

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING A PRELIMINARY APPLICATION TO  
JOIN THE PROGRAM FOR EXCELLENCE CENTERS, I-CORE  
STAGE TWO – 2012-13**

**This file contains the following subjects:**

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## 1. General Information

### 1.1 Introduction

The program is being operated following a decision by the Government on March 14, 2010 (the full text of the decision can be found on this site: <http://www.che.org.il>) and in accordance with a public call, issued by the PBC on September 13, 2011 (the text can be downloaded from the ISF's site:

[http://www.isf.org.il/news\\_in.asp?message\\_id=191](http://www.isf.org.il/news_in.asp?message_id=191) or from the site of the CHE/PBC: <http://www.che.org.il/template/default.aspx?PagelD=534&Preview=1>).

### 1.2 The goals of the Program

- 1.2.1 Strengthening Israel's scientific research and establishing Israel's standing as a world leader in scientific research;
- 1.2.2 "Brain return": returning excellent researchers to Israel, as a central means of fortifying the research capabilities and the academic staffs of the institutions of higher education;
- 1.2.3 Creating a critical mass and intensifying the relative advantage in selected fields of research in the various institutes;
- 1.2.4 Improving and upgrading of the research infrastructure in the universities;
- 1.2.5 Encouraging academic innovation, including combining various disciplines (Multidisciplinarity);
- 1.2.6 Establishing and promoting advanced study and training programs in selected areas;
- 1.2.7 Encouraging research cooperation between institutions of higher education, universities and colleges alike;
- 1.2.8 Strengthening Israel's scientific research in areas of overall and national importance;
- 1.2.9 Cooperation with research institutes and leading researchers in Israel and abroad.

1.3 For this stage, **18 subjects from various fields of research** (Humanities and Arts; Social Sciences, Education, Law and Business Administration; Exact Sciences and Engineering; Life and Health Sciences) have been selected as stated in the public call. The subjects will be presented in detail in appendices A and B to this document.

It should be noted that the specified subjects are broadly defined and therefore include a number of sub-subjects. It is intended that groups of researchers will submit proposals to the I-COREs in specified areas within these broad subjects, based upon the strengths and capabilities available in the group. In particular, there is no need to cover all the sub-subjects listed, but rather to create a research proposal for the I-CORE that will facilitate coherence and true synergy in the research between the members of the Center.

- 1.4 At this stage the establishment of about ten I-COREs will be approved among the applications relating to the 18 selected subjects, with adequate representation for each field of research.

## 2. Basic Rules

### Members of the I-CORE

- 2.1 The research group that will operate an I-CORE will be drawn from members of teaching and research staff of institutions of higher education, hospitals and research institutes (senior researchers), and also new outstanding researchers, who will join such institutions during the first three years of activity of the center. The new recruits joining higher education institutions will receive there a regular tenure-track academic appointment. The number of new and senior researchers will be limited according to the field of research:

- A Center with an experimental character will have about 10 and maximum 12 senior researchers;
- A Center with a theoretical character will have about 8 and maximum 10 senior researchers;

Deviations from these ranges will have to be considered by the Steering Committee.

- 2.2 Different researchers from the same institution may be participating in competing applications for a particular Center.
- 2.3 A new researcher is a researcher who will get a position in his institute after the date for submitting the preliminary applications, i.e. after 1 December 2011.
- 2.4 A researcher – whether senior or new – may, in principle, participate in more than one application for Excellence Centers on different subjects.

A senior researcher may not participate in more than one competing preliminary or full application on one subject.

A new researcher may, prior to his receiving a new appointment at one of the institutions, participate in more than one competing preliminary application on one subject, but when time comes for the full application, he will be required to participate in only one application on that subject.

- 2.5 New researchers who get academic positions may be members of more than one I-CORE (existing or future), but will not receive double funding as new researchers in various Centers.

Senior researchers may be members of more than one I-CORE (existing or future), but will receive funding through those Centers only if their activities are different and justify such funding. There will, of course, not be double funding for identical activities.

- 2.6 The new researchers shall constitute not less than one quarter of the members of an I-CORE (senior and new researchers), i.e. the number of new researchers shall be not less

than one third of that of the senior researchers. At least one new researcher shall be admitted in the first year of activity.

- 2.7 The grant will be allocated to the participants listed in the proposal through the proposing institutions, and it requires the participation of those researchers for the full period of the funding. Therefore, it is not possible to change the status of the researchers receiving the grant, to freeze it or to transfer it to another researcher for any reason (sabbatical, leave of absence exceeding half of the period of the grant, leaving the institution or the academic position willingly or unwillingly, retirement, suspension, death etc.) unless previously approved in writing by the ISF.
- 2.8 The researchers participating in an I-CORE undertake to all certification required for carrying out the research and to present it to the ISF at its request at any time.

### **Management of the Center**

- 2.9 At the head of each I-CORE there shall be a scientific board with 3 to 5 members (depending on the size of the Center), who are leading researchers at the I-CORE, chaired by the scientific administrator, who will also be the **Director of the Center**. The Center Director shall be a staff member at a research university, which will serve as the **“Coordinating University”**.
- 2.10 In addition to the scientific aspect, the scientific board of the I-CORE shall also be responsible for planning the sites for equipment, its use and maintenance, and ensuring its accessibility for the relevant research community in general and the members of the Center in particular.
- 2.11 The management of an I-CORE shall be the responsibility of the Coordinating University, in which the major part of the common research infrastructure will be concentrated.

### **The participation of institutions**

- 2.12 The application to establish an I-CORE shall be submitted by the research authority of the Coordinating University.
- 2.13 The Coordinating University and the additional institutions, to which the members of the I-CORE are attached, will serve as “Partnership Institutions” and will in conjunction cover one third of the Center’s budget.
- 2.14 The Partnership Institutions must attach to the application a written statement confirming their participation in the I-CORE and their undertaking the obligations involved.
- 2.15 An institution, which was not a partner from the outset, but has become a partner through the admittance of a new, excellent researcher, must undertake all the involved obligations from the date of entering the partnership like a regular Partnership Institution.
- 2.16 The grant will be allocated to research carried out in Israel (by the institutions eligible for participation in a proposal) and in accordance with the research authorities/institutions employing the researchers.

2.17 The application shall be submitted in two stages, a preliminary application and a full application.

2.18 For the purpose of registration and submission of the preliminary application, a registration website will be opened by the beginning of October 2011.

2.19 The centers will be established for a period of at least five years.

### **The Center's budget**

2.20 The overall budget for an I-CORE may include the following items:

#### **2.20.1 New researchers:**

- Annual research grants for a period of 5 years;
- A one-time personal grant for equipment to set up a laboratory for the researcher (if needed);
- Salaries;
- Research supplements ('Tosafot Bet').

2.20.2 **Joint research infrastructure for the I-CORE:** Such infrastructure shall be purchased only for the research universities that are partners in the I-CORE. Most of the joint research infrastructure shall be set up in the framework of the Coordinating University. This clause refers both to purchase, operation and maintenance of apparatus and equipment that serves all the members of the I-CORE.

#### **2.20.3 Ongoing activity of the I-CORE:**

- Carrying out and promoting international cooperation (workshops and conventions, visits etc.);
- Activity of the Center's senior researchers in the I-CORE:
  - Scholarships to research students and post-doctoral research fellows.
  - Use of equipment and materials
  - Technical manpower
- Advanced teaching programs
- Experimental projects in the framework of the I-CORE.
- Administrative manpower servicing the I-CORE.

#### **2.20.4 Overheads (details of types of overheads will appear below)**

The overall budget for each of the above mentioned items shall be greater than zero.

2.21 Average amounts for the program: The average budget for a Center will amount to 45 million NIS for a period of five year.

2.22 The detailed budget framework for the I-COREs for each subject will be decided and published towards the stage of submission of the full proposals. This framework will specify the total budget for the years of operation, the budget for each year and its division between the various items.

The budget for an experiment oriented research center will amount to about 50 to 70 million NIS for the operation period, depending on the number of senior and new staff members, the necessary infrastructure etc.

The budget for a theory oriented research center will amount to about 20 to 35 million NIS for the operation period, depending on the number of senior and new staff members, the necessary infrastructure etc.

There may be deviations from the above ranges, e.g. in cases where the necessary infrastructure already exists, or when special infrastructure is needed.

### **Funding of the I-COREs**

2.23 All the components of salaries and added research allowances for new academic staff, administrative staff or technical staff of a center shall be funded by the Partnership Institutes.

2.24 If needed, the Partnership Institutes will fund additional items of the Center's activity so that their overall participation will be one third of the Center's budget.

2.25 The funding of the PBC will, on average, amount to 15 million NIS per center for five years, and shall under no circumstances exceed 25 million NIS for the five years. The PBC attempts and pursues reaching agreements with external foundations which may join the project as strategic partners and assist in its funding.

2.26 The government budget designated for the project, which will be allocated through the PBC, and the budget that may be added thereto by strategic partners, will serve to fund two thirds of the Center's budget. This budget shall be designated to:

- Grants for the absorption of new researchers (annual research grants and personal one-time grants for equipment to set up a laboratory for the researcher). The overall amount budgeted for this purpose can be used only for absorption of new researchers, and it cannot be used in part or in full for other purposes. The rules applied for these grants will be those that have been accepted by the Israel Science Foundation;
- Research infrastructure at research universities;
- Ongoing activity of the Center (not including salary components for administrative or technical staff that are not in the framework of research grants for new researchers);
- Overheads (according to the rules that will be specified below).

- 2.27 The institutes participating in the submission of a proposal shall attach their written undertaking to participate with additional amounts to an overall value similar to the PBC budget (as part of the institute's agreement to take part in the operation of the Center (see section 2.14)).
- 2.28 It must be clear that all pieces of equipment, including computers and computer accessories that will be purchased at the expense of the grant, shall not be considered the researcher's personal property.

### **3. Evaluation Procedure for Preliminary Applications**

- 3.1 The Israel Science Foundation is responsible for the evaluation and judgment procedure.
- 3.2 The evaluation and judgment procedures will be carried out in two stages. The best among the preliminary applicants will be asked to submit full applications. Based upon the evaluation of the full applications, about ten groups will be invited to establish the new Excellence Centers.
- 3.3 The criteria for evaluation of the preliminary applications are:
- 3.3.1 Compliance of the proposed Center with the general Excellence Center program:
    - 3.3.1.1 The proven ability of the Partnership Institutes to attract new staff members to the Center, and their ability to identify potential candidates who have indicated their willingness to join the Center in the future;
    - 3.3.1.2 Existing relationships and cooperation with other institutes in Israel;
    - 3.3.1.3 Ability to create and promote international relationships in the research area of the Center;
    - 3.3.1.4 The expected contributions of the Center to teaching and qualification programs towards advanced degrees where applicable;
    - 3.3.1.5 The degree of interfacing with other research areas;
    - 3.3.1.6 The contribution to Israeli society and to the potential for lasting growth for the State of Israel, including the existence and promotion of cooperation with Industry, where applicable.
  - 3.3.2 Compliance of the proposed Center with the relevant research area as defined by the Steering Committee.
  - 3.3.3 An initial evaluation of the work plan for the proposed Center and the suitability of the infrastructure within the Partnership Institutes for the implementation of the research:
    - 3.3.3.1 The centrality of the research subjects, on which the proposed Center will focus, and the scientific quality of the application, including the degree of innovativeness embodied in it, and its potential for providing a fundamental breakthrough;

- 3.3.3.2 The capabilities of the Partnership Institutes in the relevant area of research, the existing infrastructure at their disposal and their past achievements in that area;
- 3.3.3.3 Examination of the readiness of the Partnership Institutes to support the Center's operation during the first five years, and their ability to raise funds and to continue the operation of the Center.

## 4. Guidelines for Submission of the Application:

4.1 Language of submission: The application shall be submitted in English.

### 4.2 Date and method of submission

4.2.1 **Registration form**, via the online system.

4.2.2 **Preliminary application** – to be submitted via the online system not later than December 1, 2011. In addition, **4 printed copies** of the preliminary application must be submitted to the ISF through the research authority.

4.2.3 **Full applications** – to be submitted via the online system by the researchers, through the institutes that were advised that they had successfully passed the preliminary application stage, and endorsed by the coordinating universities. The full applications shall be submitted to the ISF by **March 1, 2012 (unless otherwise instructed)**.

### 4.3 Online submission

#### 4.3.1 **System requirements of the computer used for submission of the application:**

The ISF's online system – ISFonline – is supported by the following platforms:

**PC users** – Operating systems: WIN7, WIN XP; Browser: Internet Explorer, version 7 and up. To ensure functioning of the system, users should add the ISF website to the list of Trusted Sites and enable pop-ups on the ISF site. Explanations concerning these actions can be found in the user manual.

**MAC users** – Operating system: MAC OS X; Browser: Mozilla Firefox, version 3 and up (free download: <http://www.mozilla.com/firefox/>).

The system is adjusted to a screen resolution of 1024x768 and up.

ISFonline will probably function properly also on other platforms, but the ISF cannot guarantee that it will do so during the entire process, and cannot fully support platforms other than those specified. The use of such other platforms is at the responsibility of those who choose to use them.

4.3.2 Together with the confirmation of the registration form (see above, section 4.2), a serial number allocated to the application (to be stated in all further correspondence with the ISF concerning the application) will be displayed on the

screen (as in the e-mail notification to the Center Director). The username and password for filling out the preliminary application will also be displayed.

4.3.3 Details of the full application application structure and form will be published later.

4.3.4 How to work in the ISF's online system:

- Using **the same username and password**, a number of researchers and other holders of office (who got permission from the Center Director) may enter the system and, with his/her permission, fill out various parts of the same form.
- Part of the information on the preliminary and full applications will be drawn from the registration form, and it is possible **to change and update all details** (except changing the name of the Center Director).
- Saving – all the document's screens will be saved by using one of the buttons at the bottom of the screen: SAVE, FORWARD or BACK, and it is possible to enter and leave them several times until the stage of confirmation by pressing the SUBMIT button.
- Moving between the chapters/pages may be done by using the BACK or FORWARD buttons (at the bottom of the screen) or using the screen menu on the right side or using the internet browser buttons on the upper ruler at the top.
- All fields must be filled in. By pressing the CHECK BEFORE SUBMISSION button it is possible at any stage of filling out the application to check, which obligatory data is missing. When the application is submitted (by pressing the SUBMIT button), the system will warn about fields that have not been filled in at all or have not been filled in according to the instructions.
- Corrections cannot be entered into attached files. All corrections must be made in the original files, and the corrected files must be uploaded again (this action overwrites the existing files and saves the last ones).
- As it is possible in certain sections of the form to enter free text and to use CUT & PASTE or attach files, it is recommended to check, before printing the material, that no part of the files has been omitted, and to proofread thoroughly the whole text (style and spelling). To prevent errors, special symbols should not be used in text boxes.

4.3.5 **Before pressing the SUBMIT button, the whole application should be printed and checked. It is also recommended to save a copy of the application on the personal computer.**

4.3.6 Pressing the SUBMIT button transmits the application to the research authority of the Coordinating University for approval. The research authority may return the application for corrections or disqualify it for institutional reasons. Only after the approval of the authority, will the application be submitted to the ISF. The

system will send an e-mail to the Center Director, notifying him/her that the research authority has approved the application and that it has been transferred to the ISF.

## 5. The Sections of the Application

### 5.1 Prior to beginning the application process, the applicants are requested to declare that:

- they have read the instructions;
- they agree to the application being judged according to the procedure;
- they are aware of the method of reporting required for an active grant.

### 5.2 The registration form:

- This form cannot be completed in stages. Exiting the form without transmitting it will not save the information and necessitates restarting the registration process.

5.2.1 The Coordinating University – The university, through which the application will be submitted, must be chosen from the list.

5.2.2 The Research Area for the Center – Should be selected from the list of areas chosen for this submission round.

5.2.3 Heading/The name of the Center in Hebrew and English - up to two lines of text. To avoid errors in the subject of the application, **use of special symbols should be avoided**. Instead, the full name of the symbol should be used, e.g. alpha, beta etc.

5.2.4 Details of the researcher, who will serve as Center Director – The researcher, who will serve as Center Director, shall be identified by his/her full ID number (9 digits). The system will automatically identify the researcher/Center Director and will check his/her eligibility for applying. If a problem is detected – a message will be displayed on the screen. **A new researcher or a researcher, who cannot be identified by the online system, should turn to the research authority of his institute to have his/her details updated in the ISF's database.**

The details of the researcher, who is the Center Director, will appear as they do in the ISF's database. All the details must be completed. **A researcher, who is affiliated with an institute having more than one campus, must check and update the relevant campus. The institute to which the researcher is affiliated and to which correspondence with the researcher will be sent, should be chosen.** The details of the other researchers and institutes participating in the Center must be stated in the preliminary application form.

5.2.5 After transmission of the registration form, confirmation of registration and the application number will be displayed on the screen, as will the username and

password. Notification will be sent by e-mail to the researcher who is the Center Director of the application with a copy to the research authority of the Coordinating University.

### 5.3 The preliminary application:

5.3.1 The preliminary application shall be submitted via the ISF online system, by entering the username and password into the relevant fields on the ISF's homepage.

5.3.2 The preliminary application shall be submitted in English and shall include:

5.3.2.1 The "General Information" screen (information about the Center):

- The Coordinating University – as entered on the registration form. May not be changed.
- Name of the managing researcher, the Center Director – as entered on the registration form. May not be changed.
- The Center's subject – as entered on the registration form. May not be changed.
- Heading/The name of the Center in Hebrew and English – as entered on the registration form. May be changed.
- Key words.

5.3.2.2 The "Researchers and Institutes" screen (Information about the participating researchers, members and institutes). On this screen the researchers that are members of the Center and the institutes they are affiliated to shall be added.

- For each chosen institute its letter of undertaking to participate in the Center must be attached (see section 2.14).
- The list of institutes will be in the order of their being added. If the person filling out the application wishes to change this order, the preferred order may be chosen by changing the "Display order" field.
- Addition of a researcher – each researcher, who is added to the system, will be added on behalf of one of the Partnership Institutes. The researchers shall be identified by their full ID numbers (see section 5.2.4).
- For each added researcher it must be marked whether he/she is a member of the Center's scientific board.
- Removal of an institution – it is possible to remove an institute that was chosen to participate in the Center. In such a case, the letter of

undertaking of the institute and all researchers listed as affiliated to it will be erased.

- 5.3.2.3 The “New Faculty Members” screen – Details of the new researchers due to be absorbed through the Center (see sections 2.1, 2.3-2.6) in its first year of operation. On this screen the details of the new researchers shall be filled in (his/her name, the institute he/she will join and the expected date of absorption). For each researcher an abstract of his/her research program should be attached in a file of up to one page in Word or PDF format, with the word “Abstract” and the name of the researcher on top. The preliminary application should contain at least one new researcher.

In the full application undertakings and confirmations, both on the part of the absorbing institute and of the researchers expected to be absorbed, will be required.

5.3.2.4 The “Attached Files” screen

- 5.3.2.4.1 Scientific abstract – a file containing up to one page of text in Word or PDF format only. The header should include the words “**Scientific abstract**”, the application number, the subject and the name of the proposed center. The following information should be included briefly:

- Scientific background
- The importance of the research that will be carried out in the Center and its **expected significance**.

- 5.3.2.4.2 Major features of the Center (I-CORE Program) – one file (up to five pages of text) in Word or PDF format only, presenting the work plan of the Center. The following information should be included:

- Scientific background.
- Major objectives of the Center.
- Major features of the Center’s work plan, including the names of the researchers who will be involved in its various aspects, and emphasizing the tasks assigned to the new researchers who will be absorbed.
- The expected scientific significance from the outcome of the Center’s operation.
- Possible directions of applying the knowledge that will be accumulated by the Center.
- A program for cooperation between the members of the Center and researchers in the same area, who are not participating in the Center.

For researchers who are not members of the Center, letters confirming their collaboration should be attached at the appropriate location on the screen.

- Cooperation programs.

Additional accompanying material, e.g. graphs, tables or letters of recommendation, should not be attached.

5.3.2.4.3 Collaboration Letters – When the Center’s work plan involves cooperation with researchers, institutes or industrial agents that are not participants in the Center, relevant letters of collaboration should be attached.

5.3.2.4.4 Major Equipment Description – a file should be attached, containing a table of required equipment, including the items for the general infrastructure of the Center, as well as the major items of equipment required for the new researchers due to join the Center within its first year.

5.3.2.4.5 International Workshops and/or Teaching Programs in the Framework of Unique Courses – one file containing briefly (half a page) the Center’s future plans regarding international workshops and teaching programs.

## 6. Printing and Submitting the Application

6.1 When the application is completed, it should be locked. At this stage, the system will check if all obligatory data has been entered. If this check is successful, the application will be locked and no further changes will be possible.

6.2 When the application has been locked, a button will be displayed to enable the creation of a single, printable PDF file from the various sections of the application. This file will contain all the sections of the application and the attached forms and files (excluding the letters of undertaking participation in the Center from the institutes). This process may last 2-4 minutes. At the end of the process, a message will be e-mailed to the head researcher with a copy to an alternative e-mail address that has been entered on the screen. Generating this file will enable the researchers to view or to print the file, also after pressing the SUBMIT button.

6.3 After generating the file, the researchers will have three options:

- Viewing the generated file – it is recommended to print a copy of the application, **to check that all sections are intact and to proofread the text thoroughly, as no change to the application will be possible after the final date for submission. It is also strongly recommended to save the file.**

- Reopening the “locked application” to make changes. Reopening the application for changes will necessitate repetition of the actions specified in sections 6.1-6.2 above.
- Pressing the SUBMIT button – this will cause the application to be transmitted to the research authority. After pressing this button, it is recommended to enter again and check that the application has, indeed, been submitted. Only after approval of the research authority will the application be handed over to the ISF.

6.4 4 hardcopies of the final file that was generated should be sent to the ISF via the research authority. Each application hardcopy should be stapled together on the left side (not bound), and the letters of undertaking participation in the Center from the institutes should be enclosed (but not stapled together with the application copies).

**Support by the ISF's team during the submission period and including its final date will be available only during the regular working hours.**

**The submitting institutes and the participating researchers are requested to follow the instructions meticulously. A research proposal submitted not according to the instructions or in a perfunctory manner will be rejected outright.**