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2025 OCS S&T Themes

1. In 2025, the programme will fund initiatives that tackle one of the following programmatic S&T themes (*ranked in alphabetical order*):

- A. **Deterrence & Defence:** As set out most recently in the 2024 Washington Summit Declaration¹, NATO continues to enhance NATO's deterrence and defence against all threats and challenges, in all domains, and in multiple strategic directions across the Euro-Atlantic area to deny any potential adversary any possible opportunities for aggression. Still, we cannot discount the possibility of an attack against Allies' sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Initiatives supporting this S&T theme will address how Emerging and Disruptive Technologies may support NATO's deterrence and defence posture to remain credible, flexible, tailored and sustainable.

- B. **Diversity in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) careers to ensure NATO's strategic advantage:** Seeking to adapt to the ongoing fourth industrial revolution, the scientific revolution that underlies it and the biotechnology-driven future beyond, the Alliance is cognizant that this adaptation is not independent of humanity's biological, social and physical realities. Against this background, the diversity² of professionals supporting NATO's mission is key to address complex problems, provide alternative perspectives and innovative solutions for the future.

Initiatives supporting this S&T theme shall aim to enhance the diversity of professional backgrounds and schools of thought of the S&T community supporting NATO's mission and drive the development of technologies and innovations, critical for enhancing a competitive edge in defence. In addition, initiatives under this S&T theme will strive to address the integration of gender perspectives into military development and operations.

- C. **Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDT) support to Multi Domain Operations (MDO):** Technology and the science that underlies it provides the edge required by Alliance forces to respond to security, crisis response, and collective defence challenges. The nature of conflict is changing, driven in no small measure by advances in technology, tools, and scientific understanding. At its core, MDO refers to the push for NATO to orchestrate military activities across all operating domains (Maritime, Land, Air, Space, and Cyberspace) and environments. These actions are synchronized with non-military activities and enable the Alliance to create desired outcomes at the right time and place.

¹ Washington Summit Declaration, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_227678

² Diversity encompasses a wide range of other demographics, including, but not limited to: nationality, professional expertise (e.g. operators/military members, scientific staff, multidisciplinary, etc.), educational background (e.g. traditional disciplines vs social sciences), and employment sourcing (e.g. government, academia, industry), ethnicity, sexual orientation.

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Initiatives supporting this S&T Theme will strive to address how EDTs will impact military operations increasing the speed, range and scale of threats as well as their damage potential.

- D. **Resilience from an S&T perspective:** In a NATO context, resilience is the individual and collective capacity to prepare for, resist, respond to and quickly recover from shocks and disruptions, and to ensure the continuity of the Alliance's activities.

Initiatives supporting this S&T theme will provide insights and guidance on how S&T can support Allies' national and collective resilience to fulfil NATO's three core tasks and safeguard the Alliance's nations, societies, and shared values.

- E. **S&T foresight:** Anticipating the future security environment better than potential adversaries is one way the Alliance has maintained a competitive advantage. S&T foresight is a critical aspect of this preparation. It does not attempt to predict the future in detail (a difficult task at best and impossible at worst). Instead, it seeks to provide a context for anticipating technology's potential development and impact on the Alliance and to increase the potential for S&T outcomes to enhance or threaten Alliance military operations.

Initiatives supporting this S&T theme will aim to provide insights in understanding how technology will develop in the future, thereby supporting NATO R&D portfolio management, innovation activities, and capability planning.

- F. **Other:** Applicants are welcomed to submit applications of any other topics that they may judge as being important for NATO according to the [NATO S&T Strategy](#).

2. When drafting their proposal, applicants should strive to address the following questions:

- 2.1. How does the proposal contribute to the OCS S&T themes?
- 2.2. What is the scientific relevance of the proposal and what scientific objectives is it trying to accomplish?
- 2.3. How does the proposal contribute to NATO's core tasks?
- 2.4. What will be the exploitation and impact of the activity expected results?
- 2.5. What risks could make the proposal fail to deliver its expected results?

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**NATO Chief Scientist Grants
2025 Administrative and Financial Procedures**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The “**NATO Chief Scientist Grants**” programme will provide funding to support research and S&T initiatives across innovative topics. This programme is a framework developed by the NATO Science & Technology Organization (STO) Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS) to:

- **Support** the mission of the NATO Chief Scientist in the provision of Science & Technology (S&T) advice to NATO leadership.
- **Attract** talented scientists towards NATO’s S&T activities with a view to widen the NATO scientific knowledge base.
- **Promote** NATO’s S&T through activities that augment and leverage the capabilities and programmes of the Alliance in support of NATO’s objectives.
- **Facilitate** the integration of national S&T representatives and scientists in the STO, its business models and Programmes of Work.

1.1. About the Document:

This document describes the financial and administrative procedures for the management of any project or event, and sets out the general terms and conditions governing grants made under this Programme. Additional procedures, terms and conditions may also be set out in the Award Letter or in the approved Event application.

This document and application material are also available on the NATO STO website: www.sto.nato.int. Questions about the NATO Chief Scientist Grants, before an application is submitted, should be addressed to mbx.sto@hq.nato.int.

2. TYPES OF INITIATIVES

In 2025 the NATO Chief Scientist Grants funding will be directed towards two types of initiatives:

- S&T Studies on Emerging Topics
- S&T Awareness Initiatives

2.1. S&T Studies on Emerging Topics

One of the primary purposes of the STO OCS is the dissemination to NATO Allies of timely, clear, and up-to-date scientific advice and technical information related to defence activities. On a yearly basis, the NATO STO OCS will publish a list of S&T themes and will invite applicants to submit research proposals on those topics. If selected, applicants will have to produce a research report on that topic.

2.2. S&T Awareness Initiatives

In a world where NATO S&T efforts continue to make great headways in improving the security of its Allies, the STO aims for an increased awareness of its S&T prowess and for an inclusive and diverse reinforcement of its community of experts. As such, under the S&T Awareness Initiative, two type of activities are envisaged:

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- Events and projects established to raise awareness of STO's efforts and mission; and,
- Initiatives that widen the STO scientific knowledge base, attracting under-represented talent from the STEM ecosystem to deliver cutting edge S&T.

3. WHO CAN APPLY

The NATO Chief Scientist Grants programme is open to nationals from NATO Allies working for:

- I. Organizations affiliated with or part of a NATO Allied government.
- II. Organizations affiliated with research Institutes, NGOs or private or public companies etc. residing in a NATO country.

In addition, the applicants need to be resident in the NATO country where the institution they are working for is located.

Please see below the list of NATO Allies:

- **NATO Allied Nations:** Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, the Republic of North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United States.

4. LIFECYCLE OF A NATO CHIEF SCIENTIST GRANT INITIATIVE

4.1. Call for Applications

The 2025 call for applications will be open from the beginning of October 2024 to mid November 2024 and will be published on the STO Website. Please note that unsolicited applications may be allowed beyond this deadline according to special needs.

The application call will specify the following:

- I. NATO Chief Scientist Grants Programme S&T themes for current process;
- II. Deadline for application;
- III. Application Template/Form/Letter and any documentation needed to submit the application (budget template, project director form...)
- IV. Available budget;
- V. Selection criteria; and,
- VI. Any other documents as required.

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4.2. Evaluation & Selection

Between November and December 2024, the STO OCS will select the 2025 proposals. The evaluation and selection process will consist of:

- I. **Shortlisting:** After the call for applications closes the OCS will review all the proposals and will compile a list of shortlisted applicants which will be submitted to the NATO Chief Scientist.
- II. **Independent review:** The proposals will be evaluated and ranked by a panel composed from subject matter experts from NATO's S&T community.
- III. **Final Selection:** The final selection will be confirmed by the NATO Chief Scientist. All applicants will be notified by mid December 2024 regarding the outcome of the applications process. Successful applicants will advance to the Award phase (see 5.3.) and unsuccessful applicants will be retained in a reserve list and may be contacted in the future.

At all stages the decision will be based on the following criteria:

A. General problem statement:

- Alignment to OCS S&T themes;
- Scientific relevance; and,
- Military impact.

B. Economic viability & leverage effect:

- Cost;
- Experience on similar activities;
- Duplication avoidance and synergies; and
- Potential exploitation and impact of the activity expected results.

C. Risk –Evaluation

- Risk assessment.

4.3. Award

In compliance with NATO rules, no provision of goods or services can be requested, confirmed or engaged without prior financial approval from the STO Financial Controller. Therefore, suppliers of goods or services (incl. programme applicants) are authorized to commence work only after such approval has been given. This will be officially notified through the Award Letter which will be sent once the budget for 2025 has been confirmed by NATO Allies. NATO budget is usually approved by end of December.

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The Award Letter needs to be agreed and signed within 30 days of the reception by the project director to indicate acceptance of the grant. In addition, the letter will detail all project documentation, which includes (not limited to):

- *Project Director form;*
- *Final budget template;*
- *Project delivery timeline template; and,*
- *Risk assessment matrix template.*

The countersigned Award Letter, its appendices and documents included in it by reference, together with this document, form the contract between NATO on the one side and, on the other, the Project Director to whom the grant is formally made.

4.4. Timespan of Initiatives:

Proposals must span single NATO financial years. NATO financial year lasts from January 1st to December 31st.

This means that in 2025, all the deliverables encompassed under any NATO Chief Scientist Grant must be delivered before 31st December 2025.

5. FINANCE

The funding awarded for each Event is determined by NATO. The Project Proposal should clearly indicate the total value of the project, the budget requested from the NATO Chief Scientist Grants programme, and other or own contributions. The Proposal should indicate budget allocation per each activity and major milestones.

5.1. Eligible Expenses

In order to be eligible for funding, costs must be:

- I. Incurred during the duration of the Project;
- II. In line with the approved Project Proposal budget;
- III. Incurred in connection with the Project and necessary for its implementation
- IV. Identifiable and verifiable, in particular recorded in the institutions account in accordance with the accounting standards applicable in the jurisdiction of the institution;
- V. Reasonable, justified and compliant with the propriety and sound financial management principles and best practices.

In particular, the fund is meant to cover costs such as:

- ✓ Conference and events fees, including rental of conference space, exhibition areas or demonstration sites;
- ✓ Costs of services including (*but not limited to*):

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- Contracting of organizing agencies for exhibitions, conferences, workshops, including reasonable hospitality, translation and interpretation fees;
- Contracting of external experts' support;
- Development of tools or prototypes, including the related maintenance needed for the duration of the projects;
- Development of IT tools, programmes, databases, websites, etc. for use by NATO nations or coalition forces;
- ✓ Development and publishing costs for handbooks, instructions, catalogues, media materials, etc. for use by NATO nations or coalition forces; or,
- ✓ Miscellaneous expenses integral to the projects;
- ✓ Procurement of testing materials and/or consumables;
- ✓ Reimbursements of travel and subsistence expenses in compliance with NATO Travel Regulations;
- ✓ Support the conduct of events, challenges and trials, including the lease of specific test ranges and/or infrastructures;
- ✓ Studies, scientific research, experiments, tests.

5.2. Ineligible Expenditures

The following expenses are considered ineligible under the NATO Chief Scientist Grants programme:

- ✗ Expenses incurred prior to the signing of the Agreement, or after it expires;
- ✗ Gifts and luxury goods;
- ✗ Social events;
- ✗ Sub-contracts, procurement arrangements, or collaborations with private or public institutions from non-NATO nations;
- ✗ Procurement of IT and communication equipment: PC, laptops, printers, phones, etc; or,
- ✗ Procurement of facilities, furniture or vehicles.

Generally, procurement of long-lasting materiel, equipment, and devices that will last beyond project end is not permitted, unless such an expense would not have occurred without the project funded by this programme.

The lists of eligible and ineligible expenditures should be seen as illustrative, not exhaustive. Costs other than those explicitly mentioned can therefore be both eligible and ineligible for funding. The Implementing Agent shall consult with NATO Chief Scientist Grants programme team whenever there is uncertainty as to NATO's financial requirements.

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5.3. Conditions

Grantees will manage funds in accordance with the Project budget and other conditions of the Award Letter and with the financial regulations in place at the Project Director's institution.

Regarding the transferral of funds from NATO to the awardee, the following conditions will apply:

- Up to 50% of the funds can be transferred to the project director after the signature of the Award Letter.
- After the execution and review of the mid project milestone, specified at the project delivery timeline, the project director may receive an additional payment. The total funds transferred at this stage may add up to 75% of the total project budget.
 - This mid-project milestone will be communicated by the awardee to NATO and will be reviewed by the OCS which will provide a technical assessment.
- The remaining 25% **or balance of actual costs if lower than the proposed budget**, will be transferred to the project director after the delivery and acceptance of the project.

Should NATO, in its sole discretion, require any additional conditions or modifications to these institutional rules, these will be discussed with applicants and included in the Award Letter or communicated to the project directors in writing.

In the event of any discrepancy between the rules imposed by NATO (whether by way of this document, the Award Letter, or otherwise) and the financial rules of the institution, the former take precedence.

NATO funds must be used only for direct specific costs reflected in the budget. Any misuse of funds or material non-compliance with grant conditions may lead to the immediate termination of the grant and to legal action.

6. VISUAL IDENTITY GUIDELINES

All publications, presentations, and other externally distributed materials stemming from the grant shall comply with the STO Visual Identity Guidelines (provided to the Project Director), and shall credit NATO support with the following or a substantially comparable sentence: "This activity was sponsored by the NATO Science & Technology Organization Office of the Chief Scientist under grant id. [OCSWP3XXXX]."

7. LEGAL CONDITIONS

Grants under the NATO Chief Scientist Grants Programme are unilateral grants, made at the sole discretion of NATO. NATO may decline to make any grant or to withhold any grant payment at its sole discretion, in whole or in part. The most recent revision of this file and its required documentation, along with the signed Award Letter, and any documents annexed to it or incorporated in it by reference, constitute the entire terms and conditions of grants

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under the NATO Chief Scientist Grants Programme. In the event of inconsistencies among these documents, the signed Award Letter and its annexes take priority over this document.

Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, in the event of any default by a Grant Recipient, or if a Grant Recipient fails to comply with any of the terms and conditions set out in the document, its required documentation or the Award Letter and its annexes, other written communications from NATO, or the financial regulations in place at the Project Director's institution, NATO may at its sole discretion suspend (whether in whole or in part) the grant and the payment of any monies, or may terminate the grant. In such circumstance, NATO may at its sole discretion require reimbursement of some or all unexpended monies, or expended monies, and Grant Recipients are jointly and severally liable for repayment of such monies.

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