# Notice of 2021 NSFC Program Application and Project Acceptance

**I. Program Application**

(I) Acceptance of applications

1. The National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) will accept the following programs in 2021: General Program, Major Program, some programs of Major Research Plan, Young Scientists Fund, Excellent Young Scientists Fund, National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars, Fund for Creative Research Groups, Basic Science Center Program, Regional Science Fund, some programs of Joint Funds, Special Fund for Research on National Major Research Instruments (free on application), Tianyuan Fund for Mathematics, and Major International (Regional) Joint Research Program. The application deadline is **16:00, March 20, 2021**.

2. NSFC will publish a separate guide for other programs. Since international (regional) cooperation and exchange programs can be applied for anytime, the applicants are expected to **avoid** the peak period for acceptance.

3. NSFC will fully enable **paperless application** in 2021. Host institutions can confirm electronic applications and attachments online without the need to send paper materials. After a program is approved, the signature page should be stapled to the paper-based Funded Program Proposal before submission. The signatures and seals must be the same as those in the electronic application.

(II) Writing an application

All NSFC Applications are written online.

(III) Notes for applicants

1. Applicants should carefully read the Regulations on the National Natural Science Foundation of China (the Regulations), relevant program and fund management measures and regulations, and the National Natural Science Fund Guide to Programs 2021 (the NSFC Guide 2021). They should log into the NSFC Internet-based Science Information System (the Information System) and write and submit an application for their program according to relevant requirements **after January 15, 2021**. Applicants without an account on the Information System should contact their host institutions to open an account.

2. Applicants should prepare the NSFC Program Budget according to the fund management measures, supplementary notices, and the NSFC Program Budget Preparation Notes. Program budgets must be goal-relevant, policy-compliant, and economically feasible. If a program is undertaken by more than one institution, the applicant and each cooperative institution should prepare a budget separately. After each budget is approved by the respective institution, the applicant will compile them into one. **Note: In 2021, NSFC will pilot the creation of ceilings in funding that enable the retention of unused funds for Excellent Young Scientists Fund, excluding Excellent Young Scientists Fund (Hong Kong and Macao), in addition to National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars. Applicants no longer need to prepare budgets for those programs.**

3. Applicants write an application online and submit it together with the attachments, including electronic scans of a letter of certification, a letter of recommendation, and other necessary materials.

4. Applicants and investigators should use their unique ID documents to apply for programs. The application should state whether anyone has obtained a research grant as an applicant or investigator using another ID document.

5. Applicants should provide a valid email address so that they can be notified whether or not their applications are approved and receive experts' opinions in time. They are responsible for all legal consequences of failing to do so.

**II. Program Conclusion**

(I) Notes to principle investigators

Principle investigators should carefully read the NSFC Measures for Managing Research Results of Funded Programs, and relevant program and fund management measures and regulations. They should prepare an NSFC Program Conclusion/Achievement Report (the Report) based on facts, ensuring all data and information therein are authentic and accurate. Meanwhile, the Report must neither contain any content that shall be deemed a national science and technology secret according to China's Regulations on the Protection of Science and Technology Secrets, nor any classified or sensitive information violating technology secret protection and security regulations.

1. Principle investigators log into the Information System, complete the Report, and submit it together with other attachments online. **After NSFC approves these submissions**, principle investigators download and print the final Report in PDF format, and submit the original copy of the signed report (excluding the attachments) to the host institution. Principle investigators should ensure that the printed report is identical to the approved electronic report.

2. Principle investigators should prepare an NSFC Program Final Account based on facts together with R&D, finance and other departments according to the fund management measures, supplementary notices, and the NSFC Program Final Account Notes. They must ensure that data therein are authentic and accurate and all expenditures are lawful and effective. If a program is undertaken by more than one institution, the program owner and each cooperative institution should prepare a final account separately. After each account is approved by the respective institution, the program owner will compile them into one.

3. If a program has more than 50% of funds unused, the program owner should prepare a fact sheet and send it to the host institution for approval before submitting it together with the final account. If a program has unused funds for no good reason, it must not be concluded.

4. A conclusion/achievement report must not contain papers to be published or not marked with an NSFC program number, or directly copy the text from papers.

5. After a program is approved to be concluded, NSFC will publish the full text of its conclusion/achievement report on the Science Fund Shared Service Network (http://output.nsfc.gov.cn) and the National Science and Technology Report System (https://www.nstrs.cn).

6. According to relevant requirements, the program owner or principal investigator of an NSFC funded program should store the final version of the research paper approved by peer review in the Information System, and make it accessible to all no later than 12 months after publishing the paper in whole or in part. If the paper is published with open access, or the publisher allows the publication to be stored as a PDF file, the PDF paper should be stored in the Information System.

Materials for program conclusion should be reviewed and confirmed via the Information System by **16:00, March 1, 2021**. The original copy of the program conclusion/achievement report (sole copy) signed and sealed by the host institution, the official letter from the institution, and the program list should be sent to NSFC by March 15. Incomplete materials will not be accepted.

**III. Program Progress**

(I) Program progress report

The program owner logs into the Information System and completes the NSFC Funded Program Progress Report (the Progress Report). Then the host institution reviews the Progress Report item by item in line with the Regulations and relevant management measures on the Information System **by January 15, 2021** without the need to submit paper materials. If the program owner fails to submit the Progress Report as required, the program will be handled according to relevant regulations.