



CALL FOR PROPOSALS

CYCLE 1 | ALL TEN FUNDING WINDOWS

15 June 2026 |
Grand Launching

BOARD APPROVAL

The NRIF funding windows were approved by the Governing Board of the National Research and Innovation Fund on 2nd June 2026, effectively authorizing the publication of the Cycle 1 Call for Proposals across all ten NRIF funding windows, in accordance with the Call for Proposals process set out in the NRIF Operations Manual.

INTRODUCTION AND GOVERNING FRAMEWORK

OVERVIEW OF THE TEN FUNDING WINDOWS

#	Funding Window	Window Ceiling	Primary Beneficiaries
I	Government Systems and Evidence	GMD2 Million	Government ministries, sub-vented agencies, regulatory and oversight bodies
II	Cross-Cutting Capacity Strengthening	GMD2 Million	Universities, government agencies, LGAs, CSOs, innovation intermediaries
III	Research Infrastructure and Systems	GMD3 Million	Universities, research institutions, TVET centres with research mandates
IV	Innovation Lifecycle and Market Readiness	GMD2.5 Million	Registered innovation hubs, start-ups, and SMEs
V	Student Research and Innovation	GMD1 Million	Undergraduate and postgraduate students
VI	TVET and Skills Innovation	GMD1 Million	TVET institutions (through NAFTI association)
VII	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning	*****	All NRIF grantees and implementing partners
VIII	Local Government and Provincial Development	GMD1.5 Million	Urban and provincial LGAs, Area Councils
IX	Partnerships and Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration	GMD1 Million	Cross-sector consortia spanning universities, government, CSOs, private sector
X	Diaspora and International Collaboration	GMD1 Million	Gambian diaspora professionals, diplomatic partners, international institutions

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The following requirements apply across all ten windows. Window-specific eligibility requirements are set out in each window's call. All requirements are binary: a proposal either meets them or does not. Proposals that fail any general eligibility requirement are not forwarded for technical evaluation.

- The applicant institution or individual must be legally registered and operational in The Gambia.
- The applicant must have no outstanding, unresolved NRIF grant compliance issues from a previous cycle.
- The proposed activities must fall within the scope of eligible activities for the relevant window.
- The application must be complete: all required sections, declarations, and attachments must be submitted.
- The application must be submitted by the published deadline through the NRIF digital portal, or, where connectivity limitations have been agreed in advance with the Secretariat, through the approved paper-based process.
- Where NAQAA accreditation is specified as a window requirement (Windows III and VI, and where stated in other windows), current evidence of accreditation must be submitted.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

All eligible proposals are scored using the Merit of Proposal (MP) system. Each window specifies its own weighted evaluation criteria. Scores are awarded by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) using calibrated rubrics.

Each evaluator scores independently and must sign a conflict-of-interest declaration before the evaluation begins. Where the standard deviation across evaluators for any criterion exceeds 1.5, the TAC Chair convenes a moderation session.

The final score for each criterion is the average of all evaluators' post-moderation scores. The MP is the weighted sum of criterion scores.

Minimum passing MP: 7.0 out of 10. A proposal scoring zero on any criterion is ineligible regardless of total MP.

■ AGGREGATE CYCLE 1 BUDGET

Total Cycle 1 grants budget ceiling: GMD 15,000,000 across ten windows. Individual window allocations are indicative and may be adjusted by the Board within the aggregate ceiling based on application quality and volume. The Board will receive a portfolio report at the close of each call cycle.

■ CROSS-CUTTING CONDITIONS

The following conditions apply to all grants awarded under any window:

- Grant-funded research must comply with NRIF's research integrity standards, including NSF Merit Review Principles, the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), and the ALLEA European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.
- All funded research data must be managed in accordance with the FAIR Data Principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) and deposited in the NRIF open data repository within 60 days of project completion.
- Grant agreements must include a milestone schedule with disbursement triggers. No tranche is released without Secretariat verification of the preceding milestone.
- All grantees must submit financial reports and activity reports at the intervals specified in their grant agreement.
- NRIF reserves the right to conduct site visits and financial audits of any grantee at any point during or within two years after the grant period.
- Any publication arising from NRIF-funded research must acknowledge NRIF support and comply with NRIF's open access publishing requirement.

WINDOW I — GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS AND EVIDENCE

WINDOW	I — GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS AND EVIDENCE
FOCUS	Strengthening national and sectoral data systems; closing the gap between evidence generation and government decision-making.
PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES	Government ministries, sub-vented agencies, statutory regulatory and oversight bodies.
CONSULTATION BASIS	18 sub-vented agencies across different mandates converged on identical priorities: data systems (14 votes, 1st priority); capacity building (12 votes, 2nd); MEL systems (10 votes, 3rd). 33% of ministry votes for capacity building; 25% for policy-relevant commissioned research.
CYCLE 1 BUDGET CEILING	GMD 2,000,000
MAXIMUM GRANT PER AWARD	GMD 1,500,000
GRANT DURATION	12 to 24 months

1.1

OBJECTIVES

1. Establish or strengthen integrated data systems and digital evidence platforms within government and regulatory institutions.
2. Build the human and institutional capacity to analyse, interpret, and act on data within statutory mandated functions.
3. Develop applied analytics and decision-support tools that translate evidence into operational policy and regulatory practice.
4. Fund policy-relevant applied research directly commissioned by ministries and agencies to address identified evidence gaps.

1.2

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

Government ministries; government sub-vented agencies; statutory regulatory and oversight bodies; and institutions with a defined public service delivery mandate. The applicant must demonstrate a clear link between the proposed investment and an identified operational evidence gap within its mandate. Institutions must have an active government-approved budget line that confirms their operational status.

1.3

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Development and deployment of integrated data platforms and digital management systems within government institutions.
- National data repositories, sectoral registries, and evidence hubs.
- Evidence systems for regulation, disaster response, social protection, and oversight functions.
- Staff training in data collection, statistical analysis, evidence interpretation, and policy application.
- Applied research generating evidence directly applicable to policy formulation or regulatory action.
- Knowledge management and data governance framework development.
- ICT and connectivity infrastructure directly supporting research or regulatory data functions.
- Decision support tools and dashboards that translate evidence into operational use.

1.4

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Procurement of general office equipment without a demonstrable and documented link to evidence generation.
- Salary top-ups for civil servants, including allowances beyond those provided for in approved grant budgets.
- Activities already fully funded through the institution's approved government budget, where NRIF additionality cannot be demonstrated.
- Activities outside the applicant institution's statutory mandate.
- Construction of new buildings or major structural renovations.

1.5

GRANT PARAMETERS

Grant Level / Instrument	Ceiling (GMD)	Duration
Evidence Systems Grant	1,500,000	12–24 months
Analytical Capacity Grant	1,000,000	12–18 months
Commissioned Policy Research	500,000	6–12 months

1.6

DISBURSEMENT SCHEDULE

Tranche	Condition / Milestone	% of Total
1	Grant agreement signed; financial management assessment passed.	40%
2	Approved mid-point progress report submitted and verified by Secretariat.	40%
3	Final report accepted; audit certificate submitted.	20%

1.7

EVALUATION RUBRIC

Criterion	What is Assessed	Weight
A. Strategic and mandate alignment	Degree to which the proposal addresses a documented evidence gap directly linked to the institution's statutory mandate and National Development Plan priorities.	25%
B. Quality of needs assessment	Rigour of the documented gap between current evidence capacity and what the institution requires to fulfil its mandate.	25%
C. Project design and feasibility	Logical coherence of activities; realism of budget and timeline; quality of implementation plan.	20%
D. Institutional capacity	Demonstrated ability to implement, manage, and sustain the proposed system after the grant period.	15%
E. Sustainability and uptake	Credible plan for maintenance, institutional embedding, and operational use of findings beyond the grant period.	15%

Minimum Merit of Proposal (MP) for funding eligibility: 7.0 out of 10. A proposal scoring zero on any single criterion is ineligible regardless of total MP. Where two proposals have the same total score, the higher score on Criterion A is the tiebreaker, followed by Criterion B.

■ WINDOW II — CROSS-CUTTING CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

WINDOW	II — CROSS-CUTTING CAPACITY STRENGTHENING
FOCUS	Building the human and institutional capacity to generate, manage, and apply research and innovation across the country.
PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES	Universities, government agencies, LGAs, civil society organisations, and innovation intermediaries.
CONSULTATION BASIS	Capacity building ranked 1st or 2nd priority across government ministries, sub-vented agencies, and academic institutions. Grant-writing capacity, research management, and postgraduate support were the three most consistently identified gaps.
CYCLE 1 BUDGET CEILING	GMD 2,000,000
MAXIMUM GRANT PER AWARD	GMD 1,500,000
GRANT DURATION	12 to 24 months

■ 2.1

OBJECTIVES

- Strengthen the grant-writing, research management, and financial management capacity of eligible institutions across all sectors.
- Support postgraduate education and early-career researcher development in priority national development fields.
- Fund structured training programmes that build research and innovation capacity at institutional and individual levels.
- Develop institutional research policies, ethics frameworks, and quality assurance systems.

■ 2.2

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

Universities and higher education institutions; government ministries and sub-vented agencies; registered civil society organisations with a research or innovation mandate; local government authorities; and innovation intermediaries with a demonstrable capacity development function. Applicants must demonstrate that the proposed activity addresses a documented capacity gap rather than routine operational costs.

2.3

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Structured training programmes in research methods, grant-writing, financial management, and research communication.
- Postgraduate fellowships, scholarships, and early-career researcher support programmes.
- Research ethics, integrity, and governance framework development.
- Research office establishment or strengthening, including policies, procedures, and staff training.
- Peer learning exchanges and mentorship programmes between institutions.
- Development of institutional open access and data management policies.
- Cross-institutional capacity sharing partnerships.

2.4

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Funding for routine staff salaries outside the scope of the approved grant activity.
- Conference attendance without a demonstrable link to NRIF-funded capacity development objectives.
- Activities that duplicate existing government training programmes without demonstrable additionality.
- Foreign travel not directly linked to the capacity development activity.

2.5

GRANT PARAMETERS

Grant Level / Instrument	Ceiling (GMD)	Duration
Institutional Capacity Grant	1,500,000	12–24 months
Postgraduate Fellowship	800,000	Up to 24 months
Training Programme Grant	500,000	6–18 months
Research Ethics Framework Grant	300,000	6–12 months

2.6

DISBURSEMENT SCHEDULE

Tranche	Condition / Milestone	% of Total
1	Grant agreement signed; financial management assessment passed.	40%
2	Approved mid-point progress report submitted and verified by Secretariat.	40%
3	Final report accepted; audit certificate submitted.	20%

2.7

EVALUATION RUBRIC

Criterion	What is Assessed	Weight
A. Capacity gap documentation	Evidence of the specific gap being addressed; baseline assessment; institutional self-evaluation.	30%
B. Programme design and feasibility	Logic of the training or development design; realism of timeline and budget; quality of learning outcomes.	25%
C. Institutional commitment	Evidence of institutional buy-in; contribution of institution's own resources; sustainability plan.	20%
D. Breadth of benefit	Number of individuals and institutions reached; inclusion of women and provincial institutions.	15%
E. NDP alignment	Relevance of capacity being built to National Development Plan priority sectors.	10%

Minimum Merit of Proposal (MP) for funding eligibility: 7.0 out of 10. A proposal scoring zero on any single criterion is ineligible regardless of total MP. Where two proposals have the same total score, the higher score on Criterion A is the tiebreaker, followed by Criterion B.

WINDOW III — RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE AND SYSTEMS

WINDOW	III — RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE AND SYSTEMS
FOCUS	Investing in physical research infrastructure, equipment, and shared research facilities that raise the productivity of the national research base.
PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES	Universities, research institutions, and TVET centres with active research mandates.
CONSULTATION BASIS	Research infrastructure was the unanimous top priority in the Vice-Chancellors' session and second overall in university priorities. Prototype testing infrastructure was described as a systemic failure point across multiple sessions.
CYCLE 1 BUDGET CEILING	GMD 3,000,000
MAXIMUM GRANT PER AWARD	GMD 2,500,000
GRANT DURATION	12 to 30 months
NAQAA ACCREDITATION	Required for all applicants under this window. Current evidence of NAQAA accreditation must be included in the application.

3.1

OBJECTIVES

- Fund the establishment or significant upgrade of laboratories, prototype testing facilities, and shared research equipment in accredited institutions.
- Require and govern shared access to funded infrastructure for institutions that cannot afford their own facilities, including provincial and smaller institutions.
- Support research management of information systems and institutional digital infrastructure.
- Invest in library resources, journal access, and knowledge infrastructure that raises research output quality.

3.2

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

NAQAA-accredited universities, higher education institutions, research institutes, and TVET centres with a documented research function. Applicants must demonstrate current under-capacity against a specific research need and must commit to a published shared-use protocol. Applications from consortia of institutions are encouraged and will be assessed more favourably on Criterion B.

3.3

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Laboratory construction, renovation, and scientific equipment acquisition.
- Shared research equipment and shared-use facilities, with a published access protocol governing use by other institutions.
- Innovation hubs, incubators, and maker spaces within accredited institutions.
- Prototype testing and product certification infrastructure.
- Research management information systems and institutional digital infrastructure.
- Library resources, journal access subscriptions, and knowledge management systems.
- Training in the operation and maintenance of funded equipment.

3.4

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- General IT hardware, networking, or software not directly supporting a research function.
- Infrastructure that will not be made available for shared use by other institutions.
- Infrastructure in institutions without NAQAA accreditation.
- Routine equipment maintenance without a new acquisition or upgrade component.

3.5

GRANT PARAMETERS

Grant Level / Instrument	Ceiling (GMD)	Duration
Major Laboratory / Facility Grant	2,500,000	18–30 months
Equipment Acquisition Grant	1,500,000	12–18 months
Shared Innovation Hub Grant	1,000,000	12–24 months
Research Systems Grant	500,000	6–12 months

3.6

DISBURSEMENT SCHEDULE

Tranche	Condition / Milestone	% of Total
1	Grant agreement signed; approved procurement plan submitted.	30%

3.6

DISBURSEMENT SCHEDULE

2	Approved mid-point completion report; expenditure verification by Secretariat.	50%
3	Final completion report accepted; shared-use protocol operational; audit submitted.	20%

3.7

EVALUATION RUBRIC

Criterion	What is Assessed	Weight
A. Research need and utilisation	Documented under-capacity; projected utilisation rate; diversity of the expected user base.	25%
B. Shared-use and equity of access	Quality of shared-use governance; access provisions for provincial and smaller institutions; consortium design.	20%
C. Institutional capacity	Qualified personnel to operate and manage; management track record; operational plan.	20%
D. NDP priority alignment	Degree to which the infrastructure supports research in NDP priority areas.	20%
E. Sustainability and maintenance	Credibility of maintenance plan; evidence of recurrent funding or partnership to sustain infrastructure beyond the grant period.	15%

Minimum Merit of Proposal (MP) for funding eligibility: 7.0 out of 10. A proposal scoring zero on any single criterion is ineligible regardless of total MP. Where two proposals have the same total score, the higher score on Criterion A is the tiebreaker, followed by Criterion B.

Shared-Use Requirement: All infrastructure funded under this window must be made available for shared use by other institutions through a published access protocol. Proposals must include a Shared-Use and Maintenance Plan. Failure to operationalise the shared-use protocol within 90 days of project completion will be treated as a material breach of the grant agreement.

■ WINDOW IV — INNOVATION LIFE-CYCLE AND MARKET READINESS

WINDOW	IV — INNOVATION LIFECYCLE AND MARKET READINESS
FOCUS	Supporting the full innovation pipeline, from concept development through prototype, market entry, and scale-up.
PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES	Registered innovation hubs, start-ups, and SMEs operating in The Gambia.
CONSULTATION BASIS	Prototype funding was the top priority at 67% in the innovation session. Market access support was the top non-financial need at 89%. The testing and certification stage was described as 'where innovations go to die' due to the absence of certified testing infrastructure.
CYCLE 1 BUDGET CEILING	GMD 2,500,000
MAXIMUM GRANT PER AWARD	GMD 750,000 (market entry and scale-up); GMD 500,000 (prototype)
GRANT DURATION	6 to 18 months, depending on stage

■ 4.1 OBJECTIVES

- Provide stage-appropriate financing for each phase of the innovation lifecycle from ideation through to market entry.
- Address the systemic gap in prototype testing and product certification infrastructure.
- Support market access and commercialisation for innovations with demonstrated national development impact.
- Stimulate private sector-linked innovation in agriculture, health, energy, waste management, and digital services.

■ 4.2 ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

Registered innovation hubs, incubators, technology start-ups, and SMEs legally registered and operating in The Gambia. The institution or individual must have an innovation at the stage for which funding is sought, with documented evidence of prior-stage completion. Applications may be submitted individually or as an enterprise-hub partnership.

4.3

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Concept development and feasibility studies for early-stage innovations.
- Prototype development, testing, and iteration.
- Product certification, standards compliance, and regulatory clearance.
- Market research, pilot sales, and early market penetration activities.
- Commercialisation planning and business model development.
- Scale-up investment with demonstrated market traction.
- Access to testing facilities and shared innovation infrastructure.

4.4

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Import of goods or services that directly substitute for local production without a demonstrable innovation component.
- Funding to cover general business operating costs unrelated to the innovation activity.
- Activities for which the applicant already has confirmed private investment at the time of application.
- Real estate acquisition or construction.

4.5

GRANT PARAMETERS

Grant Level / Instrument	Ceiling (GMD)	Duration
Ideation and Concept Grant	150,000	3–6 months
Prototype Development Grant	500,000	6–12 months
Market Entry Grant	750,000	6–18 months
Scale-Up Grant	750,000	12–18 months

4.6

DISBURSEMENT SCHEDULE

Tranche	Condition / Milestone	% of Total
1	Grant agreement signed; business plan and milestone schedule approved by Secretariat.	40%

2	Approved milestone report; financial expenditure verified; next-stage prototype or market evidence submitted.	40%
3	Final project report accepted; commercialisation or scale-up evidence submitted; audit certificate.	20%

4.7

EVALUATION RUBRIC

Criterion	What is Assessed	Weight
A. Innovation quality and novelty	Technical and commercial merit; originality; relevance to a documented Gambian market or social need.	25%
B. Commercialisation plan	Quality of market analysis; realism of market entry strategy; evidence of demand.	25%
C. Team capacity	Technical, operational, and entrepreneurial capacity to execute the proposed activities.	20%
D. National development impact	Employment creation potential; import substitution; export potential; NDP priority sector contribution.	15%
E. Financial viability	Budget realism; evidence of a sustainable revenue model; pathway to financial self-sufficiency.	15%

Minimum Merit of Proposal (MP) for funding eligibility: 7.0 out of 10. A proposal scoring zero on any single criterion is ineligible regardless of total MP. Where two proposals have the same total score, the higher score on Criterion A is the tiebreaker, followed by Criterion B.

WINDOW V — STUDENT RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

WINDOW	V — STUDENT RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
FOCUS	Enabling student-led research and innovation from concept development to market pilot, with mandatory mentorship at every stage.
PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES	Undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled at accredited higher education or TVET institutions in The Gambia.
CONSULTATION BASIS	100% participation rate in the student session — the highest of any consultation session. Research opportunities: 71% (top priority). Small grants: 61%. Mentorship: 61% (top non-financial need). The milestone-based grant framework was proposed by student participants and is adopted here.
CYCLE 1 BUDGET CEILING	GMD 1,000,000
MAXIMUM GRANT PER AWARD	GMD 300,000 (scale-up stage)
GRANT DURATION	3 to 18 months, depending on stage
MENTORSHIP	Mandatory for all grants. Every student grantee is assigned a mentor from the NRIF Mentorship Registry within 30 days of award. Mentorship is a grant condition.

5.1

OBJECTIVES

- Create accessible, direct funding pathways for student-led research and innovation without institutional gatekeeping.
- Support students through a milestone-based grant framework from ideation through prototype to market pilot and scale-up.
- Establish mandatory mentorship for all student grantees, connecting them with experienced practitioners from industry, academia, and the innovation sector.
- Support students from underrepresented groups, including women, students from provincial institutions, and first-generation students.

5.2

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

Undergraduate and postgraduate students currently enrolled at a NAQAA-accredited higher education institution or registered TVET institution in The Gambia. Students may apply directly (primary pathway) or through their institution

(secondary pathway, available only to institutions that have signed an institutional agreement with NRIF and meet NRIF's transparency and capacity standards). The direct pathway is the default and is designed to prevent institutional gatekeeping.

5.3

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Original research or innovation addressing a documented Gambian development challenge.
- Concept and feasibility studies (Ideation Grant).
- Prototype development and testing (Prototype Grant).
- Small-scale market pilots and initial market penetration (Market Pilot Grant).
- Scale-up of a proven concept with evidence of adoption (Scale-Up Grant).
- Materials, consumables, and direct costs of research or innovation activity.
- Participation in NRIF knowledge-sharing and mentorship activities.

5.4

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Research that does not address a Gambian development challenge.
- Coursework or dissertation work already funded through tuition or an institutional bursary.
- Activities primarily benefiting the student's academic credentials rather than creating a transferable innovation or knowledge output.
- Salaries or allowances to the student or their institutional supervisors beyond those approved in the grant budget.

5.5

GRANT PARAMETERS

Grant Level / Instrument	Ceiling (GMD)	Duration
Ideation Grant	50,000	3–6 months
Prototype Grant	150,000	6–12 months
Market Pilot Grant	200,000	6–12 months
Scale-Up Grant	300,000	12–18 months

5.6

DISBURSEMENT SCHEDULE

Tranche	Condition / Milestone	% of Total
Ideation	Inception report and concept note approved by NRIF mentor.	100% of grant
Prototype	Approved milestone report with evidence of working prototype.	50% on award; 50% on report
Pilot	Market pilot report with initial uptake data and mentor verification.	50% on award; 50% on report
Scale-Up	Scale-up plan with evidence of sustained adoption and institutional endorsement.	50% on award; 50% on report

5.7

EVALUATION RUBRIC

Criterion	What is Assessed	Weight
A. Quality and originality	Clarity of the problem addressed; originality; direct response to a Gambian development challenge.	30%
B. Feasibility	Realism of activities and timeline relative to available resources and the student's current stage.	25%
C. National development relevance	Alignment with NDP priorities; potential community, sector, or national impact.	20%
D. Implementation plan	Step-by-step plan with risk awareness and mitigation strategies.	15%
E. Inclusion	Application from underrepresented groups: women, students from provincial institutions, first-generation students.	10%

Minimum Merit of Proposal (MP) for funding eligibility: 7.0 out of 10. A proposal scoring zero on any single criterion is ineligible regardless of total MP. Where two proposals have the same total score, the higher score on Criterion A is the tiebreaker, followed by Criterion B.

Shared-Use Requirement: All infrastructure funded under this window must be made available for shared use by other institutions through a published access protocol. Proposals must include a Shared-Use and Maintenance Plan. Failure to operationalise the shared-use protocol within 90 days of project completion will be treated as a material breach of the grant agreement.

WINDOW VI — TVET AND SKILLS INNOVATION

WINDOW	VI — TVET AND SKILLS INNOVATION
FOCUS	Trainer capacity building, equipment modernisation, and evidence-based curriculum reform in technical and vocational education and training institutions.
PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES	TVET institutions in The Gambia, accessed through the NAFTI association as mandatory intermediary.
CONSULTATION BASIS	100% participation in the TVET session. Trainer capacity: 40% (top priority); equipment: 30%; curriculum development: 25%. NAFTI representation on the evaluation panel was a governance condition stipulated by participants and is adopted here.
CYCLE 1 BUDGET CEILING	GMD 1,000,000
MAXIMUM GRANT PER AWARD	GMD 500,000
GRANT DURATION	12 to 24 months
DELIVERY GOVERNANCE	All applications under this window must be submitted through the NAFTI association. NAFTI has a standing seat on the TAC evaluation panel for Window VI. NAQAA provides quality assurance oversight.

6.1 OBJECTIVES

- Strengthen the skills and pedagogical capacity of TVET trainers to deliver industry-relevant training.
- Modernise equipment and workshop facilities in TVET institutions to align with current industry standards.
- Fund applied research on curriculum reform and skills-labour market alignment in TVET.
- Strengthen institutional quality assurance and NAQAA accreditation readiness.

6.2 ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

TVET institutions operating in The Gambia that are members of the NAFTI association. Applications must be submitted through NAFTI, which validates the application before forwarding to NRIF. NAQAA accreditation or active NAQAA accreditation engagement must be evidenced.

6.3

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Trainer professional development and pedagogical capacity building programmes.
- Equipment acquisition and workshop modernisation directly linked to industry-relevant training delivery.
- Applied research on curriculum content, skills-labour market alignment, and emerging sector competencies.
- NAQAA accreditation preparation and institutional quality improvement.
- Industry linkage programmes connecting TVET institutions with employers.
- Development of practical assessment tools and competency frameworks.

6.4

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Equipment for purposes other than training delivery.
- Construction or major structural renovation of buildings.
- Salary top-ups for TVET trainers outside the approved grant budget.
- Activities not validated by NAFTI as within the scope of TVET institutional development.

6.5

GRANT PARAMETERS

Grant Level / Instrument	Ceiling (GMD)	Duration
Trainer Capacity Grant	300,000	12–18 months
Equipment Modernisation Grant	500,000	12–24 months
Curriculum Research Grant	500,000	6–12 months

6.6

DISBURSEMENT SCHEDULE

Tranche	Condition / Milestone	% of Total
1	Grant agreement signed; financial management assessment passed.	40%
2	Approved mid-point progress report submitted and verified by Secretariat.	40%
3	Final report accepted; audit certificate submitted.	20%

6.7

EVALUATION RUBRIC

Criterion	What is Assessed	Weight
A. Trainer capacity gap	Documented gap in trainer competencies; baseline assessment; link to industry requirements.	30%
B. Equipment need and utilisation	Demonstrated equipment gap; projected utilisation and link to training curriculum.	25%
C. Curriculum alignment	Evidence that the proposed activity addresses a documented skills-labour market misalignment.	20%
D. Institutional quality improvement	Contribution to NAQAA accreditation or quality assurance improvement.	15%
E. Industry linkage	Evidence of employer or industry engagement in the design of the proposed activity.	10%

Minimum Merit of Proposal (MP) for funding eligibility: 7.0 out of 10. A proposal scoring zero on any single criterion is ineligible regardless of total MP. Where two proposals have the same total score, the higher score on Criterion A is the tiebreaker, followed by Criterion B.

NAFTI Validation: Applications must include a signed NAFTI validation letter confirming that the proposed activity is consistent with NAFTI's institutional development priorities for the TVET sector. Applications without this letter will be deemed ineligible at screening stage.

WINDOW VII — MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

WINDOW	VII — MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING
FOCUS	Strengthening MEL systems and learning functions across NRIF-funded activities and within grantee institutions.
PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES	All current and prospective NRIF grantees and implementing partners.
CONSULTATION BASIS	Accountability and results measurement were identified as essential conditions for stakeholder trust in NRIF across all fourteen consultation sessions.
CYCLE 1 BUDGET CEILING	GMD *****
MAXIMUM GRANT PER AWARD	GMD *****
GRANT DURATION	6 to 18 months
NOTE	Window VII grants are awarded as supplementary instruments to grantees under other windows, or to eligible institutions seeking to develop standalone MEL capacity. They are not awarded independently to applicants with no other NRIF engagement.

7.1 OBJECTIVES

- Strengthen the MEL capacity of institutions implementing NRIF-funded activities.
- Develop or improve results frameworks, performance indicators, and reporting systems within grantee institutions.
- Commission independent evaluations of NRIF-funded programmes and thematic portfolios.
- Build a national evidence base on research and innovation investment effectiveness.

7.2 ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

Current NRIF grantees under Windows I through X seeking supplementary MEL capacity development. Alternatively, eligible institutions may apply for a standalone MEL development grant where the institution demonstrates a documented MEL gap and a credible plan to apply the capacity developed to research or innovation management functions.

7.3

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Development of results frameworks, theories of change, and performance indicator systems.
- MEL system software, tools, and data collection instruments.
- Staff training in monitoring, data collection, analysis, and reporting.
- Independent evaluation of NRIF-funded projects or programmes.
- Learning documentation, synthesis, and knowledge translation activities.
- Participation in NRIF portfolio learning reviews.

7.4

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- MEL systems for activities not funded by or linked to NRIF.
- General IT procurement without a direct MEL function.
- Routine financial audit (which is a separate grant condition, not an eligible MEL cost).

7.5

GRANT PARAMETERS

Grant Level / Instrument	Ceiling (GMD)	Duration
MEL Systems Development Grant	*****	6–18 months
Independent Evaluation Grant	*****	6–12 months

7.6

DISBURSEMENT SCHEDULE

Tranche	Condition / Milestone	% of Total
1	Grant agreement signed; financial management assessment passed.	40%
2	Approved mid-point progress report submitted and verified by Secretariat.	40%
3	Final report accepted; audit certificate submitted.	20%

7.7 EVALUATION RUBRIC

Criterion	What is Assessed	Weight
A. MEL gap documentation	Evidence of the current MEL gap; baseline assessment of existing systems and practices.	30%
B. MEL system design	Quality and logic of the proposed MEL system; relevance of proposed indicators to NRIF programme outcomes.	30%
C. Institutional commitment	Evidence of leadership commitment to MEL; plan to embed MEL within institutional practice beyond the grant period.	20%
D. Contribution to NRIF evidence base	Degree to which the MEL investment contributes to NRIF's portfolio-level evidence base.	20%

Minimum Merit of Proposal (MP) for funding eligibility: 7.0 out of 10. A proposal scoring zero on any single criterion is ineligible regardless of total MP. Where two proposals have the same total score, the higher score on Criterion A is the tiebreaker, followed by Criterion B.

■ WINDOW VIII — LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PROVINCIAL DEVELOPMENT

WINDOW	VIII — LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PROVINCIAL DEVELOPMENT
FOCUS	Financing decentralised research, data, and innovation priorities at LGA and provincial level, with funds flowing through Area Councils in accordance with the Local Government Act.
PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES	Urban and provincial LGAs and Area Councils across all seven regions of The Gambia.
CONSULTATION BASIS	Unanimous agreement from all urban LGA participants that funding must flow through Area Councils under the Local Government Act. Decentralised funding was the top priority at 64%. Waste management, youth employment, and local data systems were the top thematic priorities.
CYCLE 1 BUDGET CEILING	GMD 1,500,000
MAXIMUM GRANT PER AWARD	GMD 500,000
GRANT DURATION	12 to 24 months
FUNDS FLOW	All Window VIII grants are disbursed through the relevant Area Council in accordance with the Local Government Act. Applicant LGAs must include a letter of endorsement from their Area Council.

■ 8.1 OBJECTIVES

- Finance locally identified research and data priorities at LGA and provincial level.
- Support community co-design approaches that embed local knowledge in research and innovation solutions.
- Fund applied innovation addressing waste management, youth employment, and environmental challenges at community level.
- Develop local data systems and evidence capacity within LGA and Area Council administrations.

8.2

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

Urban and provincial Local Government Authorities, Area Councils, and community organisations formally partnered with an Area Council. All applicants must have a signed endorsement letter from the relevant Area Council. Applications from multi-LGA consortia spanning more than one region are encouraged.

8.3

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Applied research on local development challenges, including waste management, environmental sustainability, and community health.
- Local data systems and digital evidence platforms for community service delivery.
- Youth employment innovation pilots linked to local enterprise and skills development.
- Community co-design processes for research and innovation priorities.
- Waste management, recycling, and composting innovation directly addressing LGA-managed services.
- Knowledge-sharing and learning events connecting LGA practitioners across regions.

8.4

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Activities not endorsed by the relevant Area Council.
- Infrastructure construction beyond small-scale community facility improvement.
- Salary top-ups to LGA civil servants.
- Activities that duplicate national government programmes without demonstrable community additionality.

8.5

GRANT PARAMETERS

Grant Level / Instrument	Ceiling (GMD)	Duration
Local Research and Data Grant	500,000	12–24 months
Community Innovation Grant	300,000	12–18 months
Youth Employment Pilot Grant	200,000	6–12 months

8.6

DISBURSEMENT SCHEDULE

Tranche	Condition / Milestone	% of Total
1	Grant agreement signed; financial management assessment passed.	40%
2	Approved mid-point progress report submitted and verified by Secretariat.	40%
3	Final report accepted; audit certificate submitted.	20%

8.7

EVALUATION RUBRIC

Criterion	What is Assessed	Weight
A. Local development relevance	Degree to which the proposal addresses a documented, locally-identified priority.	30%
B. Community co-design	Quality of community participation in the design of the proposed activity.	25%
C. Area Council governance	Quality of governance arrangements through the Area Council; accountability mechanisms.	20%
D. Regional equity	Contribution to reducing development disparities between urban centres and provincial areas.	15%
E. Sustainability	Credible plan for sustaining the activity or its outputs beyond the grant period.	10%

Minimum Merit of Proposal (MP) for funding eligibility: 7.0 out of 10. A proposal scoring zero on any single criterion is ineligible regardless of total MP. Where two proposals have the same total score, the higher score on Criterion A is the tiebreaker, followed by Criterion B.

Decentralisation Principle: In Cycle 1, at least 50% of Window VIII allocations will be directed to provincial LGAs outside Greater Banjul. This target will be reported publicly in the NRIF Annual Report.

WINDOW IX — PARTNERSHIPS AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

WINDOW	IX — PARTNERSHIPS AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION
FOCUS	Facilitating cross-sector partnerships, consortium formation, and collaborative research and innovation that no single institution could achieve independently.
PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES	Consortia spanning at least two of the following sectors: universities, government agencies, civil society organisations, and private sector entities.
CONSULTATION BASIS	Fragmentation was identified as a universal constraint across all fourteen consultation sessions. Cross-sector partnership creation received 50% of non-financial support votes from urban LGAs.
CYCLE 1 BUDGET CEILING	GMD 1,000,000
MAXIMUM GRANT PER AWARD	GMD 500,000
GRANT DURATION	12 to 24 months
CONSORTIUM REQUIREMENT	Minimum of two institutions from different sectors. A lead applicant must be designated. The lead applicant is legally responsible for all grant obligations.

9.1

OBJECTIVES

- Create and formalise cross-sector research and innovation partnerships that address national development challenges.
- Support university-industry linkages that translate academic research into applied solutions.
- Fund collaborative research programmes spanning multiple institutions and disciplines.
- Build the partnership formation and consortium management capacity of eligible institutions.

9.2

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

Consortia of at least two eligible institutions from different sectors. Each consortium must include a designated lead applicant who is legally registered in The Gambia. Eligible sectors include:

higher education institutions; government ministries and sub-vented agencies; registered civil society organisations; and private sector enterprises. At least one consortium member must be a Gambian institution.

9.3

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Collaborative research projects with defined roles and contributions from each consortium member.
- University-industry research partnerships with documented applied outcomes.
- Thematic research programmes involving multiple institutions.
- Consortium formation, legal formalisation, and partnership management costs.
- Joint knowledge-sharing events, workshops, and learning activities.
- Shared data platforms and collaborative open science activities.

9.4

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Partnerships between institutions from the same sector only.

Activities that duplicate existing bilateral agreements without demonstrated additionality.

Partnerships where the lead applicant does not have a Gambian institutional presence.

Activities designed primarily to benefit a private sector partner's commercial interests rather than the public research good.

9.5

GRANT PARAMETERS

Grant Level / Instrument	Ceiling (GMD)	Duration
Consortium Research Grant	1,000,000	12–24 months
University-Industry Grant	500,000	12–24 months
Partnership Formation Grant	300,000	6–12 months

9.6

DISBURSEMENT SCHEDULE

Tranche	Condition / Milestone	% of Total
1	Grant agreement signed; financial management assessment passed.	40%
2	Approved mid-point progress report submitted and verified by Secretariat.	40%
3	Final report accepted; audit certificate submitted.	20%

9.7

EVALUATION RUBRIC

Criterion	What is Assessed	Weight
A. Partnership quality and complementarity	Genuine complementarity of partners; clear roles; documented rationale for the consortium structure.	25%
B. Collaborative research design	Quality and logic of the collaborative research or innovation plan; clarity of joint outputs.	25%
C. National development impact	Degree to which the partnership addresses a documented national development challenge.	20%
D. Sustainability of the partnership	Evidence of commitment to sustaining the partnership beyond the grant period.	15%
E. Inclusion and equity	Inclusion of provincial institutions, women-led organisations, and institutions from underrepresented sectors.	15%

Minimum Merit of Proposal (MP) for funding eligibility: 7.0 out of 10. A proposal scoring zero on any single criterion is ineligible regardless of total MP. Where two proposals have the same total score, the higher score on Criterion A is the tiebreaker, followed by Criterion B.

WINDOW X — DIASPORA AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

WINDOW	X — DIASPORA AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION
FOCUS	Enabling diaspora and international engagement through mentorship, co-financing, joint research, and institutional partnerships, with a mandatory local partner requirement.
PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES	Gambian diaspora professionals, international institutions, diplomatic partners, and joint Gambia-international research consortia.
CONSULTATION BASIS	Mentorship programmes and innovation partnerships each received five selections as the top diaspora engagement areas in both virtual consultation sessions. The local partner requirement was proposed by diaspora participants and is adopted here.
CYCLE 1 BUDGET CEILING	GMD 1,000,000
MAXIMUM GRANT PER AWARD	GMD 500,000
GRANT DURATION	12 to 24 months
LOCAL PARTNER REQUIREMENT	Every application under this window must include a Gambian institution as a partner. The Gambian institution may serve as lead or co-applicant.

10.1

OBJECTIVES

- Open concrete pathways for Gambian diaspora professionals to contribute research expertise, mentorship, and co-financing to national development priorities.
- Fund joint research partnerships between Gambian institutions and international partners on topics of shared national interest.
- Support visiting expert placements that transfer knowledge and build institutional capacity.
- Attract diaspora and international co-financing to complement NRIF funding.

10.2

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

Applications must include at least one Gambian institution as a partner. The international or diaspora partner may be: a Gambian professional working abroad; an international higher education institution; a research institute; a diaspora professional organisation; or an international development partner with a documented Gambia engagement. The Gambian partner must be legally registered and operational in The Gambia.

10.3

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Joint research projects co-led by Gambian and international or diaspora partners.
- Visiting expert placements and knowledge transfer programmes.
- Diaspora mentorship programmes, connecting Gambian researchers and innovators with diaspora professionals.
- Co-financing arrangements where the international or diaspora partner brings matched or complementary funding.
- Institutional twinning and capacity exchange programmes.
- Joint academic publications and knowledge-sharing products.

10.4

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Activities where the Gambian partner plays a nominal rather than substantive role.
- Activities that primarily benefit the international partner's research agenda rather than Gambia's development priorities.
- Diaspora remittance channels or investment mechanisms unrelated to research or innovation.
- International conference attendance without a documented research or innovation output for The Gambia.

10.5

GRANT PARAMETERS

Grant Level / Instrument	Ceiling (GMD)	Duration
Joint Research Partnership Grant	1,000,000	12–24 months
Visiting Expert Placement Grant	400,000	6–12 months
Diaspora Mentorship Grant	300,000	12 months

10.6

DISBURSEMENT SCHEDULE

Tranche	Condition / Milestone	% of Total
1	Grant agreement signed; financial management assessment passed.	40%
2	Approved mid-point progress report submitted and verified by Secretariat.	40%
3	Final report accepted; audit certificate submitted.	20%

10.7

EVALUATION RUBRIC

Criterion	What is Assessed	Weight
A. Quality of partnership	Genuine complementarity; substantive Gambian partner role; clarity of respective contributions.	25%
B. National development value	Degree to which the collaboration addresses a documented Gambian development priority.	25%
C. Knowledge and capacity transfer	Quality of the plan for transferring knowledge, skills, or resources to the Gambian partner.	20%
D. Co-financing leverage	Evidence of financial or in-kind co-contribution by the international or diaspora partner.	20%
E. Sustainability	Credible plan for sustaining the partnership and its outputs beyond the grant period.	10%

Minimum Merit of Proposal (MP) for funding eligibility: 7.0 out of 10. A proposal scoring zero on any single criterion is ineligible regardless of total MP. Where two proposals have the same total score, the higher score on Criterion A is the tiebreaker, followed by Criterion B.

TIMELINE CYCLE 1

Stage	Target Date	Responsibility
Board approval of call document	2 June 2026	NRIF Board
Call published on NRIF portal	15 June 2026 (NRIF National Launch)	Secretariat
Information sessions for applicants	Within 10 days of publication	Secretariat
Application deadline	31 July 2026	Applicants
Eligibility screening completed	7 August 2026	Secretariat
TAC evaluation and moderation	8–22 August 2026	TAC
Due diligence on shortlisted proposals	23–30 August 2026	Secretariat
TAC recommendation to Board	2 September 2026	TAC
Board approval of awards	9 September 2026	NRIF Board
Applicants notified	By 16 September 2026	Secretariat
Grant agreements executed	By 23 September 2026	Secretariat and Grantees

APPENDIX A

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

1. All applications must include the following documents. Applications missing any required document will be deemed ineligible at the screening stage without further review.
2. Completed NRIF application form (all sections).
3. Institutional registration certificate or proof of legal status.
4. Audited accounts or financial statements for the most recent financial year (for institutional applicants).
5. Conflict-of-interest declaration signed by the lead applicant.
6. Completed budget template with supporting justification.
7. Implementation plan with milestones and timeline.
8. Evidence of NAQAA accreditation (Windows III and VI; and where specified).
9. NAFTI validation letter (Window VI only).
10. Area Council endorsement letter (Window VIII only).
11. Consortium agreement and lead applicant designation letter (Windows IX and X, and multi-institutional applications).
12. Local partner confirmation letter (Window X only).
13. Ethics clearance or evidence of application for clearance (for research involving human subjects).

APPENDIX B

APPEALS AND GRIEVANCE PROCESS

- All applicants have the right to appeal an eligibility screening decision or an evaluation outcome. The following process applies:
- An applicant may request written feedback on their application from the Secretariat within 14 days of receiving notification of an ineligibility or unsuccessful evaluation decision.
- A formal written appeal must be lodged with the NRIF Executive Director within 21 days of the date of the notification letter. Appeals must specify the grounds for appeal and include supporting evidence.
- The Executive Director will convene an Independent Appeals Panel, comprising a member of the Board, a member of the TAC who was not involved in evaluating the application in question, and one independent expert. The panel will not include the evaluators of the original application.
- The Appeals Panel will issue a written decision within 30 days of receiving the formal appeal. Its decision is final.
- Appeals on grounds other than procedural irregularity or manifest scoring error will not be accepted. Disagreement with an evaluator's assessment does not constitute grounds for appeal.

NRIF is committed to transparency in all funding decisions. The names of all successful grantees, the amounts awarded, and the summary evaluation rationale for each award will be published on the NRIF digital portal within 21 days of the Board's award decision. This commitment was made to all fourteen consultation sessions and will be upheld in every funding cycle.

National Research and Innovation Fund | The Gambia

Established under the National Research and Innovation Fund Act, 2025