sciences.

### ***C) Governance of ARCN***

ARCN is established as a grade A parastatal of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and water Resources. It has a Governing Board answerable to the Minister of agriculture. The Board has a chairman and members from public and private sectors covering key stakeholder groups. The Executive Secretary is the CEO; with four directorates.

### ***D) National Agricultural Research System (NARS)***

Nigeria has the largest and most elaborate National Agricultural Research System (NARS) in Sub- Saharan Africa (SSA).

- 18 National Agricultural Research Institutes
- 3 Universities of Agriculture
- 19 Federal Colleges of Agriculture
- 40 Faculties of Agriculture
- 8 Faculties of Veterinary Medicine
- 4 International Agricultural Research Centers present in Nigeria
- Several OPSs, NGOs, CBOs, FBOs etc

ARCN is committed to harnessing the strength from this expansive network.

The National Agricultural Research System [NARS] is expected to contribute to agricultural development and rural poverty reduction in Nigeria through the generation and dissemination of new technologies, provision of base line data for policy planning and implementation, and capacity strengthening of research institutes. This can be achieved through the following programme components:

- research management development
- strategic human resources development
- development and upgrading of research facilities
- improvement of library and information systems
- research programme support
  - ✓ development of national research strategy plan

- ✓ prioritization of research projects
- ✓ revival of nationally coordinated agricultural research projects
- ✓ establishment of competitive research grant scheme
- ✓ articulation of detailed research protocols on mandate commodities
- Collaboration with international research organisations within and outside Nigeria

### **3. Competitive Agricultural Research Grant Scheme**

#### ***3.1 Objectives of the scheme***

The Competitive Grant Scheme for agricultural research seeks to harness under-utilised research capacity that directly brings significant benefits to end-users. By this, the Scheme will contribute effectively to national food security and poverty eradication. The Competitive Agricultural Research Grant Scheme will be operated at a national level and provides competitive grants for contracts to address national agricultural research priorities. The objectives of establishing the competitive grant scheme are to:

- i) Strengthen the national agricultural research system (NARS) through mobilizing the best available scientific expertise in the public and private sectors to work on specific high priority projects in accordance with the national agricultural development strategies.
- ii) Promote research partnerships and collaboration between national and international, private and public institutions to maximize complementarities among different institutions or disciplines in the conduct and management of agricultural research.
- iii) Make research more demand-driven by involving clients in setting priorities, executing research and evaluating outputs.
- iv) Improve research quality and innovation by selecting projects based on rigorous technical review, sound work plans and expected results.
- v) Complement core research programmes by drawing a wide range of participants into the research system and providing needed operating costs in a timely manner, for more efficient use of available resources (human and physical) and research infrastructure.

This manual explains how the Competitive Research Grant Scheme (CRGS) through the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN) will be established and operated. It provides procedures and guidelines for implementation of the scheme. These guidelines are a 'work in progress' that is not sealed in concrete and will continue to be updated through annual review as experience is gained and new lessons are learned.

## **4. Details of Competitive Research Grant Process**

### ***4.1 Thematic focus and types of proposals to be considered for funding***

The Competitive Research Grant Scheme will consider applications from scientists in the public (Agricultural Research Institutes, Universities and other Institutions of higher learning) and private (privately owned research laboratories/establishments, etc) sectors. The research grants are intended to provide funds to support research projects outside the core programmes of research institutes, and funds for universities to carry out studies that meet certain criteria for priority, without necessarily conforming to the requirements for postgraduate thesis. Also desirable is the need to make the grant available to support collaborative research between institutions in Nigeria, and between Nigeria and overseas institutions. In essence, all such funded research should aim at complementing and strengthening the core agricultural research programmes of the research institutes. The scheme also aims at fostering collaboration with scientists in the Research Institutes.

#### ***4.1.1 National Priorities as the Basis for the CRGS***

There shall be national agricultural research priorities determined through a process of aggregation, synthesis and analysis of the research needs emerging from stakeholder-led structures established to identify farmers' and other stakeholder demands, needs and opportunities. The priority setting process will ensure that stakeholders are well sensitized to cover all aspects of their farming systems including natural resource management to ensure that these vital areas are not left out. Through defined processes, the priorities shall regularly be refined and converted into Expression of Interest and tender notices or strategic objectives as a basis for developing and supporting creative, innovative and collaborative research proposals.

#### ***4.2 Eligibility***

The guiding principle for assessing eligibility of research proposal shall be merit as judged by the relevance of the project proposal to national development, or contribution to knowledge of the particular field of specialization. Such projects may include those that are designed to solve some pressing agricultural problems, whose results can be immediately beneficial to the Nigerian farmer; projects that can be completed in the specified period; and research projects whose results will enable other priority research to go ahead more quickly.

Priority will be given to the following:

- a) Research projects involving multidisciplinary or multi-sectoral groups. This ensures the pooling of resources and expertise for enhanced achievement of

objectives. It also ensures continuity of the project should any member drop out. Multidisciplinary approach to research yields quicker result.

- b) Competitive Research projects for which ARCN has already committed fund needing either extension of time or supplementary grant.

Assessment of proposals/applications for grants shall be by peer review, using the prescribed format. Each proposal will be assessed by two reviewer experts in the field. The grant is open to Nigerian scientists provided such individuals have adequate research experience.

#### ***4.3 Pre-proposal submission evaluation and selection process***

Institutional and individual agricultural research scientists and any combination thereof qualify to respond to invitations for proposals and be considered for CRGS.

The following criteria represent the minimum criteria that all projects must meet to receive funding consideration. All proposals shall be pre-screened against these minimum requirements for technical conformity before being submitted for further consideration.

##### *a) Consistency with the national Strategic Agricultural Research Plan and the priorities chosen for the present call for proposal.*

As a minimum requirement all projects must be consistent with the national agricultural research strategic plan and with the priorities established by the Council as part of the implementation of this plan, relevant to the present call. In this context all projects must focus on agricultural development, contribute to economic growth and development, respond to market opportunities and enhance the natural resource base. In addition the project must be relevant to national issues and concerns and should address a major constraint, issue or opportunity.

##### *b) Institutional synergy.*

The projects presented to the Council must demonstrate a partnership among stakeholders in planning and implementation. Each project must demonstrate involvement of at least two "different kinds of entities" conversant with agricultural research. The research team may include international research centres, NGOs, NARIs, Universities, the private sector or other relevant stakeholder organisations.

##### *c) Identification of the executing organisation and project team.*

The project document must clearly identify the entity that will serve as the principal institution and those that will serve as partners. The proposal needs to list the names and institutions of all participating researchers and/or project implementers,

with clear identification of the Lead Scientist or institution, which must be based in the country. The project should indicate the knowledge and experience that the principal investigators have in the research subject.

*d) Duration of project and grant limit.*

The project proposal must adhere to the project period and funding limits established in the guidelines and by any other project guidelines issued by the Council.

*e) Commitment of contributions to the project.*

Projects will indicate clearly the inputs of human, material and financial resources to be provided by the principal executing agency and the various partners involved in the project. The project must include signed documentation from the parties confirming those commitments.

*f) Conformity with general project guidelines.*

Proposals must follow the guidelines established in the Proposal Preparation Guidelines. All projects must include information requested, including a detailed budget, work plan, and monitoring and evaluation plan. Projects that do not include all relevant information will be considered non-responsive.

#### **4.4 Evaluation criteria**

##### **4.4.1 Technical Criteria**

All projects that meet the general submission criteria will be evaluated according to technical criteria to determine the overall feasibility of the project. The Council will employ five levels of technical criteria to evaluate the projects under the competitive grant system. These levels include: (1) general institutional capability, (2) technical and scientific merit and quality, (3) social and institutional impact, (4) economic impact, and (5) communications strategy. All projects will be measured against these various criteria and ranked and scored according to importance. Indicative weightings are: general capability (15 points), scientific quality (30 points), social and institutional impact (25 points), economic impact (15 points) and communications strategy (15 points).

*(a) Institutional and Management Capacity*

The purpose of the institutional evaluation is to establish that the executing agencies have sufficient managerial capacity to undertake the proposed project: i.e., that they have the technical capacity, the experience and the managerial, administrative and control systems required to implement the project successfully.

The evaluation will focus on overall institutional experience to determine the capacity of institutions or teams to conduct research on proposed topics. Reviewers will assess the:

- qualifications of the lead scientist and the other participating groups;
- background and scientific/technical performance of the team members in the past;
- ability of the team to achieve the proposed results;
- lead institution's capacity to capably manage the team; and,
- ability of the institutions to administer finances and to submit accountability through internal and external auditing mechanisms.

The evaluation will also concern a management plan, including the monitoring plan and indicators, for the implementation of the project.

*(b) Technical Quality*

*Scientific merit:* The project proposal must offer a solid response to a priority problem or research opportunity or address a priority constraint relevant to the present call. As part of this it must offer an innovative, coherent and inclusive strategy to achieve established objectives. Each project must present a research hypothesis and provide adequate explanation as to how the project will address that hypothesis.

The purpose of assessing technical quality is to determine the scope of the proposal and whether it has been properly formulated. The review will determine whether the project makes sense scientifically and technically, whether there are alternatives or more promising avenues, and whether there are efficient mechanisms proposed to transfer or disseminate the expected results. In addition, the assessment will determine the project's overall technical feasibility and relevance.

The project's technical and scientific excellence will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

- established research hypothesis that addresses an important constraint or issue of relevance to the country;
- clear background and justification for the project along with a detailed description of the expected outcomes; quality and cost of materials and methods for achieving the objectives and expected outcomes;
- scope of the proposal in terms of diversity of disciplines involved, size of the affected geographic area, and degree of joint activity and inter-institutional relations;
- quality of scientific or technical design of the proposal, based on clear objectives, specified activities, internal logic;

- well established indicators for each outcome or objective and methods established to measure progress toward meeting the established objectives (well developed monitoring and evaluation plan).
- possible multiplier effects, taking into account the use of the product(s) and technologies in the country and how they might contribute to other projects or programs.

*(c) Social and Institutional Impact*

*Social Considerations:* The social assessment considers the project's likely effects on poverty (employment, income) and contribution to the economic and social well being of the target audience. Projects need to contribute to economic development objectives and help the target audience participate more effectively in the market economy. The project should foster broad participation with particular attention to gender focus and responsiveness. The social assessment also analyses whether the project is likely to have potential negative impacts on the community or other non-target groups. The social impact assessment requires information and analysis of:

- direct and indirect beneficiaries of the project including benefits to poor farmers and gender;
- likelihood of achieving the objectives of the proposed activity and impact of the project within a reasonable time frame;
- potential for the adoption of the generated technologies and opportunities for spill over to other eco-regions;
- the ability of the technology to stimulate target group participation in market oriented agriculture; and,
- expected indirect effects of technologies, such as those caused by spill over of research results;

*(d) Capacity building and partnership quality:*

The capacity building assessment seeks to evaluate how the proposal will help strengthen the NARS. The partnership assessment attempts to establish beyond the number of partners, the quality and the diversity of the partnerships of the proposed project at the national level. Reviewers will assess the:

- participatory process, which has been followed to achieve the design of the project proposal (e.g. meetings, workshops, electronic mail conferences, gap evaluation between the first draft and final proposal).
- diversity and complementarity of the roles played (with specific references to the integration and synergism among different knowledge systems) by the different stakeholders and the added value brought by these different roles.
- agreement and consensus built by stakeholders themselves on these principles of participation based on comparative advantage.
- shared mechanism allowing the consensus decision-making process and conflict resolution mechanism.

### *(e) Economic Impact*

The economic assessment attempts to establish the economic impact of the proposed project at the national level. Projects funded must demonstrate a contribution to the national economic development and lead to increased agricultural incomes and stability of production in the medium to long-term. In most cases this will translate into a focus on market-oriented programs.

For example, the evaluation of proposals focusing on production aspects will take into account the significance of the expected changes in production value (based on production volume, product quality, efficient use of production factors, and other improvements that may result from introducing a new product) and the impacts of those changes for the sector and the farmer.

For proposals focusing on overall sector activities the evaluation will consider the economic strength of that specific sector, the magnitude of the problems being addressed, and the estimated extent to which the proposed project can address them and overcome any existing constraints.

The economic and financial impact assessment requires information and analysis of:

- expected incremental economic, financial, and social effects on aspects such as changes in production value, increased productivity, enhanced product quality, cost fluctuations, effect on income level and distribution, employment and overall contribution to economic development; and
- the potential for the project or activity to achieve economic and financial sustainability in the long run.

### *(f) Monitoring and Evaluation*

Each project will include funds for monitoring and evaluation and project approval will be based on the inclusion of an effective monitoring and evaluation plan among other things. These funds should be used to measure achievement against established indicators. In general, monitoring and evaluation budgets should not exceed five to ten percent (5-10%) of the total project budget.

### *(g) Communications Strategy:*

Projects will also be evaluated on the communication strategies for effective dissemination of results to enhance adoption of the technology or programs developed through the project. The potential for adoption offers an important point for evaluating the research project's success. Adoption may provide economic, social and financial benefits to the beneficiaries. Important factors include the potential for spill-over from one area where the technology is developed to other eco-regions,

for sustainability and for achieving impact within a reasonable time frame.

#### ***4.5 Size of the award (Funding)***

##### ***4.5.1 Amount***

ARCN will establish maximum funding amounts for the competitive grant program. In most cases, grants under the competitive grant scheme may not exceed N50,000,000.00 (Fifty million Naira) over a three-year period.

Funds from the grants are intended to cover additional costs in the following line items:

- The costs of short-term personnel dedicated to work on the project;
- Travel costs and per diem;
- Project inputs including specialized equipment;
- Required computer and/or telecommunications equipment;
- Data collection costs;
- Statistical analysis;
- Local transportation;
- Training, meeting and seminar costs;
- Dissemination of research results generated by the project through workshop proceeding, scientific publications, technical notes.
- All other costs not related to core costs and directly related to the implementation of the project.
- To purchase/solicit services from NARIs and/or IARCs

The grant scheme will not normally provide funding for core or permanent salary costs, overheads or for large capital items, such as vehicles. The program also will not finance investment in construction of buildings or research facilities.

#### **5. Management of the Fund**

The Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN) will be responsible for managing the Fund and approve all projects for funding. This will involve calling for proposals, pre-qualifying the proposals, arranging for proposal reviews, preparing and submitting proposal review reports to the Council, disbursing grants and arranging for M&E of projects in accordance with the provisions of these guidelines. Additional peer review panels may be constituted, when necessary for review and evaluation of proposals. These functions may alternatively be contracted out.

#### **6. Guidelines for the preparation of project implementation contracts**

##### ***6.1 Project Proposals Preparation***

All research projects submitted to the Council for a particular call for proposals should address the research priorities identified in the national strategic plan and strategic objectives chosen for the call. They should also demonstrate a collaborative approach.

Proposals will be considered for funding at only one time per year. The bidding process will normally comprise two stages:

- a) Expression of Interest
- b) Invitation of short listed candidates to present final proposal.

The process begins with a list of priority strategic research objectives derived by distilling the stated research needs of research client groups. The production of this list is the responsibility of the Council. A statement of a research opportunity plus the related research requirements will be prepared by the Council. An invitation for Expression of Interest to prepare proposals to address the listed research issues will then be advertised in the national newspapers and other relevant public media.

A period of one month will be allowed for the submission of Expression of Interest. Guidelines for the preparation of Expression of Interest will be provided. The Secretariat will allow one further month for review of Expression of Interest. Short-listed individuals will then be invited to submit formal proposals to conduct research in accordance with the advertised strategic objectives.

A period of two months will be allowed for the submission of proposals. Guidelines for proposal formats will also be given.

### ***6.2 Submission of Proposals***

All the research proposals should be submitted to ARCN which will scrutinize the proposals to ensure that they have been properly completed and conform to the conditions of the award. They will be further processed as detailed in 6.5 below.

### ***6.3 Application Forms***

Applications made in accordance with the format obtainable from ARCN should be submitted for consideration of the Research Grant Scheme. The proposal should be typewritten and clearly legible to enable production of photocopies. Due to limitation of space in the forms, concise, clear and specific statements are to be made. Incoherent and vague description of objectives of the research proposal will increase the chances of rejection of the application.

#### ***6.3.1 Multiple Applications***

Normally, no single individual shall be a beneficiary of grants for more than one project at anyone time. The same principle shall apply in the case of team projects where a member of a team may wish to apply for another grant either alone, or as a member of another team.

#### ***6.4 Project Description***

Sufficient information must be given in the application form of a well written protocol of the investigation, showing clearly the problem to be investigated, its relationship to previous research and similar ongoing research, and mode of procedure. The use of major equipment listed, travel, labour, should be clear from reading the procedure. The importance or value of the study should be stated. All the experimental details necessary to permit peer evaluation or review should be included, as well as details of anticipated costs.

#### ***6.5 Processing of Applications***

Applications that satisfy the guidelines will be processed. Each application will be sent to two independent evaluators to be selected. Each evaluator will assess the proposal and enter his/her views on a prescribed form. Evaluator will be given guidance, and asked to comment especially on the significance to Nigerian Agriculture and the scientific merit of the proposal.

Applications, together with evaluators' reports, are submitted to the Council. After consideration of the independent evaluator's reports, the Council will rank the proposals in three groups, A, B, and C, in descending priority order. Priority order within each ranking group will further be carried out to facilitate determination of fund allocation against the available resources. The D category is reserved for proposals with so little merit that the Council recommends outright rejection

Following Council's decision, applicants will be informed of the success or otherwise of their proposals and, if successful, of any modifications of proposals required and the conditions and timing for disbursement.

### **7. Monitoring and Evaluation procedure for the scheme**

The Council needs to determine the effectiveness of its project financing through project evaluation and will undertake routine monitoring and external evaluations of all projects, either through its own Secretariat or through outsourced services. These periodic evaluations will provide the Council with a means to check on those results reported by grant recipients and serve as a mechanism to collect independent information and results verification. The format for project monitoring form will be provided. The Council will also evaluate the results of the funded research projects at the end of the project execution period. The Council will accomplish this primarily based on the final report, which will indicate the degree to which the objectives have been met, and an end-of-project evaluation.

The Council Secretariat will maintain a database with the evaluation results of all

projects financed under the scheme. These data will serve as a reference for evaluating the institutional capacity of the executing agencies, as well as provide a source of lessons learned for adaptive research and technology transfer in the country.

## **8. Disbursement of Funds and Accounting for funds**

i) All grants/funds shall be paid to the Bursar's Department of the recipient's employer (i.e. research institute or university) or organisation (private sector). Withdrawal of funds by the researcher will be controlled by the financial system of the recipient's employer's institution. However, as a general guide, the following regulations for disbursement and monitoring of funds are made:

ii) Items Purchase with Local Purchase Order (LPO)

Three quotations from respectable local dealers or a quotation from the manufacturers or their local accredited agent must be produced.

iii) Cash Advance Items (e.g. Travel, Labour, Supplier, Printing and Stationery)

For these items, no more than half of the total sum allocated to these activities in the grant, subjects to a maximum aggregated ceiling of N100,000.00 can be drawn at any time. This must be retired in full before further withdrawal can be made.

In every case, a satisfactory progress report must be recorded by the project before further cash advance are authorized.

All statements of accounts or cash advance retirement and supporting documents (receipts, etc.) shall be prepared in triplicate. One of these, including the original receipts, should be sent to the Chief Financial Officer or Bursar of the grantee's Institution or organisation, who will file it; the other one is sent to ARCN. The third copy is retained for filling by the grantee researcher.

Additionally, the following regulations specific to the under-listed items shall apply:

a) Travel

Air-tickets shall be secured through the services of the researcher's institution's travel office. In the alternative, authentic stubs of used air tickets carrying appropriate dates to travel and destinations may be filed for reimbursement.

- Additional advances may be allowed to cover the travel expenses of research assistants and drivers, but not the associated allowances of such staff, provided that the identity of such staff and the basis of estimation are provided with the application for cash advance. In case of air travel,

application may be submitted for cash advance that would be appropriate in the prevailing circumstances.

b) Labour

All labour hired and retained in employment for continuous periods of 30 days or more shall be paid by means of the institution's salary payment voucher to be raised in the specific name of staff under employment.

Cash advance requests for the settlement of labour charges shall be allowed only for casual labour retained for less than a continuous period of 30 days in one year.

c) Supplies including Stationery

Grantees should normally use LPOs to cover items of supplies. When this is not possible, Cash advance shall be accompanied by a detailed breakdown of the desired supplies, their expected source(s) and estimated cost of each item. The breakdown shall be signed and dated by the applicant.

d) Printing

In all cases, printing is expected to be a terminal activity in the Research Grant Scheme. Cash advance, if desired for this purpose, may be allowed only after prior evidence has been provided in progress report(s) that field and/or laboratory work are completed and the analysis of data has advanced so far that printing has become imminent.

e) Building Construction

Institutions are expected to make available fixed structures (e.g. buildings, animal pens, etc) as part of their own contributions towards the successful execution of the projects. Consequently, erection of fixed structures may not be entertained in the application for this scheme.

iv) Retirement of Advances

All statements of accounts or cash advance retirement and supporting documents (receipts, etc.) shall be prepared in triplicate. One of these, including the original receipts, should be sent to the Chief Financial Officer or Bursar of the grantee's Institution or organisation, who will file it; the other one is sent to ARCN. The third copy is retained for filing by the grantee researcher.

## **9. Reporting**

### ***9.1 Progress Reports***

Progress reports shall be made on the prescribed forms every 6 months outlining the progress achieved so far in pursuit of the objectives of the approved proposal. Each report must include a financial statement showing the amount of funds approved, itemized expenditure and balance in the budget. These reports will be assessed by ARCN Secretariat. Satisfactory progress will be a pre-requisite for disbursement of further funds in the project. Where no reports have been received after 12 months, the grant shall be deemed to have lapsed.

### ***9.2 End of Project/Staff Departure or Resignation***

Upon departure or resignation of staff/researcher, or on completion of the project, all equipment purchased shall be handed over to the Head of the institution of the researcher, for use by other staff in the institution. Under the circumstances, the responsibility of accounting for all the equipment will be that of the head of the institution or establishment. Where a group is funded and the principal investigator leaves the institution, ARCN should make arrangement to appoint another from the remaining members of the group to continue the project.

End of project final report, including financial statement supported with receipts shall be sent to ARCN Secretariat for scrutiny. Any unexpended balance of the grant shall be returned to ARCN.

### ***9.3 Publication and Dissemination***

The Council encourages grantees to publish their results in scientific journals and extension materials. Such publications should be submitted as part of a progress or final report where possible.

Financial contribution from CRGS should be acknowledged in publications based on research supported by CRGS as follows: - "This research was supported (in part) by the Competitive Research Grant Scheme (CRGS) of Nigeria".

## **10. Application for Supplementary Grants**

Applications for supplementary grants are made in a prescribed format and forwarded for processing in the same way as for fresh grants. In no case can the grant be extended for more than three years. The case should be well presented showing what was done with the grant already received, i.e. research grounds covered, together with a financial statement of expenditure backed by receipts. The need for supplementary grant is then justified. In no case will the grant be extended beyond three years.

## **11. Sanctions**

Progress reports are due 15 days after the end of each six-month period. If the progress report is not received within two weeks after the due date, the principal

investigator/Head of submitting institution will be notified to suspend disbursement of funds until the report is received. ARC management will not approve further disbursement of grant funds until the situation is satisfactorily remedied.