# INTRODUCTION

## Background

Uganda seeks accelerated economic growth and improved social well-being. Its national development strategy is centered around transforming the economy and transitioning into a lower middle-income country by the year 2020. Development of such an economy puts high emphasis on the production, transfer and application of scientific knowledge. National governments, development partners, civil society and private sector entities around the world have expressed growing interest in embracing STI to optimize technology development and adaptation. Demand is high for innovative approaches with which to assess causal mechanisms, to evaluate policy and program impacts and to guide S&T interventions for economic growth and development.

The Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) is a Government of Uganda (GoU) agency, under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI). The Council is mandated to facilitate and coordinate the development and implementation of policies and strategies for integrating Science and Technology (S&T) into the national development process.

Research and Development (R&D) grants support scientific innovations across all domains of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) and R&D projects in the basic, applied, incubation and commercialization stages, in line with the priorities indicated in the STI Policy 2009 and Uganda Vision 2040. These grants aim to accelerate the development of a robust and coherent scientific evidence base which will support effective policy and investments in S&T systems and effective industrial research uptake and utilization. Grant beneficiaries, upon completion of the R&D phase of their projects, are expected to utilize their business plans as road maps to commercialization. The UNCST, by working closely with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Uganda Industrial Research Institute and other stakeholders in the STI sector, also provides support in bridging the gap between innovation and commercialization through incubation centers and science and technology parks to ensure that the grants programme translates into creation of employment opportunities, inclusive development and steady economic growth as stated in the NRM manifesto 2016-2021 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

## Context

Supporting relevant research through development grants can promote positive economic transformation and improvement in key sectors—education, health, agriculture, energy, water and sanitation—for the Ugandan society. The application of science can stimulate the economy through new innovations in areas such as agricultural production, industry, communications and health care and local products and innovations can lead to the birth of vigorous new companies to market them. Thus, the support to R&D projects offers the GoU an invaluable opportunity to invest in those science and technology initiatives that are innately relevant for national development.

The competitive nature of R&D grants ensures that they are awarded to the most productive research teams working on the most relevant topics. The award criteria emphasizes the importance of linking research to industry, so that the output is increased prototypes as well as new knowledge. Recipients would use the grants to turn their existing facilities into small but flexible centers of research excellence for their particular domains.

Uganda’s public resources are limited and yet its needs are great. It must therefore build its science and technology system in a way that is most cost-effective and owned by the country. R&D grants are devised as a competitive and transparent mechanism to fund researchers and innovators with activities on research efforts devoted to generating new knowledge and its translation into solutions in the S&T field as determined by a panel of technical experts in the specific field of interest. Other built-in accountability measures provide further safeguards for ensuring research quality and impact from the grants programme.

## Vision and Mission

The vision of this facility is a prosperous Science and Technology led Ugandan society. The mission is to build capacity in and mobilize the population to embrace STI so as to enhance economic transformation, prosperity, and human development by 2020.

## Objectives of the Research and Development Grants

A grant is a direct financial contribution, by way of donation, in order to finance actions intended to support achievement of specific objectives.

Grants are made for an operation which is proposed to the Contracting Authority (UNCST) by a potential beneficiary (an “applicant”) and which falls within the normal framework of the beneficiary’s activities. Grants are not meant to finance the normal functioning of the beneficiary’s body.

The goal of the R&D grants is to make transformational STI investments that have a demonstrable potential to generate significant and sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits to Uganda. The objectives of this grants scheme include the following:

1. To strengthen Uganda’s STI capabilities and performance in the medium term.
2. To support the uptake of research results so as to enhance national productivity and growth.
3. To strengthen Uganda’s human resource and research productivity for social economic transformation.
4. To support the growth of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) by supporting Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) initiatives using multidisciplinary and multi-sector research teams.

## Scope of the Grants Facility

The facility supports several priority projects in the fields of Agriculture and Allied Sciences, Industry and Engineering, Environment and Natural Resource Management, Health and Nutrition, Information and Communications Technology on an annual basis. Applications are assessed on a competitive basis, to optimize the contribution made through Government investments in the national development goals.

The projects should have a clear indication of their contribution to (1) gross domestic product (GDP), (2) employment creation, (3) government revenue, (4) trade competitiveness, and (5) efficient service delivery. The facility supports activities on research efforts devoted to generating new knowledge and its translation into solutions in the S&T field as determined by a panel of technical experts in the specific field of interest.

A wide range of proposals that address the objectives outlined above are considered, based on selection criteria explained in the subsequent section. Each grant proposal is assessed vigorously in order to attain value for money**.**