

GUIDELINE FOR NEF RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAMME

The NEF Research Grant Programme financially supports academic and scientific research aimed at understanding nature, ecosystems, and biodiversity and contributing to conservation actions based on scientific data in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The programme is designed to enhance the research capability of young researchers in that region, and applicants are limited to individual researchers who independently design and implement their research projects, not to large-scale or institutional projects. We expect our applicants to take this opportunity to improve their skills and knowledge and enrich their experience through their research work.

Please note that research projects under this programme must be carried out in one of NEF's target countries. Applicants who are studying or working outside the target countries are not eligible for this programme.

1. GRANT SIZE AND DURATION

The maximum grant size in this programme is one million (1,000,000) Japanese yen per project, with a maximum duration of two years.

2. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants and their proposed research project must meet **ALL** the requirements listed below.

2.1 Eligible applicants

Note: This programme is intended for researchers and doctoral students who are based in and conduct research in one of NEF's target countries.

An applicant must:

- be a national of developing country in the Asia-Pacific region (see 3. *TARGET COUNTRIES AND REGIONS* below);
- be either of the following:
 - ① a researcher with at least three (3) years of research experience and sufficient achievement in their field of study, working full-time at a research institution or relevant organisation in one of the countries listed in 3. *TARGET COUNTRIES AND REGIONS* below, **OR**
 - ② a full-time doctoral student enrolled at a research institution in one of the countries listed in 3. *TARGET COUNTRIES AND REGIONS* below, and conducting research in that country;
- have research experience and skills sufficient to conduct and manage the proposed research project;
- be able to communicate in English;
- not have another application to the NEF;
- not have another ongoing NEF-funded project at the time of application submission; **AND**
- not have had another NEF-funded project for the past two years.

2.2 Eligible research projects

Only individual research projects are eligible under this programme. Team or group projects are not supported.

A proposed research project must:

- be scientific research contributing to the NATURE CONSERVATION of the country where the applicant currently works or studies;
- focus primarily on LIVING ORGANISMS;
- be carried out in the country where the applicant currently works or studies;
- involve fieldwork for data collection;
- be the applicant's OWN research work (team project is ineligible.);
- achieve its objective(s) and submit interim and/or final reports within a scheduled project period of not less than one (1) year and not more than two (2) years; **AND**
- be exclusively funded by the NEF Research Grant Programme.

Applicants are encouraged to self-check the examples of supported and declined projects provided below to confirm that their research focus aligns with NEF's scope. The examples below are provided solely to help applicants self-assess topical alignment; they are not exhaustive.

Examples of the research fields SUPPORTED in the past:

- ecology, taxonomy, distribution, and current status of wildlife;
- biodiversity (e.g., species diversity, genetic diversity, ecosystem diversity);
- wild flora and fauna;
- gathering information on threatened species and for ecosystem recovery;
- relationships between nature and humans (e.g., mutual interference, sustainable use of natural resources, wildlife management);
- economic valuation of the natural environment for conservation action; etc.

Examples of the projects DECLINED in the past:

- projects lacking the viewpoint of nature conservation;
- projects aiming to develop agricultural, forestry, and/or fisheries industries;
- projects focusing on environmental pollution problems, public health, and climate change economics;
- projects focusing mainly on public awareness activities;
- projects based solely on interview results and/or reference;
- projects that require a large group of researchers rather than an individual researcher; etc.

A list of awarded projects is available at our website (<https://nagaofoundation.or.jp/e/research/awarded/index.html>) in an Excel file. Please check the list to understand NEF's interest before preparing your application.

3. TARGET COUNTRIES AND REGIONS

The target countries in the Asia-Pacific region include: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri

Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Vietnam.

Please note that even if a country or region is listed above, NEF may suspend or exclude support for certain countries or regions due to operational or safety considerations. Eligibility will be determined at the time of application, and such decisions may be made without prior notice.

4. ELIGIBLE AND INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

4.1 Eligible expenses

- expendables necessary for field surveys and analysis (e.g., sampling gear, reagent);
- local travel expenses for the field trips (e.g., accommodation, food, transportation);
- reference materials (e.g., articles, books);
- labour costs necessary for the proposed research (e.g., local guides/porters, field assistants); and
- other expenses only when the NEF Secretariat approves.

4.2 Ineligible expenses

- salaries and tuition for the applicant, their assistants, and others involved in the research;
- renovation and installation of the institution's facilities;
- general-purpose equipment, including equipment that is widely available through the applicant's institution, such as personal computers, computer software and accessories, analytical equipment, microscopes, projectors, printers, GPS devices, digital cameras, vehicles, motorbikes. (Exceptions may be made only when the applicant clearly justifies the necessity of purchasing brand-new equipment, subjects to approval by the NEF Secretariat);
- honoraria, consultation fees, and travel expenses paid to advisors and experts;
- participation fees to attend national and international workshops, conferences, and training;
- international travel expenses;
- expenses for disseminating research results/findings;
- publication costs
(NEF offers financial support to publish research findings in different programmes after the completion of the proposed research project. If interested, please see **Grant for Submission/Publication Fees** for submitting a scientific paper or **Publication Programme** for printing a scientific book);
- expenses for past activities already completed;
- general administrative expenses and overheads; etc.

5. OBLIGATIONS OF GRANT RECIPIENTS

If granted, recipients should:

- conduct the approved research project following ethical standards as a responsible scientist;
- submit a detailed progress report, with photographs taken and a financial report, within one year after implementation of the approved research project; and
- submit a detailed final report, with photographs taken and a financial report, upon completion of the approved research project.

6. HOW TO APPLY

6.1 Understand the NEF Research Grant Programme

Please read this guideline, “Guideline for NEF Research Grant Programme,” to understand the programme. When filling out the application form, follow the instructions provided. Both the guideline and the forms of application documents are available on our website (<https://www.nagaofoundation.or.jp/e/research/research.html>).

6.2 What to submit

Applicants are required to submit the five (5) documents below:

- two (2) copies of a completed **Application form**, one in MS Word and the other in PDF (The PDF version must include signatures from the applicant and his/her institutional head or supervisor for confirmation purposes.);
- a filled **Budget and timetable** in Excel;
- a filled **Applicant’s background**; and
- one (1) **Recommendation letter**.

If desired, the following items are acceptable as supplementary materials: electronic map images with captions, less than 700 KB in file size; and one (1) scientific paper published in a peer-reviewed journal and listed under ‘4. Selected publications’ of Applicant’s background. Other items will be discarded.

Before submission, please ensure that all required documents are complete. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

6.3 Where to submit

The required five (5) documents mentioned in 6.2 should be submitted to the NEF Secretariat by e-mail (secretariat@nagaofoundation.or.jp).

6.4 Application deadlines

Application deadlines for the year 2026 are twice:

- **15 April 2026 at 10:00 AM (Japan Standard Time, UTC+9)** for research projects **starting from/after August 2026**; and
- **14 October 2026 at 10:00 AM (Japan Standard Time, UTC+9)** for research projects **starting from/after February 2027**.

All required documents mentioned in 6.2 must reach the NEF Secretariat by the deadline. Incomplete application documents or delayed submissions, even one minute after the deadline, will not be accepted.

7. EVALUATION/SELECTION

The NEF Secretariat will check applications to ensure all the requirements are fulfilled. Only qualified applications will be examined by the NEF Selection Committee based on the following criteria:

- relevance and importance to nature conservation;
- clearness of objectives and research questions/hypotheses;

- originality and quality of the proposed research;
- appropriateness and concreteness of methodology to achieve objectives and answer research questions/hypotheses;
- feasibility of the research design and schedule;
- reasonableness of the budget;
- applicant's past achievements and experience in related research; and
- recommender's statement on the applicant and the proposed research project.

Please note that NEF Secretariat does not provide pre-screening or advisory opinions on proposed topics via e-mail. Applicants should decide eligibility based on this guideline and the examples listed herein.

8. SCREENING FOR PLAGIARISM

Please note that applications will be screened for plagiarism using the iThenticate plagiarism detection system during the selection process. The NEF Secretariat will reject applications that involve plagiarism or self-plagiarism.

9. RESULT ANNOUNCEMENT AND REMITTANCE

Results will be announced on our website within three (3) months after each deadline. Successful applicants will receive a letter of approval, report instructions, and account information form by e-mail. Fund remittance will be made as soon as the account information form reaches the NEF Secretariat.

Due to the high volume of applications received, the Secretariat will only contact the successful applicants and those who receive feedback from the Selection Committee. Thank you for your understanding.

This grant opportunity is designed for young researchers to enrich themselves as a scientist through their research projects. NEF expects all applicants/recipients to understand and follow ethical standards in science as professional scientists. Any improper conduct, such as improper grant spending, fraudulent grant acquisition, or research misconduct (fabrication, falsification, plagiarism), is not acceptable and subject to penalties.

If you have any questions or concerns about our programmes, please feel free to contact the NEF Secretariat by e-mail (secretariat@nagaofoundation.or.jp).