

# GUIDE TO SECTOR COUNSELLORS APPLICATION ROUND 2024 – DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH



## Introduction

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has provided grants for development research activities as part of Denmark's international development cooperation for decades. Since 2017, research collaboration projects have been granted in selected countries with Danish Strategic Sector Cooperation (SSC).

Aligned with Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation "The World We Share" research project funding is available for Danish research institutions with partners in selected countries with a **targeted** development cooperation with Denmark through specific SSC programmes. The themes are announced in the Calls as part of the annual application round, see the 2024 Call for applications at [DFC's webpage](#).

The application round consists of two phases. Phase 1 is the prequalification phase in which a reduced number of applicants are shortlisted based on a research project idea and invited to Phase 2, a full research project proposal phase. The expected duration of the granted research projects is up to 5 years and with a maximum grant of 10 million DKK for each project.

While the MFA (Evaluation, Learning & Quality, ELK) is responsible for the strategic and political aspects of the research cooperation, Danida Fellowship Centre (DFC) administers the application rounds and grants to research collaboration projects. The Consultative Research Committee for Development Research (FFU) is tasked with assisting the MFA by providing professional and scientific advice in relation to research applications and projects. In the assessment of applications, three overall criteria are used by the FFU: relevance, scientific quality, and the potential effect (and feasibility in Phase 2) of the research. Embassies are involved in the assessment of relevance during Phase 1 and international peer reviewers are involved in the assessment of the scientific quality during Phase 2.

## Objective of the research cooperation

The mandate to provide support to development research is explicitly stated in §7 of the Danish Law on International Development Cooperation with the purpose to strengthen research capacity and generate new knowledge in developing countries. "The World We Share", Denmark's current development cooperation strategy, highlights the importance of partnerships between Danish universities and the research community in the Global South. The strategy furthermore sets clear goals for development cooperation funding targeting climate, nature and the environment, including regarding climate adaptation and climate mitigation initiatives.

## Roles and responsibilities of sector counsellors in 2024

### a. General communication with applicants

In the application process for these competitive funds, it is essential that the principles of good public administration are respected in accordance with Danish legislation (Forvaltningsloven / Vejledning om Effektiv Tilskudsforvaltning). Sector counsellors may be contacted by applicants for advice and information from the initial stages of preparing the application and throughout the application round. The overall

principle in this contact with applicants is to ensure to *treat all applicants equally*, provide the same level of service, information and advice to all (without payment).

## **b. Involvement in Phase 1 – relevance assessment**

The sector counsellors will be directly involved in the assessment of the applications in Phase 1. As sector counsellors are MFA employees and thereby part of the MFA as granting authority, it is important to avoid any possible conflicts of interest in the involvement and communication with applicants.

In Phase 1, the applications will be assessed by sector counsellors with respect to the relevance of the research project proposed (project idea). The relevance of the research proposal is evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- *The focus of the project is well-defined with respect to the guiding principles for the support to development research and theme of the call;*
- *The project responds to national development priorities and is relevant for Danish development cooperation/Danish Strategic Sector Cooperation;*
- *The project is well-defined with respect to ongoing research projects/programmes in the country/region;*
- *The project is well suited for the political, socio-economic and institutional context, including the security situation.*

In February 2024 the sector counsellors will be given access to the Phase 1 applications, receive instructions and a review form to be filled in for each application for research in the specific growth and transition country. In the assessment, the sector counsellors must *strictly adhere to the criteria in the Call*.

It is the responsibility of the sector counsellors to consult the relevant Danish authority during the assessment of relevance of the proposed project. The reviews will be used by the FFU in the further assessment at a meeting in April 2024 and for the final short-listing by the MFA (ELK).

In May 2024 the sector counsellors will be informed about which applicants have been invited to prepare a full research project proposal – a Phase 2 application.

## **c. Involvement in Phase 2 and in granted projects**

The deadline for the Phase 2 applications is in August 2024. The sector counsellors will not be involved in the assessment of the phase 2 applications, but again, it is important to *strike a balance* in the communication with the short-listed applicants. On the one hand, the contact to applicants is important to facilitate the link to the SSC from the onset of the research projects. On the other hand, the sector counsellors must not have a direct influence on the content of applications. Thus, it is necessary to keep advice at a general level concerning the themes and SSC projects.

By the end of 2024 the final decision will be made on which research projects that are selected funded and this decision will be endorsed by Innovation Fund Denmark. The sector counsellors will be informed of the approved research projects. When the research projects have been granted, the Danida Fellowship Centre will be responsible for the management of the grants and contact to the project holders, including monitoring of project implementation in collaboration with ELK and the FFU. It is expected that the granted research projects will link directly with sector counsellors, e.g. through a project advisory committee, and that sector counsellors are invited to relevant project events.

For more information on Calls for research applications and on-going projects, please consult [DFC's website](#) or contact the DFC Research Management Team at [research@dfcentre.dk](mailto:research@dfcentre.dk).