

Introduction to the Application for Intergovernmental International and Strategic Key Projects under the National Key R&D Program



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■ Intergovernmental International Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation

Positioning: International science & technology collaboration projects under bilateral and multilateral government agreements.

Duration: 2–3 years

Project Types:

- Joint research projects
- Young talent exchange and cultivation projects

■ Strategic Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation

Positioning: Promote the innovation-driven development strategy and the Belt and Road Initiative, leveraging the guiding role of S&T innovation. Focus on major international cooperation to facilitate sharing of innovation resources. Strengthen S&T cooperation to address global challenges and support the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Duration: 2–3 years

Project Types:

- Joint R&D and Demonstration Projects
- Cooperation within Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan
- Personnel Exchange

■ Pay attention to the release date of the guidelines and the application period (usually three rounds per year, with each round open for about 40 days).

- Round 1: The notice and guidelines are usually released in October or November of the previous year, with applications starting in November.
- Round 2: Released in March or April of the current year, with applications starting in May.
- Round 3: Released in June or July of the current year, with applications starting in July.

Available on the official website. Applicants need to register with their university' s research office, login account, and complete application. https://service2.most.gov.cn/sbzn_d/



Pay attention to the deadline and prepare in advance. Allow extra time to avoid last-minute submission, as the university will also conduct a formal review

Period/round	Start time	End time
1	2024-11-15 08:00	2024-12-26 16:00
2	2025-05-06 08:00	2025-06-23 16:00
3	2025-07-14 08:00	2025-08-21 08:00

■ Get familiar with the main countries and frequency of intergovernmental project cooperation, and check whether joint applications are required.

	Americas	Europe							
	United States	Germany	Finland	Denmark	Belgium	Malta	Spain	European Union	
Guideline Frequency	2021-2023	2021-2023	Annual	2020-2021	Biennial	Annual	Annual	2020-2024	
Sole/Joint Application	Sole Application	Joint Application	Joint Application	Joint Application					
	Asia					Shanghai Cooperation Organization			
	Japan	South Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Malaysia	Uzbekistan	Belarus	Russia	
Guideline Frequency	Irregular	Annual	Irregular	2025	Irregular	Irregular	Irregular	Biennial	
Sole/Joint Application	Join Application	Joint Application	Joint Application	Joint Application					

Joint applications involve greater uncertainty and require more preparation and communication

■ Requirements for Applicant

- Project (or research) leaders must hold **a senior professional title or a doctoral degree**, and be **no older than 60 years** of age (as of January 1). At least six months should be devoted to the project per year. The applicant should be the main proposer of the research plan and actually lead the research. Applicants must have no serious research misconduct records and no relevant social credit blacklist entries.
- Civil servants from central and local government agencies at all levels, as well as experts involved in the formulation of key program implementation plans or the **current year project guidelines**, are **not eligible to apply for the project (or research)**.
- Foreign and Hong Kong, Macao, or Taiwan scientists may serve as project leaders. For full-time appointments, a valid full-time employment certificate from a mainland institution is required. For part-time appointments, valid employment certificates from both institutions must be provided and submitted

■ Requirements for Applicant Institution

- The lead applicant institution and participating institutions should be research institutes, universities, or enterprises registered in mainland China (including Hong Kong and Macao from 2025), with independent legal status and a registration date of at least one year prior (based on the official announcement date). **Government agencies are not eligible to participate**
- **Each project must be submitted through a single recommending institution. Multiple or duplicate submissions are strictly prohibited.**
- **Possible funding requirements: If enterprises participate in the project, they should provide matching funds at least equal to the government funding received.**

Application Guidelines

- Project number limits are largely consistent each year, but the formal review criteria must be checked carefully.

Intergovernmental International Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation, the budget for the central government special fund≤4 million RMB:

- Project Leader:
 - **Served as leader for submitted or ongoing projects** under Science and Technology Innovation 2030 – Major Projects; Key Subprograms of Intergovernmental International Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation; and Strategic Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation projects for Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan with central government special fund budgets of \leq 4 million RMB.
 - **Served as a key project member in two submitted or ongoing projects** under Science and Technology Innovation 2030-Major Projects and the key subprograms of Intergovernmental International Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation.
- Key Project Member:
 - **Served as project leader for ongoing projects** under Science and Technology Innovation 2030 – Major Projects and the National Key R&D Program.
 - **Served as project (research) leader or a key project member in a total of two submitted or ongoing projects** under Science and Technology Innovation 2030-Major Projects and the key subprograms of Intergovernmental International Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation.
 - **Served as a key project member in submitted or ongoing Intergovernmental International Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation and Strategic Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation key projects for Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan, with central government special fund budgets \leq 4 million RMB.**

- Project number limits are largely consistent each year, but the formal review criteria must be checked carefully.

Intergovernmental International Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation, the budget for the central government special fund > 4 million RMB:

- Project Leader: **Excluding Strategic Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation key projects for Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan with central government special fund budgets of \leq 4 million RMB**
- Served as project (research) leader for submitted or ongoing projects under Science and Technology Innovation 2030 – Major Projects and the National Key R&D Program.
- Served as a key project member in a total of **two** submitted or ongoing projects under Science and Technology Innovation 2030-Major Projects and the National Key R&D Program.
- Key Project Member:
- served as project leader for ongoing projects under Science and Technology Innovation 2030 – Major Projects and the National Key R&D Program.
- Served as project (research) leader and as a key project member in a total of **two** submitted or ongoing projects under Science and Technology Innovation 2030 – Major Projects and the National Key R&D Program (**Excluding Strategic Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation key projects for Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan with central government special fund budgets of \leq 4 million RMB**).

Personnel exchange projects under the Intergovernmental and Strategic Science and Technology Innovation key programs are not counted toward the above limits.

■ Requirements for Foreign Collaborating Institutions and Personnel

- The **foreign** project leader **should not** submit multiple applications with different domestic institutions on the same research direction and technical route. The total number of projects in which the foreign project leader serves as a leader, including submitted and ongoing projects, must not exceed **two**.
- **Foreign scientists employed in mainland China who have participated in ongoing projects (research) under the National Key R&D Program or Science and Technology Innovation 2030 – Major Projects may not participate as foreign personnel in new applications.**
- The lead applicant institution must sign a collaboration agreement with the foreign partner institution for the current project application. The content and mode of cooperation should comply with the laws, regulations, and research ethics requirements of China and the countries (regions, or international organizations) where the partner institutions are located. For any collaborative activities that require prior review and approval, the applicant institution must complete the relevant domestic review and approval procedures in accordance with laws and regulations. The project can only be officially approved once all necessary procedures have been properly completed.

Different projects may impose stricter requirements on foreign partner institutions and personnel.
Applicants should carefully review the guidelines and formal review criteria

- Two key reference documents are : *Interim Measures for the Administration of the National Key R&D Program* , *Measures for Administration of Funds for the National Key Research and Development Projects*.
- Start preparing the application early. Emphasize practical applications and international impact in the proposal. High-level papers are not necessary, with more emphasis placed on substantive exchange.
- Identify suitable target countries and partner institutions early, taking into account research capabilities and complementarity of research content, and communicate in advance to form a team. The partner institution should have distinctive expertise relevant to the research problem. Highlight its advantages and demonstrating the necessity of the collaboration.
- Carry out substantive international collaboration and highlight its outcomes. Meaningful exchanges and visits are essential for international cooperation projects.
- The prior collaboration foundation of the application team can be highlighted. For example, joint publications, meetings held, and personnel exchanges or visits.

- Strengthen the construction of joint laboratories/platforms under the SCO alliance framework.
- Focus on areas of mutual interest, including energy, digital economy, and low-carbon development.
- Establish a long-term and stable cooperation mechanism, hold meetings, develop standards, and facilitate exchanges and visits, which are conducive to the implementation of project collaborations.

**Leveraging international cooperation as a bridge
and strategic tasks as a driver,
we aim to promote the joint development and sharing of
research outcomes.**