

Establishing Centres of Excellence in Urban Governance for Unplanned Areas based on Trans-/Inter-disciplinary Projects

Call for proposals

February 2021

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I. Introduction

Worldwide, cities are facing challenging issues in addressing urban growth and lack of planning. Egyptian authorities have managed several actions in various economic, social and urban levels to confront this issue. One of the significant challenges is the urban governance of the Egyptian cities and the spread of unplanned areas that might require actions of urban controlling. In line with these challenges, the prime minister's initiatives for cooperative and harmonized efforts between the Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research and the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities to manage Egypt's urbanization. **Figure 1** shows the differences between some city districts in Egypt and others in European non-capital cities.

Most important, the number of research manuscripts generated from Egyptian universities and research centres on urban planning is relatively low compared to other areas.

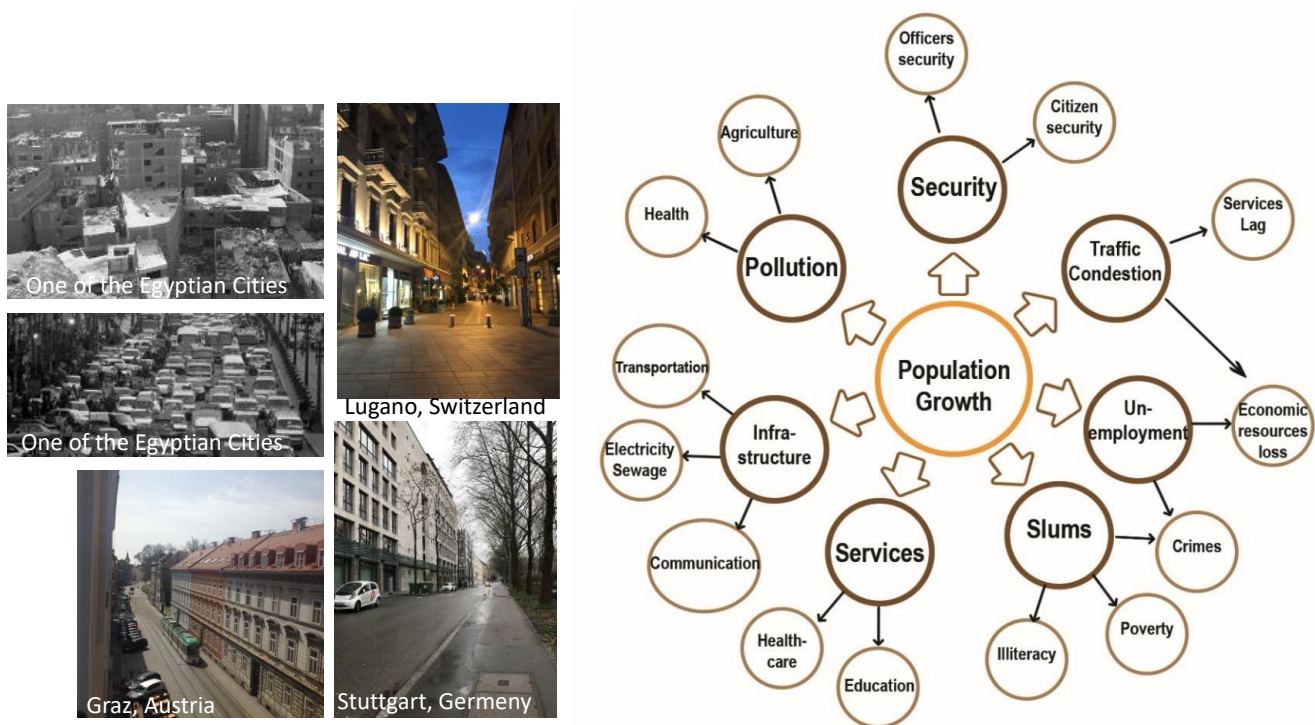


Figure 1. Images showing comparison between city-districts in Egypt and others in Europe (left) and schematic showing challenges of urbanization (right)

II. Grant Aims and Objectives

The present call for funding projects on urban planning aims to boost research work in this vital area by establishing centres of urban governance. The research conducted in these centres is expected to be trans-/inter-disciplinary in nature. The detailed objectives of this call are to:

- Establish centres of excellence for urban governance in Egyptian universities/Research Centres
- Ensure that research outcomes reach and serve local communities and other stakeholders in Egypt
- Develop socio-economic and digital models to manage and control the urban growth in Egypt
- Paving the ground for trans/inter-disciplinary cooperative research in Egyptian universities, research centres and industrial sector

III. Priority Areas

The long-term plan of the STDF includes the establishment of centres of scientific excellence in the different research areas identified to be of national priority. In the current call, funding will only be provided for scholars who mainly focus on the challenges facing the informal residential areas and slums, and innovations that help in developing these areas. Besides, multi-/inter-disciplinary proposals are encouraged to benefit from existing scientific knowledge. International cooperation between Egyptian research centres and international partners is also encouraged. **Figure 2** illustrates—but not limited to—the area of knowledge and recommended tracks.

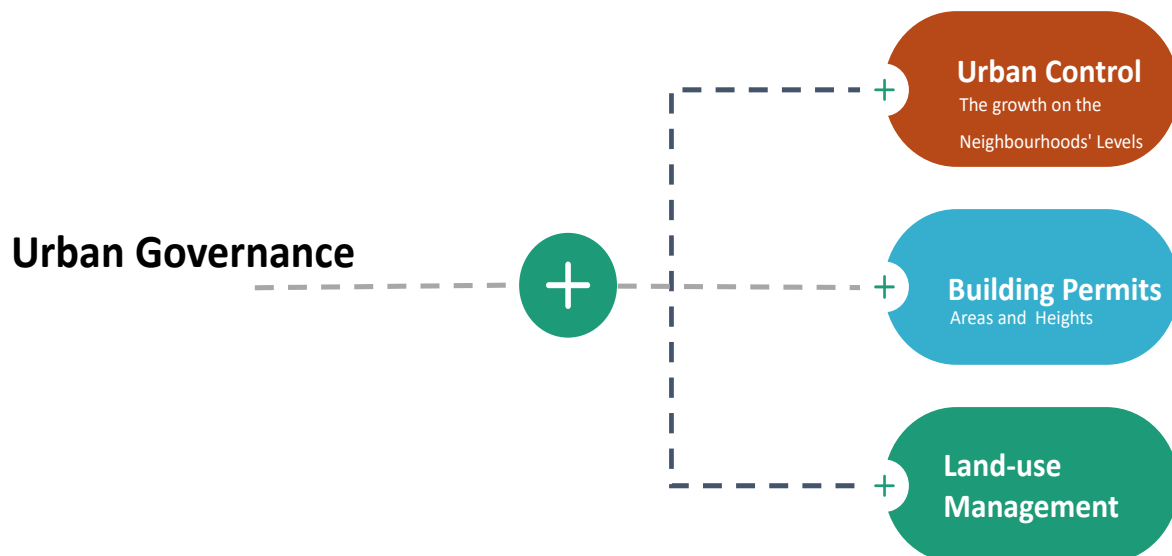


Figure 2. The call areas of knowledge

IV. Contribution and Added Value

The added value of having this call and its expected outcomes will reflect on both research and practice. The contribution encompasses:

- Mapping unplanned urbanization using digital models
- Analytical framework building for managing urban challenges
- Branding the city image for a better quality of life
- Cooperation between Egyptian universities and research centres in different disciplines for more visibility on the research level
- Cooperation between universities and research centres, with local society and industry

V. Grant Phases and Deliverables

Grant Phases:

- Phase-I: Duration up to one year and funding is up to 2,000,000 Egyptian pounds
- Phase-II: The STDF's funding will follow with mega projects that reach up to 20,000,000 Egyptian pounds. Besides, all details will be announced by the end of the 1st phase.
- Phase-III: STDF will not fund this phase

The first phase aims to establish centres of excellence in urban governance—the duration of this phase extends to a one-year maximum. This centre's structure includes three universities/ research entities in different regions (leading university/research centre and two associate universities/research entities). An endorsement letter signed by the leading university to facilitate the establishment of a centre of excellence (providing the suitable locations) should be provided in the application form. The expected deliverable from this phase includes:

1. Benchmarking
2. Gaps/priorities to be achieved
3. Synergistic approach
4. Business model
5. Feasibility study/ drawings of proposed plans
6. Case(s) for pilot studies and maps for the selected area/cases

The second phase follows the trans-/inter-disciplinary strategy. The selected projects (1-3 projects) aim to merge the academia/research/studies and stakeholders to implement the conceptual model in pilot projects. A thorough evaluation of achievements and challenges are expected to be conducted at the end of this phase. A limited number of proposals presented in the first phase will be invited to submit a second phase proposal. In the second phase, selected universities/research centres will be asked to have partners from non-academic institutions. Endorsement letter signed by leading university and a commitment for participation/funding from the stakeholders is expected in the second phase. The expected deliverable from this phase includes:

1. Baselines for the selected case study/studies
2. Key Performance indicators (KPIs)
3. Economies of scale
4. Full System delivery for the case study
5. Manual for application
6. Revised feasibility study
7. A minimum of two publications indexed in Scopus or Web of Science (WOS)
8. A plan for the continuity of CSE at the end of the project

The **third phase** covers the final implementations in larger areas and other universities/research centres. This phase is fully funded by investors, authorities, and municipalities/governorates with the centre of excellence consultancy. **Figure 3** shows the team structure and tracks of this call.

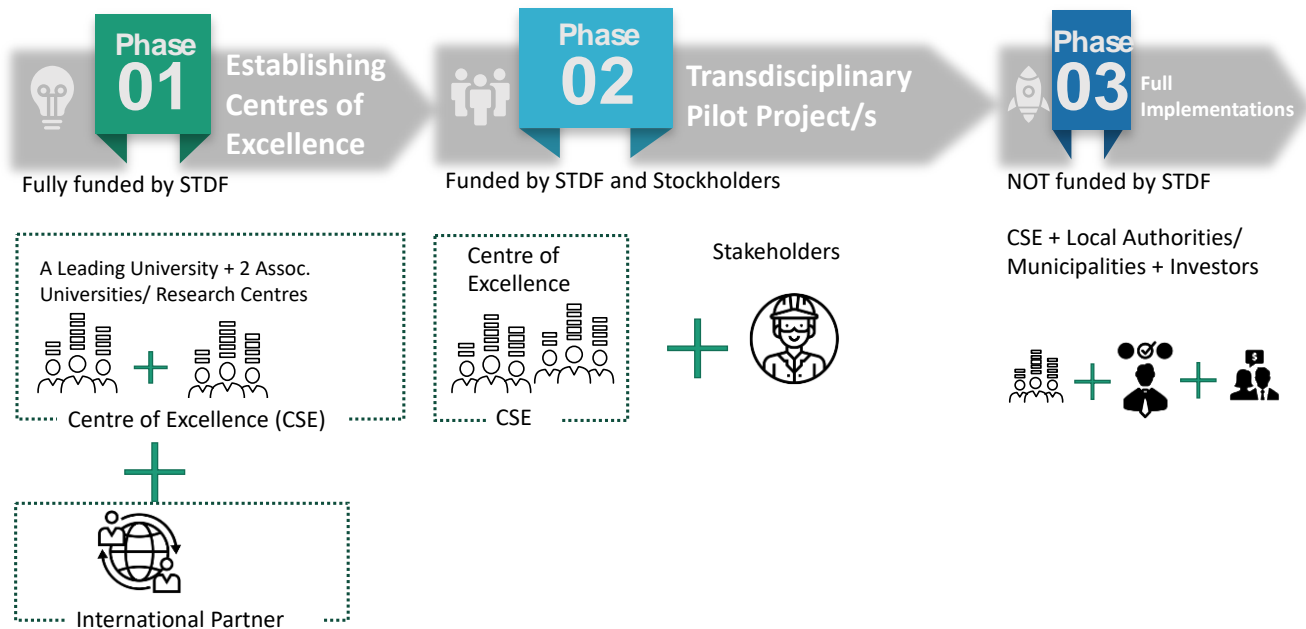


Figure 3. The phases of this call and team structure

VI. Timeline

- Launch of the call for proposals submission: **9 February 2021**
- Deadline for submission of full proposals: **31 March 2021 at 11:59 pm**
- Funding decisions announcement: **15 July 2021**

VII. Eligibility Criteria

Each proposal should be submitted jointly between academics from three universities/research centres in different regions in Egypt. The following eligibility criteria apply to this grant:

- Any public Egyptian research entity (university, research institution/centre, etc.), having well-documented scientific research and development activities, with tangible research outcomes (patents – internationally published papers – prototypes – products) in one of the outlined priority areas, is eligible for funding.
- Each institution is allowed to submit one proposal only. Priority will be given to institutions having excellent research teams in national priority areas and/or related areas of expertise.
- The applying institution should provide a suitable location for establishing CSE outside the grant budget (self-funded participation by the institution).
- The applying institution has to appoint an Egyptian researcher who has a PhD degree and is affiliated with the institution, to act as the project's principal investigator (PI). The PI must have high h-index, citation and publications in Scopus. If the proposal is approved for funding, the appointed individual will be the director/manager of the Centre of Scientific Excellence. The leading institution should also nominate a Co-PI, who will replace the PI in case he/she becomes, for any reason, unable to carry on with his role as the director/manager.
- For individuals who are the PIs of an "on-going" STDF-funded Capacity Building or Centre of Excellence project, the current call requires that they must have finished their projects successfully before the date of submission.
- Including young researchers (under the age of 40) and/or graduate (PhD or MSc) students in the research team is encouraged.
- The proposal should also clearly state how the equipment requested will help achieving the addressed scope of deliverables as given in the proposal. Additional fund request and/or extra equipment apart from those needed to cover urban governance's area to reach the proposed outcomes will result in rejection of the whole proposal.

VIII. Proposal Submission

All applications must be uploaded to the STDF website (www.stdf.org.eg), to which registration is required. The submission will be in one stage as full-proposal submission. Independent and qualified experts will evaluate the proposals, and STDF will ensure that the process is transparent, impartial and applicant supportive.

Upon the eligibility check phase, eligible proposals are technically evaluated for the final decision. STDF carries out an evaluation of recommendations with the assistance of national/international independent experts. Only accepted and eligible proposals from the first phase will be invited to submit for the second phases. STDF staff ensures that the evaluation process is transparent, robust and fair, and aligned with its rules and regulations.

IX. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals submitted to this grant will be subjected to three levels of evaluation:

- I. Experts evaluation in the field of speciality of the submitted proposal.
- II. Interview and oral presentation.
- III. Site visit and meeting with the host institution's officials to assess the facility preparedness for hosting the Centre of Scientific Excellence.

The funds are awarded based on the following criteria:

- The scientific, technological and/or innovative quality of the proposed project.
- A research plan with clear objectives, milestones and expected measurable outcomes.
- The offered "Business Model" to run the Centre of Scientific Excellence and area development; the institution must show its policy regarding sustainability, equipment maintenance, and support services to the industrial, governmental entities and customers.
- A clear scope in phase I and the extension of the spectrum in phase II and the standard methods addressed with their reference.
- Potential for growing an endogenous knowledge in the proposed field will place Egyptian researchers at the forefront of this area.
- A track record of success in the field for the institution, PI & project team.
- Proven experience in the field of the proposed Centre of Excellence.
- A suitable location for establishing CSE.
- The host institution's ability and commitment to run the CSE according to international standards, as well as the institution's equipment's services sharing policy and its ability to enforce it.
- The institution's ability to effectively contribute to the national sustainable development and/or the region's socio-economic development where the CSE will be established.
- Cooperation with stakeholders/industry and collaboration with other research institutes is highly encouraged.
- The proposed CSE shall address customer requirements and add value and credibility in scientific research.
- The maximum budget must not exceed 2 Million in the first phase.

X. Budget Estimation

In the first phase, a maximum of 2,000,000 Egyptian pounds grant is awarded to the accepted project to cover all costs required to accomplish the task during its entire period. In phase two, a budget will be co-funded by STDF, stakeholders and industry representatives for the invited successful projects from phase I. The candidates eligible for the second phase will be asked to provide a clear vision about the partners from stakeholders or industry (obligatory in the second phase) and their funding share. Overestimation of the budget will be considered in the evaluation process. For phase I projects, the eligible costs are as follows:

- **Eligible costs (Allowable)**
The research's eligible direct costs are the costs identified as specific costs directly linked to the study's performance.
- **The Incentives of Team Members**
Monthly incentives are granted to members of the research team, based on their role/assigned tasks and time dedicated to the project up to 25% of the total budget.
- **Travel Cost**
The cost of a stay in other countries is calculated according to STDF rules and regulations. Justification for travel should be provided in the proposal. Training in one of the advanced universities/institutions in the field is allowed for up to one month.
- **The Cost of Equipment, Supplies/Materials and Software**
The allocated amount for the purchase of new equipment, supplies/materials and software licences should not exceed 50% of the total budget directly related and necessary to the research project. The budget format in the proposal should be signed and stamped by the PI host institution.
- **The Cost of Organization of Workshops**
The allocated amount will be based on a favourable description of this activity that should promote the area of research specified in the proposal. The details of the activities and their cost should be listed in the proposal.
- **Indirect Costs**
A total of 10% of the total budget and up to 150,000 LE of the project excluding the cost of equipment might be allocated as an indirect cost that is payable to the researcher(s) host institution (where the researcher(s) is/are conducting the research work). Such indirect costs are expected for the usage of the host institution's facility and infrastructure and cover the cost and salaries of administrative work.

XI. Payment Procedures

When STDF approves a project, a contract agreement will be signed between STDF, the principal investigator (PI), and the host institute. The budget will be disbursed as instalments. The number of instalments depends on the duration of the project. The first instalment will be spent at the beginning of the project. The other instalments will be paid after the receipt and approval of the progress reports provided by the PI and endorsed by the host institution.

The disbursement of the final instalment of the project (10% of the budget) is conditioned upon the delivery of the outputs specified in the proposal in the scheduled time (refer to the deliverables of each phase). The final instalment payment is subject to the internal rules and regulations of STDF and can cover only the indirect costs and the remaining incentives.

XII. Follow Up A-Technical Reports

Biannual technical progress reports should be submitted according to STDF progress reports formats. The project's final report should be submitted no later than one month after the official end date of the project and should follow the STDF final report format together with an Achievements Report.

Site Visit: By the end of each phase of the project, a visit by STDF representatives is expected, to assess the final status of the new Centre of Scientific Excellence, and to ensure that the CSE has fulfilled the fundamental technical and managerial requirements according to the approved proposal.

STDF's logo shall be added to all certifications released from the CSE.

STDF evaluates all submitted reports, and feedback is sent to the project's PI and host institute. For rejected follow-up reports, STDF can impose additional follow-up and monitor progress reports independent from the usual way.

Suppose the submitted progress/final reports show that the team did not achieve the set objectives specified in the original proposal and/or the team is performing poorly. In that case, STDF will take all measures to stop the project and recover the budget allocated.

B- Financial Reports

Two reports are requested every year (biannually) signed and stamped from the institution as well as all the expenditure vouchers.

XIII. General Remarks and Conditions

- All proposals must be uploaded to the STDF website, proposals submitted by e-mail or send as hard copies will not be considered.
- All proposals must use the exact formatting requirements for the current call given in the attached Application Form. Failure to adhere to the precise format required will result in rejecting the proposal.
- All proposals MUST be written in English Language.
- The application must include a signed and a stamped Endorsement letter from the institution's legal representative, as shown in the Application Form.
- The same proposal should not be submitted in more than one grant. (Duplicate submission of the same proposal is not allowed).
- Each PI can only submit a maximum of two proposals until notified with the evaluation results of his/her submitted proposals.
- At any time, a contracted STDF project team member should only be participating in a maximum of 3 projects (or a maximum of 2 projects as a PI/Co-PI).
- DO NOT submit proposals previously funded either by STDF or any other funding agency. Submissions deemed to be supported by different grants will be disqualified & applicants will be banned from submitting proposals to STDF.
- Any publications delivered as a result of STDF funded proposals should acknowledge STDF funding in the publication and supporting conducting the results.
- STDF's intellectual property rules (IPR) rules and regulations in addition to the STDF code of ethics are applied to all submitted proposals.
- Foreign partners are allowed in this grant only as consultants given that the relevant approvals have been obtained, and only consultants' fees are permitted for those partners.
- Equipment purchased using STDF funds must be made available to all Egyptian researchers, provided that the project work is not disrupted.
- If more than one institution is involved, it has to be clearly stated which institution is in charge and each partner institution's role has to be specified.
- Extending a project's duration is not allowed. Only under stringent justified conditions shall STDF allow project extension, and any request for project extension will affect negatively STDF future decisions regarding the performance of the research team members.
- Having members from different departments or research institutes in the same research team is allowed and encouraged.
- Conflict of interest should be avoided in any proposal application.
- All proposals will be evaluated on a competitive basis