BRICS STI Framework Programme
Pilot STI Flagship Projects Call 2026

Call is open until June 16, 2026. 15:00 UTC+3 (Moscow time)

I. General Description

I-1. Joint Funding of Multilateral Research & Development Cooperation

The BRICS STI Framework Programme aims to promote research, development and innovation in the main areas of cooperation among the institutions in the consortia which consist of partners from BRICS countries.

As one of the BRICS STI Framework Programme special actions research funding organizations from the BRICS countries have agreed to jointly establish a new call for flagship projects: **BRICS STI Framework Programme Pilot STI Flagship Projects Call 2026**.

The following BRICS STI Framework Programme Member Organizations are participating in the call as national funding organizations:

Brazil:
National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq).
China:
Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST).
Egypt:
Science, Technology & Innovation Funding Authority (STDF).
Iran:
Iran National Science Foundation (INSF).

Russia:
Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MSHE).
South Africa:
National Research Foundation (NRF).

I-2. Aim of the Joint Call

The BRICS STI Framework Programme aims to support research and development projects that are of strategic importance to BRICS member states. BRICS STI Flagship Projects should focus on global challenges, be of mission oriented approach and address common challenges of the BRICS countries. BRICS STI Flagship Projects should lead to a strong impact, whether it will be a technological advancement, societal or scientific impact. BRICS STI Flagship Projects aim at the horizontal and/or vertical integration of the value chain and thus at the technological feasibility of systems solutions with a long-term potential for growth. BRICS STI Flagship Projects serve to strengthen an STI sector or branch or to generate model solutions to important challenges faced by society.

BRICS STI Flagship Projects are inter-disciplinary in scope, led by accomplished scientists (and related personnel) from BRICS countries, and preferably have begun to generate high impact results.

The Pilot BRICS STI Framework Programme Flagship Projects Call 2026 covers the following three thematic topics:

1. Digital Earth.

BRICS countries in particular suffer from weather and climate extremes, reliable prediction of which is of vital importance for sustainable development of BRICS societies, especially in highly urbanized areas. The project should target long-term partnership between BRICS countries in developing national cutting-edge Earth system digital twins in order to minimize the hazardous impacts of extremes on natural economies and society. Such partnership should base on federated (distributed) approach, providing mutual beneficiation and growing national capacities in indigenous development of prediction tools.
Combination of advanced physics-based weather/climate forecast technologies and artificial intelligence is a cutting-edge paradigm for improvement of natural extremes prediction, and should be followed in the project. The flagship project should aim to enhance the predictive capabilities of national systems by interchange of methods, programming codes, data and expertise between BRICS partners via common R&D ecosystems in order to improve each country’s forecast technological lines. The differences

between current national technologies should be systematically treated as complementaries, where any country will be able to provide the “bricks” to another partner’s system. The project should adopt the innovative coupling of Earth system models and the models of anthropogenic systems in order to explicitly reproduce the socio-economic impacts of weather/climate extremes and possible feedbacks between natural and human systems. The priority extremes include precipitation, floods, droughts, wildfires, air quality and meteorological comfort with focus on largest megacities of BRICS countries. The forecast products and operational services are to meet the key demands of each country’s citizens, stakeholders and governments. The complementary backgrounds of projects teams should ensure the competence transfer between partners to ease the solution of country-specific problems of environmental prediction.

The project outcomes should directly contribute to appropriate action and timely warnings to the community, stakeholders and governments.

The provision of prediction products and services adapted to demands of country-specific consumers should ensure a direct positive economic effect. The technologies to be created in the project should be integrated with the information dissemination systems for quick dispatch of information to disaster response units. Project should end up with new research infrastructure for scientists from BRICS countries dealing with fundamental and operational problems of Earth system predictions.

This will foster the resilience of urban infrastructure and landscapes and mitigate unfavorable climate change and natural disasters across all countries. Apart from scientific and technological output of the project, coordinated training courses will be organized to teach students, scientists and operational forecasters the new models and techniques developed in the project; this will enhance the national human capacities in indigenously developing and operating the cutting-edge physical and AI prediction tools.

2. Psycho-molecular tools.

Brain health in BRICS nations is increasingly challenged by socioeconomic pressures, chronic stress, genetic predisposition, substance abuse, rapid technological change, and rising life expectancy. If left untreated, mental illness can cause unprecedented suffering, especially in densely populated urban areas, and, by the end of this decade, may cost the BRICS economies trillions of USD annually.

Whereas physical-health assessment has become largely data driven, integrating structural, biochemical, and physiological markers with AI-enhanced analytics, mental- and cognitive-health evaluation still depends almost exclusively on face-to-face consultations. As stress and information overload intensify across BRICS populations, the incidence of psychiatric and cognitive disorders is climbing sharply.

Objective, scalable diagnostic and monitoring tools are therefore urgently needed, both in clinical settings and in everyday life.

This flagship project seeks to create an economically sustainable, scalable toolkit for the objective assessment and longitudinal monitoring of mental and cognitive health. The toolkit will combine molecular and biochemical markers with behavioural data and advanced analytics to enable early, accurate detection of mental disorders, cognitive decline, and other psychiatric conditions, thereby supporting clinicians in diagnosis and treatment selection.

Suggested key requirements: Harmonised, country-specific data collection and analysis under common project-developed protocols, followed by centralized performance evaluation.

Open interchange of methods, software, research protocols, and expertise through a shared RD ecosystem, bolstering each nation's predictive capacity in mental health.

Complementary team competencies across countries to facilitate mutual technology transfer and address country-specific diagnostic challenges.

By uniting the complementary strengths of BRICS partners, this flagship project is expected to accelerate the development of next-generation psycho-molecular tools and significantly improve mental-health outcomes throughout the BRICS member states.

3. <u>BRICS Intelligent Telescope and Data Network.</u>

The flagship scientific programme should establish a network of astronomical telescopes—some already operational—supported by an intelligent data infrastructure that enables advanced research. This network will leverage existing and planned telescopes and computing facilities within BRICS countries, and will take advantage of access to other multi-wavelength, space- and ground-based facilities utilized by BRICS partners.

The initiative should focus on two main areas:

- Advancing wide-field, multi-wavelength imaging sky surveys and the detection and study of transient and time-variable phenomena in the universe — a core pillar of modern astrophysics — across BRICS nations.
- Developing technical solutions to the immense Big Data and High-Performance Computing challenges posed by global networks of transient detectors and imaging surveys, including participation in world-leading projects like the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) and the Rubin Observatory's Legacy Survey of Space and Time (LSST), in which many BRICS countries are actively engaged.

With their strategic global distribution, BRICS countries are well positioned to take the lead in this dynamic and rapidly advancing research area. Future plans include the creation of a

global network of optical telescopes capable of near-continuous all-sky monitoring on sub-hour timescales—greatly enhancing our ability to observe and understand a dynamic cosmos.

The project is also expected to drive innovation in both instrumentation and big data science, with collaborative teams across BRICS leading national and cross-national data innovation efforts. The initiative should engage both academia and industry from each partner country, with a focus on developing technologies central to the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

A comprehensive human capital development component will foster a new generation of data-literate scientists and engineers in BRICS countries, strengthening the scientific community across the BRICS countries. Cross-disciplinary collaboration and strong industry partnerships will be central to the initiative, accelerating technological spin-offs and promoting science for sustainable development.

I-3. Invitation for Proposals and Prospective Applicants

The BRICS STI Framework Programme Member Organizations shall invite applicants from their countries to identify potential partners in at least three other BRICS countries and to jointly prepare proposals for collaborative R&D projects in the three thematic topics of the call. A total of at least four countries should be represented by partners involved in the project's implementation.

Applicants are requested to submit inter-disciplinary in scope proposals for BRICS STI Flagship projects which correspond to the following core elements:

- Clear specification of a long-term mission with a research agenda comprising short and intermediate goals to realize a common vision;
- A track record of high-impact scientific contributions and strong scientific leadership and excellence;
- Inter-disciplinary approach, drawing in scientists from at least two fields of science and related personnel from a range of different disciplines and sectors, including non-academia, to the value of the projects.

All applicants must fulfil their respective national eligibility rules for research grant applications (please refer to the National Annex document and consult with national research funding organization participating in the call).

I-4. Financial Support

The participating funding organizations plan to support collaborative activities including

exchange of researchers from the participating counterpart countries. Conditions of support will vary by country and respective national funding organizations' approaches with a common rule that each participating funding organization funds its national researchers or institutions.

The duration of a collaborative research project will be at least 3 years years with the possible extension of the project duration and funding for another additional 2 years, with expected start date of projects in 3rd quarter of 2026.

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Please note that type of supported activities vary depending on the particular participating funding organization. More details can be found in respecting National Annex document (available on http://brics-sti.org/index.php?p=new/41) or from national contact points.

II. Application

Each project consortium must include partners from at least four BRICS countries applying for funding (please also refer to national annexes for additional requirements), with one partner designated as the Project Coordinator. Additional partners may also participate in the project consortium either by applying for funding through their own national funding organization or by joining on a self-funded basis (without requesting financial support)."

A **Joint Application Form (JAF)** (link for download: http://brics-sti.org/files/JAF_BRICS_fpcall_2026.docx) shall first be submitted by the Project Coordinator to the BRICS STI Framework Programme Secretariat through the online **BRICS STI Framework Programme Application Management System (BRICS AMS)** at http://ams.rfbr.ru/BRICS. JAF must be completed in English.

In addition to the JAF, each national team of a project **shall submit an additional national component** (i.e. proposal) to the relevant national participating funding organization following all required procedures of each particular participating funding organization.

The Joint Application Form includes information on:

1) Title and acronym of cooperative STI flagship project project;
2) Thematic area
3) Abstract;
4) Project team;
5) Work plan (goals, results) for the initial 3-year period, with potential additional 2-year project implementation period;
6) Budget requested.

The national component to be submitted shall vary in form, terms and information provided depending on the particular participating funding organization. More details can be found in the National Annex document (can be downloaded from http://brics-sti.org/index.php?p=new/41 page) and on the websites of participating BRICS STI Framework Programme Member Organizations.

The project which does not submit in due date a fully completed Joint Application Form to the BRICS STI Framework Programme Secretariat through BRICS Application Management System (ams.rfbr.ru) or national components to all respecting national funding organizations will automatically be considered as ineligible.

II-1. Preparation of Application Forms

Applicants should agree on the aims, strategy and management, the title of the project, and agree on the project coordinator. Based on these arrangements the applicants should complete the Joint Application Form (JAF) and national components.

II-2. Submission of Application Forms by Applicants

Applicants must submit the Joint Application Form (JAF) to the BRICS STI FP Secretariat via the online application submission tool until **15:00 (Moscow Time, UTC+3) on 15th of June 2026**.
To submit the JAF an online-submission form must be completed via the BRICS STI Framework Programme Application Management System (BRICS AMS) at http://ams.rfbr.ru/BRICS. The project coordinator should register in BRICS AMS, log in and create a proposal for the BRICS STI Framework Programme Pilot STI Flagship Projects Call 2026. The Project Coordinator must fill in all the required fields and submit application. The online submission form fields are identical to the information provided in JAF template, however the completed JAF (in *PDF or *DOC format) as file attachment to the online form is requested to be uploaded in the “upload file” section of online submission form.

If any additional to the minimum eligible number of required participants partner is joining the project on own costs, requested funding amount should be stated as “0” in the corresponding proposal box item.

Applications submitted to the BRICS STI FP Secretariat by any method other than through online submission form at http://ams.rfbr.ru/BRICS, such as e-mail, will be rejected.

An additional national component should be submitted to the respective national funding organization according to its own rules and procedures. Please note that submission deadline for national component vary from the deadline for JAF submission to the BRICS STI FP Secretariat.

II-3. Receipt of Application Forms by Call Secretariat

Following the online submission of an application, the respecting confirmation message with proposal registration number will be shown in confirmation message. On “my projects” page in BRICS AMS the project thereafter will be shown with assigned registration number BRICS2026f-XXX (where XXX stands for unique number) and status “Registered”. No additional letter of confirmation will be provided to the applicant. **An assigned registration number serves as proof of application registration.**

II-4. Retraction of submitted application

At any time after online submission of an application before the due date, an applicant can retract the application for modification on “my projects” page in BRICS AMS. Following retraction action an application is considered as “not submitted”. Re-submission of the application is only possible until the call deadline (15:00 (Moscow Time, UTC+3) on 15th of June 2026). Re-submitted application will be assigned with new number, which will differ from earlier submission.

III. Evaluation of Project Proposals

III-1. Evaluation Procedure

Each participating funding organization evaluates all proposals where applicants from its own country request funding from their respective funding organization. Based on the results of the evaluation, a joint decision by the participating national funding organizations will be made regarding the selected proposals to be co-funded.

III-2. Evaluation Criteria

The following general evaluation criteria will be considered (please also refer to national call announcements information on national component):

- Scientific quality and innovation of the joint research plan

- Competence and expertise of teams and complementarities of consortium (interdisciplinary / all necessary expertise)
- Expected impacts: e.g. scientific, technological, economic, societal
- Horizontal and/or vertical integration of the value chain and thus at the technological feasibility of systems solutions with a long-term potential for growth.
- Serve to strengthen an STI sector or branch or to generate model solutions to important challenges faced by society.
- Outcome of the project should have at least the technology readiness level at System/process prototype demonstration in an operational environment
- Project Sustainability: The extent to which the project demonstrates potential for long-term continuation, impact, and follow-up activities after the conclusion of the funding period.
- Sound project management, methodological approach, feasibility and appropriateness of the joint research plan
- Added value to be expected from the research collaboration, balanced cooperation
- Appropriateness of resources and funding requested
- Opportunities for early career researchers
- Encouragement of the participation and joint research by the business sector.

III-3. Announcement of Decision

Applicants will be notified of the final decision in third quarter 2026 regarding the approved joint projects for funding.

IV. Responsibilities of the PI following Approval of Projects

After the proposals have been approved, the PI and his/her own affiliated institution are required to adhere to the following when carrying out the cooperative project and utilising funding:

IV-1.

Each partner on a project will be responsible for complying with its funding organization's intellectual property rights requirements and partners on a project will work out any necessary intellectual property rights agreements among themselves.

IV-2. Progress Report

Progress Report to each participating funding organization

All applicants must follow their own funding organizations' rules and procedures.

IV-3. Final Report

IV-3.1 Final Report to the BRICS STI Framework Programme

After completion of the period of joint project, the Project coordinator shall complete and submit within three months an integrated final report to the BRICS STI Framework Programme Secretariat on the results of the joint project. The report will be reviewed by the BRICS STI Funding Working Group.

IV-3.2 Final Report to each participating funding organization

All project participants must follow their own funding organizations' rules and procedures.

BRICS STI Framework Programme Secretariat

http://brics-sti.org/

Contact person:
Mr. Yaroslav Sorokotyaga
Russian Centre for Science Information
E-mail: brics@rcsi.science

V. National Contact Points

Applicants should contact the following national contact points for information on each Party's national eligibility rules or support conditions:

Brazil:

National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq)

CNPq
Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico

Lelio Fellows Filho
General Coordinator of Intenational Cooperation
National Council for Scientific and Technological Development - CNPq
Tel: +55-61-3211-9247
E-mail: leliof@cnpq.br

China:

Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST)

中华人民共和国科学技术部
Ministry of Science and Technology of the People´s Republic of China

Application Consulting Service
International Science and Technology Cooperation Center
Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), China
E-mail: zfj@nrscc.gov.cn

Egypt:

Science, Technology & Innovation Funding Authority (STDF)

STDF
هيئة تمويل العلوم والتكنولوجيا والإبتكار
Science, Technology & Innovation Funding Authority

Ms. Hoda Yassien
Program Coordinator STDF
Email: hoda.yassien@stdf.eg
Website: www.stdf.eg

Iran:

Iran National Science Foundation (INSF)

The Office of President
Vice-Presidency for Science and Technology
Iran National Science Foundation

International Collaboration Division
Tel: +98 21 82161000
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Russia:

Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MSHE)

Ms. Albina Kutuzova
Phone: +7 49
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South Africa:

National Research Foundation (NRF)

Walter Baloyi
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Email: KW.Baloyi@risa.nrf.ac.za