Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

This FAQ summarizes key information about the Third Round of the Research Projects Funding Program. It is intended as a practical guide for prospective applicants and partners. The formal Call for Proposals remains the authoritative source.

What is the role of AI and other advanced technologies?

AI and other advanced technologies, including big data, IoT, robotics, blockchain, drones, and 3D printing, are encouraged where they meaningfully strengthen the proposed research or enable new approaches to a clearly defined challenge or opportunity within the priority areas. Technology should act as an enabler rather than the starting point of the proposal. Applicants should explain why the technology is relevant, what role it plays, and how its use strengthens the quality, impact, or potential value of the proposed research.

Is a partnership with government or industry mandatory?

No. A proposal may be submitted without a government or industry partner where the nature and stage of the research justify this. However, where a project addresses the needs of a specific government entity or industry sector, meaningful engagement with a relevant partner can strengthen the proposal by demonstrating the relevance of the challenge and supporting a credible pathway to testing, uptake, adoption, or longer-term value.

Do government or industry partners need to provide cash funding?

No. Government and industry partners are not required to provide cash funding. Their contribution is expected to be primarily in-kind and may include expertise, access to data, facilities, infrastructure, operational environments, test beds, users, or support for piloting and deployment. Cash co-funding may demonstrate additional commitment but is not a requirement.

Can government or industry partners receive grant funding?

No. Government and industry partners are expected to participate on a non-funded basis and contribute to the project through relevant in-kind support. Grant funding is intended to support the eligible lead institution and approved research activities, including eligible academic collaborations where applicable.

What is the difference between a partnership and a collaboration?

Partnerships refer to government or industry entities that actively support the research project through non-financial (in-kind) contributions, such as expertise, facilities, data, infrastructure, test environments, or other relevant resources. Partners should demonstrate genuine commitment to the proposed research and, where appropriate, its pathway to future uptake, deployment, or commercialization.

Collaborations refer to arrangements with universities or research institutions in the UAE or internationally, that contribute relevant expertise or research capability to the project. Where project funding is allocated to an academic collaborating institution, the arrangement should be appropriately formalized by the lead institution.

Consultancy, fee-for-service, or other commercial service arrangements should not be presented as project partnerships.

Can the PI collaborate with leading universities or research institutes outside Dubai?

Yes. PIs are encouraged to collaborate with leading universities and research institutes in the UAE and internationally where the partnership strengthens the quality, capability, or ambition of the proposed research.

The project must remain led by the Dubai-based PI and anchored within Dubai’s research ecosystem. At least 60% of the total grant funding must be utilized within Dubai,

How should arrangements with collaborating institutions be formalized?

Where collaborating institutions are involved, the lead institution should establish appropriate subcontracting or collaboration arrangements to formalize roles, responsibilities, deliverables, governance, and, where applicable, the allocation of project funds.

What is the expected PI time commitment?

The PI may propose a research contribution of up to 30% to the project, subject to appropriate justification and institutional support. The proposed contribution should be reflected through corresponding course release/teaching relief or workload adjustment, in accordance with the applicable Budget Policy. A researcher's combined contribution across all ongoing Dubai RDI funded projects must not exceed 50%.

How is the progression from Phase one to Phase two?

The end of Year 1 is a formal go/no-go decision point for all projects, whether they are earlier-stage or applied. Continued funding will depend on satisfactory progress against agreed milestones, the quality and credibility of results achieved, the case for the next phase of work, the continued relevance of the project's pathway to value, and overall portfolio considerations.

Does this mean earlier-stage research must produce a pilot by the end of Year 1?

No. Expectations will be proportionate to the maturity of the project. Earlier-stage projects will be assessed against appropriate scientific, technical, and strategic milestones, such as validation of a hypothesis, generation of critical evidence, demonstration of feasibility, or development of a credible route towards future application. Applied projects may be expected to show stronger evidence of readiness for piloting, testing, adoption, or translation.

What does "deployment" or "adoption" mean?

Deployment or adoption refers to the integration or application of research outputs in a real-world context. Depending on the nature of the project, this may include operational practice, government policy or services, clinical or technical workflows, pilot environments, commercial products or services, or scalable solutions used beyond the research setting.

Will feedback be provided?

Yes, feedback will be provided to applicants at the full-proposal stage.

Can a researcher who received Dubai RDI funding as a Co-PI (not PI) apply as PI in this Round?

Yes. A researcher who has previously participated in a Dubai RDI-funded project as a Co-PI but has not previously received funding as a lead PI through the Dubai RDI Projects Funding Program, may apply as a PI in Round Three, subject to meeting all other eligibility requirements.

Is there a cap on a researcher's total research contribution across RDI funded projects?

Yes. Each researcher's total research contribution across all RDI funded projects, whether participating as a Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI), must not exceed 50%. The cap applies to the researcher's combined contribution across all ongoing RDI funded projects.

Can one Principal Investigator submit more than one Letter of Intent?

No. To ensure fair access to a limited pool of new research leadership, each eligible PI may submit only one Letter of Intent as lead PI in this round. A researcher may still appear as a Co-PI or named team member on other submissions, but leadership of more than one LOI is not permitted.

Can a researcher who changes institution after submission remain the PI?

A change of institutional affiliation during the LOI, full-proposal, or delivery stage must be disclosed promptly, since eligibility depends on full affiliation with a Dubai-based HEI or research institute. If the PI moves to a non-Dubai-based institution, they can no longer serve as lead PI; if they move to another eligible Dubai-based institution, continuation is possible subject to confirmation of institutional endorsement and continuity of the research plan.

Can early-career researchers apply?

Yes. Eligibility is based on the stated requirements, including holding a relevant PhD, full affiliation with an eligible Dubai-based institution, and a demonstrated track record of research excellence, rather than seniority or years since completing the PhD. Early-career researchers who meet these requirements are therefore eligible to apply.

What does "transformative potential for Dubai" mean in practice?

It refers to the potential, if the research succeeds, to create a step-change in capability rather than an incremental improvement. For example, opening a new RDI pathway or platform, reshaping how an important system or sector operates, or establishing a differentiated leadership niche for Dubai in a strategically important field. This is assessed under Impact Pathway, Value Creation & Transformative Potential for Dubai, alongside the plausibility of the route to that outcome given the project's maturity.

Does a project need to have a commercialization pathway?

No. Commercialization is only one possible route to value; other valid pathways include policy influence, public-service improvement, operational adoption, scientific capability building, practitioner uptake, or creating a platform for future innovation. What matters is that the pathway is credible and appropriate to the project's stage of maturity, not that it necessarily ends in a commercial product.

What costs are eligible and ineligible for funding?

Please refer to the budget policy provided in the application form.