



## RESEARCH FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AND ADVANCEMENT

RASTA Competitive Grants Program for Policy-oriented Research

[www.pide.org.pk/rasta](http://www.pide.org.pk/rasta)

The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) has launched a multi-year competitive grants program for policy-oriented research in Pakistan titled '*Research for Social Transformation and Advancement*' (RASTA) under the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) of the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, the Government of Pakistan.

RASTA's mission is to develop a high-quality research network of academia and think tanks across Pakistan producing high-quality, evidence-based policy research to inform Pakistan's public policy process. RASTA will build on an earlier Competitive Grants Proposal of the Planning Commission of Pakistan 2011-14. See [Haque and Orden \(2018\)](#) for a summary.

The **objectives** of RASTA program are to:

- a) Reduce research-policy gap by stimulating economic and social science research and debate across Pakistan.
- b) Build a network to stimulate internally defined and produced policy-relevant research within a context of crowd-sourced ideas.
- c) Provide a knowledge-sharing/generating platform where different actors can present and share evidence-based research to inform decision-making in the government.
- d) Revisit the future policy agenda in line with the evidence produced in this program.
- e) Build capacity and improve policymaking and implementation by involving and engaging local universities, think tanks, policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders.

With these objectives, the program seeks to develop local thought communities and generate knowledge. Substantial outputs will be completed in important areas of public policy that will produce insightful research and facilitate goals that the Government wants to achieve according to its vision.

# FIRST CALL FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS

<https://pide.org.pk/rasta/1st-call-for-research-proposals/>

RASTA invites first round of research proposals on the following broader themes allowing maximum leeway in proposing projects:

- Growth and Development
- Market and Regulations
- Cities Governance and Development
- Persisting Energy Problems of Pakistan
- Governance, Public Policy Making, and Aid Dependence

Proposals are sought for research that identifies key policy issues and public policy decisions in Pakistan; assesses outcomes of those decisions empirically; evaluates constraints to policy reform; and examines alternative policy recommendations to enhance their impact. The proposal submission is due by **November 20, 2020**, midnight Pakistan Standard Time (PST).

## GRANTS DESCRIPTION

RASTA will issue multiple 'Calls for Research Proposals.' Submissions will be reviewed, and progress of award studies will be closely monitored by the 'Research Advisory Committee' (RAC) of RASTA. Following are the broad principals of the program:

1. The maximum duration to complete a project will be 12 months.
2. The maximum grant available for a project is 4.0 million.
3. Proposals will be judged by the choice of the problem and expected knowledge outcomes for countrywide or local development.
4. All data collected and work produced under RASTA will have to be submitted for authenticity checks.
5. Multiple conferences/workshops will be organized allowing all reviewers, award winners and sector specialists to see progress and develop network learning.
6. Evaluation of government initiatives, policies and processes, and assessment of institutions and their performance in broader socio-economic and development context are encouraged.
7. Female applicants, students and researchers from backward areas of Pakistan are encouraged to participate in the RASTA program.

**Application Qualifications:** Research proposals are solicited from faculty members and staff at national and provincial universities and research institutes within Pakistan. Research proposals are also solicited from scholars at foreign universities and research institutes with interest in the economic growth and policy issues of Pakistan. Research proposals are encouraged from Pakistani graduate students enrolled in PhD and thesis-based MS/MPhil degree programs at Pakistani and foreign universities, or from faculty members to support the research of these students.

Proposals from each of the three groups of applicants will be evaluated in separate competitive categories. Outstanding proposals from each category are anticipated to be funded. Proposals may be submitted by individual applicants or by teams of up to four co-investigators. Collaborative proposals by teams based at multiple institutions are encouraged.

## **APPLICATION GUIDELINES**

**Elements of the Grant Application:** English is the language to be used in the RASTA competitive grants program. Applications must include the following:

1. RASTA Application Cover Sheet (Download [here](#))
2. Title Page, Abstract (up to 250 words), and Table of Contents.
3. Description of the proposed research including a problem statement; review of relevant existing studies; research questions/hypotheses maintained and to be tested; proposed technical approach to the research; sources of data; potential pitfalls facing the analysis; anticipated uses of the results; policy implications and potential beneficiaries; and list of references. This body of the proposal must not exceed 12 single-spaced pages with size 12 font size, using Times New Roman/Cambria font.
4. For applicants who are faculty members and research staff, both national and foreign, a brief curriculum vitae (1-3 pages) for each Principal Investigator.
5. For applications for which a substantial portion of requested funds will be used to support a graduate student, (a) an official transcript of graduate coursework completed and list of planned additional course enrolment, and (b) a letter of recommendation from the applicant's principal advisor (to maintain confidentiality, the letter of recommendation may be submitted to RASTA separately from the other application materials).
6. Timeline for achieving each phase of the research; insert as an Annexure with the research proposal.
7. Detailed budget (financial proposal) indicating proposed expenditures and a brief explanation of each cost. The budget may include such items as direct salary for Principal Investigators; cost towards research assistants, data acquisition or collection including field surveys; and travel and related costs. No equipment or hardware will be financed by the project. The budget explanation should indicate any additional funding available or expected to be received in support of the proposed research.

**Submission Process and Deadline:** Applications (in pdf) must be submitted electronically to [rasta@pide.org.pk](mailto:rasta@pide.org.pk) Complete applications will be acknowledged by return email within 14 days of submission. There is no need to submit a hardcopy of the application.

The deadline for applications submission is **November 20, 2020** by midnight Pakistan Standard Time (PST). Incomplete applications and applications received after this deadline will not be considered.

## PROCEDURE OF COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM

**Selection Criteria and Process:** All complete grant applications will be reviewed by a scholarly review panel comprised of members of the Research Advisory Committee (RAC). Proposals will be evaluated based on (i) the importance of the topic and relevance to the given research themes; (ii) cohesion and creativity of the proposed research; (iii) research design and technical feasibility of the proposed research approach and analysis; (iv) value of expected research outcomes for public policy; and (v) qualifications of the Principal Investigator(s) for undertaking the proposed study. Equal weight will be given to each criterion. Top-ranked proposals will be invited for oral presentation (in person or by video) before the review panel in January 2021. Selection decision and grant awards will be announced by January 31, 2021.

**Disbursement of Funds:** Disbursement of funds to successful grant applicants will occur in three tranches: (i) first upon selection of the proposal for an award; (ii) second upon acceptance by the review panel of an interim research report; and (iii) third and final upon acceptance by the review panel of the project's final research report.

## PRE-SUBMISSION ENGAGEMENTS

For potential applicants, RASTA is organizing two Webinars and one Workshop to provide guidance before the submission deadline. In the RASTA Webinars, a panel of experts will guide potential applicants about the RASTA's objectives, program design, application procedure, and review process. In the RASTA Workshop, potential applicants will learn about 'Writing a Good Proposal'. Following are the dates for these events:

1 <sup>st</sup> RASTA Webinar	Wednesday, October 28, 2020
RASTA Workshop	Wednesday, November 4, 2020
2 <sup>nd</sup> RASTA Webinar	Wednesday, November 11, 2020

## EXPECTED OUTPUTS AND RESEARCH DISSEMINATION

RASTA grant recipients are expected to produce a research article or monograph of international peer-reviewed publication quality. Interim and final reports submitted to the review panel for approval of grant fund disbursements are expected to be intermediate products leading to this final published output as **RASTA Working Paper**. The RAC may also ask the grant recipient to produce one or two **RASTA Policy Briefs** for wider research dissemination.

The RASTA program will organise bi-annual research conferences/workshops. RASTA grant recipients will be expected make two presentations of their work: an initial presentation corresponding to their interim research report and a final presentation corresponding to their final research report. Members of the RAC and other invitees will participate in these workshops.

## RASTA PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

<https://pide.org.pk/rasta/rasta-program-management/>

### Project Management Team

The RASTA competitive grants program is managed by the Project Management Team (PMT) at PIDE, Islamabad. The RASTA PMT manages all program activities under the leadership of Dr. Nadeem Ul Haque, Vice Chancellor, PIDE Islamabad. The PMT, stationed at an independent Project Management Unit, is responsible for the administration of grant selection procedure made by the scholarly review panel, disbursement of funds based on the fulfilment of the grant requirements by recipients, and other operational aspects of the program.

### Research Advisory Committee

The RASTA is guided by a scholarly Research Advisory Committee, chaired by Dr. Nadeem Ul Haque, Vice Chancellor, PIDE Islamabad. The members of the RAC are well-reputed national and international researchers, academics, practitioners, international economic development scholars, and senior federal and provincial government officials. The role of RAC is critical from the call for applications stage to final submission of the research report. Each member of RAC will critically review research proposals, participate in the decision to award funds, monitor the progress, and mentor some awarded research studies during the course.

## RASTA KNOWLEDGE HUB

<https://pide.org.pk/rasta/rasta-knowledge-hub/>

Visit RASTA Knowledge Hub to find out the research produced and published through its earlier PSSP Competitive Grants Program. RASTA Working Papers and RASTA Policy Briefs will be published here.

## RASTA UPDATES & CONTACT

For queries and/or correspondence related to the RASTA Competitive Grants Program, write to [rasta@pide.org.pk](mailto:rasta@pide.org.pk). For latest updates, follow [@RASTA\\_PIDE](https://twitter.com/RASTA_PIDE) on Twitter.

### RASTA Project Management Unit

Pakistan Institute of Development Economics  
Quaid i Azam University Campus, P.O. Box 1091,  
Islamabad 44000, PAKISTAN.  
Email: [rasta@pide.org.pk](mailto:rasta@pide.org.pk)  
URL: [www.pide.org.pk/rasta](http://www.pide.org.pk/rasta)