

Date: 22-23 August 2018

Venue: Far Eastern Federal University, Vladivostok, Russia

Participants: Listed in the Appendix

e-ASIA Joint Research Program 7th Annual Board Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting

- 1) The 7th Annual Board Meeting of the e-ASIA Joint Research Program (the “Program”), chaired by Mr. Yaroslav Sorokotyaga, Division Director, International Relations Department, Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR) was held on the 22nd and the 23rd of August 2018 at the Far Eastern Federal University (FEFU) in Vladivostok, Russia. The meeting was attended by the Board Members (including proxies of the appointed Board Members) from ten of the nineteen Member Organizations of the Program from eight of the thirteen countries, namely: NHMRC (Australia), MEXT (Japan), JST (Japan), AMED (Japan), HRC (New Zealand), DOST (Philippines), RFBR (Russia), NSTDA (Thailand), TCELS (Thailand) and VMOST (Vietnam). NIAID (USA), NCI (USA) participated in the Board discussion via videoconference. The full list of participants is attached to these minutes as an appendix. The Board Members from MOH (Cambodia), RISTEKDIKTI (Indonesia), MOST (Lao PDR), MOH (Lao PDR), MOSTI (Malaysia), MOE (Myanmar) and ARDA (Thailand) did not attend. TRF (Thailand) expressed its consent in writing to decisions made by the Board in advance of the Annual Board Meeting.
- 2) Dr. Alexander Usoltsev, Head of International Relations, RFBR, on behalf of the hosting Member Organization (hereinafter referred to as “MO”) made a welcome address underlining the importance of enhancing scientific cooperation in Asia and further developing e-ASIA JRP activities. The welcome speech was followed by self-introductions from Board members and the Program Secretariat.
- 3) A ***review of activities*** which took place after 6th Annual Board Meeting was presented by the Program Secretariat (Mr. Yoshihide Kobayashi) followed by approval of the Board:
 - Key Topics Summary in 6th Annual Board Meeting in Cebu, the Philippines on June 22-23, 2017;
 - Ad hoc Board Meetings (18th - 22nd);
 - 5th and 6th Annual Activity Report;
 - Update on past call information regarding proposals and supported projects, including PI substitutions;
 - Workshop on "Strategy for Genetic Conservation and Utilization of Endangered or

Indigenous/Native Animal Species in Asia“ held March 1-2, 2018 in Bangkok, Thailand;

- Update of the information on List of Member Organizations, Guest Partners and Board Members, Scientific Advisory Council members, presenting two new Board Members - Dr. Alexander Usoltsev (RFBR, Russia) and Dr. Pongsakorn Tantilipikorn (TRF, Thailand) and new SAC member Mr. TEK Bunchhoeung (MOH, Cambodia);
- Information about Grantee Network section to be introduced on the e-Asia website.

VMOST provided new information about the two projects of the 6th Call with Vietnamese participation which have not been yet formally approved by VMOST. The Board members were informed that the evaluation process was ongoing for one project, and that there were some organizational problems with the second project, but that these difficulties would be overcome and that the funding for both projects would start before the end of the year.

The e-Asia JRP Secretary-General (Mr. Masaki Sato) informed Board Members of the status of e-ASIA JRP Membership expansion and current developments on communication efforts with potential member organizations: A*STAR (Agency for Science, Technology and Research, Singapore), DST (Department of Science and Technology, India) and DBT (Department of Biotechnology, India), which have expressed an interest in joining e-ASIA JRP.

MOSTI (Malaysia) is still under a “Quasi-Member” status and is currently undergoing reorganization – as the Ministry is undergoing reorganization approval from the Minister will take some time.

TCELS and RFBR informed about the latest developments regarding STI policy in their respective countries, including reorganization of relative ministries.

- 4) **Report on the 5th SAC Meeting** was presented by the Program Secretariat, including an overview of the discussion on priority topics for the 8th Call for proposals and a brief summary of SAC comments on the five-year Program evaluation report.
- 5) **Board members presented Progress/Final Reports for e-Asia projects:**
 - AMED presented one Final Report: Project #1 “Evaluation of the Pandemic Potential of H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Viruses Circulating in Indonesia” and two Progress Reports: Project #3 “Characterization of Multidrug Resistance Gram-Negative Bacteria Carrying Antibiotics-Resistance Gene Which Have been Inserted to Chromosome”; and Project #5 “Health Impact of Opisthorchiasis Infection in Cambodia and Vietnam: Prevalent Surveillance of Opisthorchiasis and Risk Surveillance for Liver Cancer.”
 - NSTDA presented the Final Report for Project #2 “Development of Functional Nanocarbon-Based Catalysts for Biomass Conversion Processes.”
 - The Program Secretariat (on behalf of NIAID, USA) presented the Progress Report of Project

#4 “Dengue Viral Genetic Diversity in Selected Populations in Myanmar”.

HRC presented the Progress Report of Project #6 “Collaborative Fever Etiology Research in South East Asia”.

DOST presented the Progress Report of Project #7 “Development of Information Gathering and Utilization Systems Using Small Unmanned Airborne Vehicles (UAVs) for Disaster Risk Assessment, Monitoring and Response”

JST presented Progress Reports of two projects: #8 “Intelligent Integrated Transport for Smart Life”. JST also mentioned that the Japanese government is now considering the creation of a new transportation system for the 2020 Summer Olympics. This new system should be founded on people’s behavior; #17 “Monitoring and Prediction of Extreme Weather Using Lightning Detection Network and Micro-Satellites”.

The presentations were followed by a lively discussion among the Board Members, calling attention to some outstanding projects results, both in terms of scientific and societal impact. However, some of the questions on projects implementation, including methods used and outcomes, raised by the Board could not be answered due to a lack of detailed information in reports on various aspects of project implementation. In this regard the Chair proposed introducing specialized valorization meetings among the e-ASIA JRP activities, in order for project PIs to meet and report on intermediate and final projects outcomes, answering relevant questions. It was agreed that such report meetings could not only benefit the evaluation of projects results but also be useful for enhancing interaction in the research community, including by promoting the exchange of ideas, exchange between projects, and spread of information related to e-ASIA JRP activities as well as supported e-ASIA JRP projects. Such meetings could also be organized back-to-back with SAC meetings.

- 6) The “**Five Year Program Activity Evaluation**” report by SAC was presented by the Program Secretariat. The report covers various aspects of program implementation for the five years of program activities focusing on the following issues:
- Contribution of the program towards promotion of the science and technology community in East Asia;
 - Contributions to human resource development in the region;
 - Contribution to generation of “novel knowledge and competitive technologies” and generation of “synergistic, supplemental and leveraged effects”;
 - Genuine partnerships for mutual contribution and equitable allotment of outcomes;
 - Rational and objective approaches to decision-making, supported by facts and guided by scientific experience;
 - Effectiveness of the program management.

The report further noted that:

- The numbers of participating organizations and countries has steadily increased every year. Further expansion of collaboration beyond the East Asia Summit (EAS) participating countries is an additional achievement. However, there are still some EAS countries which have no participating organization. It is hoped that the Program will expand collaboration to include organizations from these EAS countries.
- The Program expanded the fields of cooperation from the original five fields to seven and Member Organizations have steadily implemented program activities in nearly all the cooperation fields. However, there remains one cooperation field in which no joint activity has been conducted yet. It is hoped the Program will implement activities in all the fields of cooperation.
- The Program has steadily implemented joint calls for proposals. The numbers of projects and involved PIs have increased every year. This is contributing to active participation of the STI community and the expansion of areas of collaboration in the region.
- The Program is making a positive contribution to researchers' capacity development and network expansion through activities such as training, research exchange with partner countries, workshops and research presentations at various events. Additionally, there are additional contributions, such as how participating research institutes of a project jointly signed a MOU to create more effective collaborative environment for human resource development between the institutes.
- Some Member Organizations (MEXT/JST and AMED) have introduced a scholarship program specially reserved for e-ASIA JRP projects. This is a good example of Member Organizations' own initiatives done together with e-ASIA JRP to nurture early-career researchers.
- The Program is contributing to the generation of new knowledge and know-how through collaborative research. In addition, some outputs of collaborative research, such as improvement in crops and medical diagnostics, are contributing or expected to contribute to societal progress.
- e-ASIA projects are demonstrating synergistic effects through collaborative research while making full use of each country's respective strengths in a complementary manner, including across various areas such as in on-site data collection, analysis and growth of research targets.
- The Program is fostering genuine partnerships for mutual contribution for both researchers and Member Organizations through implementing collaborative projects as well as organizing research workshops and other meetings.
- Since workshops are opportunities for creating new researcher networks and discovering new research themes, further contributions by each Member Organization in organizing them are encouraged.
- Due to the introduction of multiple funding modalities, it has become easier for more Member Organizations to participate in joint calls for proposals under the Program. The Program is providing an environment in which researchers from all countries which have participating

organizations in the Program to contribute to projects and achieving positive outcomes.

- Decisions regarding the Program were made on a rational and objective basis by the Board, with advice from SAC (the neutral advisory council consisting of science and technology experts) provided on an ad hoc basis.
- In the selection of call topics, the Program is trying to make decisions based on facts and the scientific and programmatic priorities of each Member Organization suggested by SAC and/or what has been learned through research workshops.
- The Program has steadily been improving program management every year and is trying to realize even more effective program management.
- During calls for proposals, award notices were delayed for several months in most calls. This may have caused delays for applicants in regard to activities related to the proposals. For a small number of proposals extended delays occurred due to unusual circumstances. It is hoped that both the Program Secretariat and Member Organizations collaboratively improve the processes in future call implementations.
- Improved responsiveness from Member Organizations would be appreciated by the Program Secretariat.

During the evaluation report presentation activities, the following remarks were provided and discussed by MOs:

DOST drew the Board's attention to the fact that the Environment (Climate Change and Marine Science) area of cooperation was lacking in activities, especially in terms of how no call in this thematic area has yet been launched.

NHMRC commented that e-Asia JRP is a very fruitful program and informed the Board about the discussion on how its national project approval procedures and notification processes in Australia can take up to 5-6 months due to how each grant award needs to be signed by the respective minister in advance. HRC shared its experience on making successful improvements on a national level on the same kind of issues during its time as a participant of the Program. RFBR stressed that delays in the approval process of a few months is a critical problem. There are some projects involving RFBR support that still have not been formally approved by MOs, even after a year has passed. Due to fiscal year budget allocation restrictions for each call, RFBR began to fund these projects before national procedures of other funders were fully completed, as otherwise the funding for selected 6th Call projects would have had to be canceled. The Board agreed that timing differences in national approval processes and funding lead to imbalances in project implementation for project teams which put the entire project at risk. There are also other related problems which arise from these cases, such as how some other national rules put restrictions on PIs to apply with new proposals for other calls until decision on the project have been made, etc.

VMOST provided updated information on two projects in the Bio-Nano call which had not been approved after more than a year had passed. Internal procedures are expected to take two months and these projects can be funded from January 2019. DOST shared their experience on overcoming problems related to decision making delays in early calls, by modifying internal procedures, such as introducing different project approval authority of projects based on budget size and pre-approval schemes in DOST before applying to e-ASIA. NHMRC is also trying to improve its approval process situation.

TCELS initiated a discussion on intellectual property issues in case of commercialization of projects results. In this regard the Program Secretariat informed that for e-Asia JRP CRAs (Collaborative Research Agreement) this is not mandatory, but the Secretariat still recommends project consortia to sign CRAs; however, the Program Secretariat lacks information on whether consortia of selected projects have signed CRAs or not. The Chair noted that the necessity to sign CRAs for IP regulation also depends on the type of project (for innovative projects it is much more relevant compared to those focused on basic research, for example) and further strongly depends on national legislation of countries involved in each particular project, and that it therefore is an incredibly challenging task to create a universal CRA which would suit the needs of each MO country. However, the PIs may use model agreements (such as those prepared by the Program Secretariat, or alternatively those available as models for other multilateral programs, based on EU Horizon 2020, etc.).

The Board was informed by the Program Secretariat about the status of the e-Asia JRP membership, including “Guest Partners” and “Quasi-Members”. Once again it was underlined that Guest Partner organizations may join e-ASIA JRP calls on a call-by-call basis, but are not eligible for assigning a Board Member, while the Quasi-Member status, initially introduced for providing opportunities to collaborate with Malaysia, is basically available for organizations which need to undergo additional formal national approval procedures to receive approval for fully participating in the Program. However, five years after the introduction of the Quasi-Member status for MOSTI of Malaysia, the situation concerning national approval remains unchanged. It was decided that the Board should return to the issue of the Quasi-Member status on a future occasion.

- 7) The Board discussed the **Improvement Proposals of e-ASIA Activities** provided by both MOs (HRC, NIAID, JST) and the Program Secretariat.

The discussion floor was opened by the Secretary-General with a comprehensive description of the Program Secretariat’s suggestions:

The *first* item addressed the application stage, mainly focusing on *improvements needed for Call Guidelines*. Some of the MOs by the time of the last call’s announcement (or later) have not yet provided national guidelines outlining national eligibility requirements and applications deadlines. In some other cases national guidelines written in the e-ASIA call guideline did not

provide all necessary information necessary to determine non-eligibility of some proposals. For some funders there were other specific deadlines, though clearly stated, which were not considered by applicants. Some funders did not provide information as to whether they require a national application or not. As a case study, the Secretary-General described application procedures for AMED, HRC and VMOST and the various difficulties that applicants have faced. The follow-up discussion started with comments from HRC, informing the Board that HRC application forms and information requested from applicants are somewhat different from e-Asia JRP applications, as well as that HRC staff needs to confirm application content prior to submission to the e-ASIA Secretariat before the call deadline.

RFBR proposed to have National Annexes – national requirements for each funding agency, as additional separate documents for each funder (not as part of e-ASIA call text as it is now), in order for national requirement information to be made available on the call website sometime after the call announcement, in the case of some funding organizations failing to provide information on national requirements by the time of the call text publication. RFBR also explained the reason for postponing national deadlines in relation to the e-ASIA Call deadline, namely to ensure that general applications to the e-Asia Secretariat had been submitted and to give Russian applicants a few extra days to complete the national application (which, as in the case of HRC, requires some additional information) building on the final proposal sent to the e-ASIA Secretariat. If it were reviewed by the e-ASIA Joint Evaluation Committee, RFBR will not ask for national application forms and instead use the general e-ASIA proposal sent to the Secretariat for review.

In order to avoid possible confusion arising from different national deadlines, AMED suggested that each call should prepare a single chart showing all relevant national deadlines related to a particular call to be published on the call website in order to inform applicants.

The *second* item for discussion was *delays of award notices in past e-ASIA calls*. The Secretary-General showed information on award notice delay cases for each of the past e-ASIA JRP calls. The delays occurred both in the evaluation phase as well as in the post-evaluation phase (national approval procedures). Once again, the importance of avoiding significant delays was underlined. One of the solutions to avoid delays (in the evaluation phase) was to introduce a Joint Review Panel. As feedback to the Program Secretariat's presentation, HRC mentioned that some procedures undertaken by MOs are required by legislation and thus could not be avoided unless legislation is changed. For example, HRC has to complete the post-award stage in six weeks to two months period. The Chair seconded that some MOs need to follow their national evaluation processes, so it is needed to collect information on whether all MOs can use joint peer review scheme. NHMRC agreed that some countries have regulations which do not allow to use joint peer review scheme (NHMRC and NIAID), however currently NHMRC is working on the situation and expects that the joint peer review scheme, which HNMRC fully supports as a scheme which truly demonstrates the cooperative nature of activities, will be

suitable for NHMRC. The Chair continued the idea that a joint review scheme would allow also to evaluate exact same proposal rather to different national proposals submitted in parallel, which may vary in quality of preparation while the project described is actually remains the same. DOST pointed out that the greatest delay issue is not in the review process but rather in the administrative process of the post-evaluation phase. The Program Secretariat presented a chart with post-evaluation timelines provided by the MOs, which unfortunately did not correspond with the practices of some of the funders.

The Board went round the table and shared information on potential project start dates based on their respective national funding modalities (fiscal/calendar year etc.): RFBR uses two different approaches: (1) funding within a calendar (fiscal) year or (2) funding within factual year (e.g. from September until September); NHMRC is flexible and can fund at any time but prefers start of funding from 1st of January; AMED funds according to the fiscal year, from the end of March (as the Japanese fiscal year lasts from 1st of April to 31st of March); JST can fund according to factual months (e.g. from June to July) moreover some additional funding time can be extended to projects until the end of last fiscal year of the projects. HRC can start funding in any month; DOST can start funding at any time but preferably on January 1; TCELS can start funding at any time but prefer to plan funding for the next fiscal year (starting on October 1); MOST: the Vietnamese fiscal year starts on January 1 and MOST can start funding from January to June; from July onwards MOST needs to wait until the following fiscal year. The Chair offered the Secretariat to ask absent MOs to provide the Secretariat with information regarding their funding modalities via e-mails to arrive at the best possible solution.

The Board once again underlined the importance of sticking to a common call timeframe and urged all MOs to complete all internal evaluation procedures in due time. The Board agreed that the timespan of award notifications should not exceed one year after a call announcement has been made.

The *third* item presented by the Program Secretariat focused on *time differences in project funding periods*. The Program Secretariat initially showed a case study on time differences in funding periods. In some instances the simultaneous funding period of PIs from different countries within a single project was limited to around one and a half year out of three years. The Program Secretariat noted that some of the MOs do not follow the funding timeframes provided prior to the call announcement. The Program Secretariat urged MOs to stick to the funding timeframes provided in the call guidelines.

The Board supported the Program Secretariat, recognizing the importance of funding synchronization among project PIs. The Board Members stressed that work delays for one PI can result in overall project delays due to common difficulty for other funded project PIs to carry on with their work which needs appearance of all related consequences.

As a case study for major reasons for project start date delays DOST noted the following: (a) In a very early case, when approval by DOST came after approval by e-ASIA, significant time was

required (b) significant time was required to receive permission from National Commission on Indigenous Peoples; (c) significant time was required to procure some of the equipment which was necessary for the project. It was seconded by JST. While the Chair noticed that the Board cannot set a single funding date due to differences in national funding modalities, the Program Secretariat invited all MOs to communicate with each other on the funding situation for selected projects, and if possible, to adjust the funding period in order to secure maximum duration of project co-funding. The Chair noted that projects selected in a single call starting with different timeframes also is an issue which should be considered since there are Member Organizations which are unable to delay the starting date of some projects from that of the other projects.

The *next* two *items* on the agenda were suggested for discussion by NIAID. One of them was a recommendation to ***minimize delays in post-review negotiations and decisions of final project approval for co-funding/support***, which was previously discussed, and the other was a recommendation to ***increase funding opportunity publicity***.

DOST commented that for the past five years the approval ratio has been one out of five (1/5), so a further increase in interest from the research community would make it necessary for MOs to increase call budgets, otherwise there would be a risk of the success rate dropping low enough to undermine interest in applications to calls in the research community. As an idea for consideration TCELS proposed to introduce an exit strategy of each project and project managers who would supervise selected projects. HRC suggested that publicizing completed project success stories and positive outcomes may showcase how the Program constitutes a good investment. The Chair added that the scientific community could be more actively targeted by presentations about e-ASIA JRP in relevant scientific conferences. AMED suggested adding more flexibility to project selection procedures by introducing “groups” to the evaluation ranking lists which would allow simultaneous consideration of a batch of projects equivalent to each other.

The *following item* discussed by the Board was presented by HRC and focused on modifying the application format, namely by ***making the section for research approach descriptions longer and including a common CV section in the application form structure***, in what should result in more room for details required and ensure consistency and ease of reading. Considering that there are parallel submissions of national applications, making the application form longer should be avoided. Further, there is a need to consider the suggestion to modify application forms internally in each Member Organizations and the best option may be to reconsider some fields in the proposal forms. The Program Secretariat was instructed to consider the suggestion of modifying the application form and to continue communication with MOs on this process via e-mail, with HRC assisting if required. The *other item* proposed by HRC was to extend the proposals evaluation phase to up to four months in length.

The final presenter of suggestions for improvement was JST, bringing *two items* to the table: ***effective utilization of project outcomes*** and a ***reconsideration of the SAC mission***. JST noted

that currently no comprehensive discussion opportunity for project outcomes among Member Organizations exists and further that the current reporting process is insufficient for the adequate promotion and ensuring sustainability of the program, suggesting that in order to improve the situation a joint face-to-face workshop for concluded projects or a joint project evaluation meeting, both with the participation of MO representatives, may be introduced. Besides the general view that the proposal to have meetings for final reports largely was in accord with previous discussion, the following additional remarks were made: AMED suggested exploring a mechanism of combining outputs of different e-ASIA projects in one larger project; TCELS supported JST's concerns on effective utilization of project outcomes and that IP utilization could be included in the criteria. DOST added that project outcomes could be considered not only right after the conclusion of a project, but also in the subsequent years, as well as that different kinds of project outcomes should be considered for projects of different nature (e.g. the public good for health-related projects; commercialization for materials-related projects; involvement of stakeholders or end users for extension work projects, etc.). JST added that if the project outcome is known, they may be given advice on applying to other programs of the Member Organizations in order to receive continuous support.

With consensus in the discussion that the Board should introduce reporting activities such as face-to-face workshops or a conference for e-ASIA supported projects among e-ASIA JRP activities, the Program Secretariat was entrusted, with support from JST, to draft an event concept paper and subsequently share it with MOs for further elaboration and approval.

Regarding the reconsideration of the SAC mission, JST shared the following view: as the current role of the SAC is solely to provide advice and opinions to the Board, the current situation shows that the role of the SAC is limited with little benefit of valuable experts' insights, also resulting in difficulties in securing full member attendance in SAC meetings. JST proposed to reconsider the SAC mission so that the SAC may have greater direct influence, for example through introducing a specific call topic selection discussion panel assigned by/jointly with SAC, a joint peer review panel assigned by/jointly with SAC for project selection or a joint meeting opportunity between the Board and SAC for direct communication. Supporting JST's proposal, the Chair shared his personal reflections on the last SAC meeting, noting that the issue of SAC members' role was also raised among meeting participants. The ensuing discussion within the Board noted that the SAC is represented by scientists from various fields and therefore in its present composition is not satisfying the criteria for acting as a thematic call peer review panel. In this regard, with appreciation of SAC's contribution to the Program, the Board would like to hear the opinion of SAC on its own mission, something which may be included in the next SAC meeting agenda. To this end the Board tasked the Program Secretariat to collect opinions of SAC members on their views on the role of SAC. Based on the opinion from SAC the discussion on this matter would take place during the next Board Meeting, and the MOs are further also

invited to provide their suggestions prior to the meeting. As additional comments, TCELS suggested inviting members from industry or the private sector to SAC and changing the Council to the Specialist Advisory Council.

8) As a follow-up to the discussion of the 6th Annual Board Meeting, JST presented their views on how *to enhance opportunities for early-career researches* in the framework of e-ASIA JRP activities. As a measure to address this challenge, JST presented an idea of introducing a pilot call for early-career researchers with a focus on projects including at least three young PIs from three countries in the field of “Materials” in the 8th call or in ad hoc call in 2019, with only real funds support from MOs with reduced funding compared to funding for regular e-ASIA JRP projects as an initial budget for launching collaborative research.

The Board expressed general approval of the suggestion to improve opportunities for young-career researchers followed by a discussion on details and criteria that may shape call conditions, such as a definition of early-career researchers, pilot call thematic areas, etc. Exchange of information and further discussion showed that the definition of early-career researchers or young scientists varies between MOs and can depend on age, the number of years post-degree, or both.

NHMRC proposed not only focusing on dedicated calls for early-career researchers but also exploring measures of incorporating opportunities for young scientists into existing activities, e.g. introducing a requirement in existing calls to involve early-career researchers as part of the PI team in e-ASIA JRP projects as well as giving opportunities for them to participate in face-to-face workshops, etc. DOST commented that the Materials field is good for the Philippines since researchers in this field are younger compared with those in other fields and further that DOST would be able to participate. AMED suggested that collaboration between young and senior researchers is also an effective option if functioning as a mentor system, something which presently exists in a different US-Japan medical collaborative research program.

Based on the discussions, JST was entrusted by the Board to draft a call concept paper and provide it to the Program Secretariat for distribution among all MOs.

9) Based on feedback collected from MOs prior to the Board Meeting, the Program Secretariat presented draft suggestions on modalities for the *8th e-ASIA JRP call* implementation, including topics of interest and a call timeline.

Based on the discussion, the following schedule for the 8th call has been agreed upon:

- Call framework tentative agreement – August 2018
- Set call topics – End of September 2018
- Document preparation and Main Member Organizations assign – October-December 2018
- Submission of LoI – End of December 2018
- Open call – Middle of January 2019

- Close call – End of April 2019
- MO review – May-July 2019
- Joint Review Meeting – September 2019
- Announcement to applicants – End of November 2019
- Contract preparation – December-February 2020
- Funding start – January-March 2020

Suggestions on call topics presented by SAC and MOs were distributed among participants prior to the meeting. MOs exchanged information on the matter and indicated topics of interest for participation in the next call. The following topics have been approved for the 8th e-ASIA JRP call (preferences given during the meeting or prior in writing are indicated in brackets; other MOs are not prevented from joining a given call):

Materials:

- Innovative Materials (JST, DOST, RFBR, NSTDA)
The “Materials” thematic area was selected as an area for launching a pilot call for early-career researchers; however, a critical mass of participating funders is needed. In this regard RFBR has agreed to investigate opportunities to support a pilot call for early-career researchers under the Innovation Materials topic in the framework of the 8th e-ASIA JRP call for proposals. In the case that RFBR agrees to participate - a critical mass of funders will be reached and the Innovative Materials thematic area will be launched within early-career researchers funding concept, if not – there will be a regular call under the Innovative Materials topic with opportunities for other MOs to participate with in-kind contributions.

Health Research:

- Infectious Diseases (NHMRC, AMED, HRC, DOST, RFBR, NIAID, NSTDA).
- Cancer (NHMRC, AMED, DOST, RFBR, NCI, TCELS).
- Multidrug Resistance (NHMRC, HRC, RFBR, DOST, NSTDA).
The Board agreed to specifically announce Multidrug Resistance as a third topic and it will encourage researchers to collaborate in this topic and to find possibilities for participating MOs to strategically acquire extra funding for research on this topic.

Agriculture (Food):

- Animal Genetic Resource Conservation and Utilization (JST, DOST, TRF, VMOST, NSTDA).
This area is an outcome of the workshop held by TRF and JST.

For each topic approved as an 8th e-ASIA JRP thematic area leading MOs were assigned to draft thematic scoping documents by the end of September 2018, namely: Health – HRC and

NHMRC; Materials – DOST; Agriculture (food) – JST. The Call Secretariat is then to distribute the draft of the call concepts among all MOs to receive feedback on their potential participation in the call.

While the thematic scoping is still to be elaborated and agreed, some MOs raised concerns that their potential for participation in certain subtopics may be limited due to difference in national priorities in elaborated subtopic scope. In this regard it was underlined by the Board that if any MOs which are deciding to participate in a particular subtopic would have additional national limitations narrowing down subtopic scope and therefore limiting opportunities for national researchers, those limitations should be clearly stated in the respective national annexes and provided for publication on the call website in due time.

The Board also discussed action to be undertaken in relation to other thematic directions:

Health Research:

It was noted that the topics of “Precision Medicine” and “Regenerative Medicine” are of particular interest. However, opportunities for project research funding in these particular areas should be further investigated. In this regard the Board entrusted NSTDA to organize the workshop on the Precision Medicine topic.

AMED commented that it is unnecessary to discuss call topics on an annual basis, and suggested instead establishing a mid-term or five-year strategy in order to focus on long-term topics of priority. In this regard AMED would lead call topics discussion for a longer-term plan.

Materials:

In the framework of thematic area consideration as a candidate for launching a pilot call for early-career researchers it was noted that horizontal links between young scientists in the Asian region may be insufficient for building up multilateral projects. In this regard DOST would hold a brokerage workshop on Innovative Materials for early-career researchers and young scientists prior to launching a call focused on young scientists.

Environment (Climate Change and Marine Science):

Since no call for proposals has been launched in this area so far, further action is encouraged in this direction for cooperation. The Board entrusted RFBR to organize a workshop in the Environment field in 2019.

The Board exchanged opinions on whether e-Asia JRP should focus its collaborative efforts on fewer topics with greater impact in the selected fields or alternatively a wider range of topics to foster international collaboration networks across range of disciplines and address priority topics in different research areas.

10) The Secretary-General presented detailed information on the *operation policy of the e-ASIA Secretariat*, focusing on three main pillars:

- *Mr. Sato's term of office as Secretary-General*
- *Sustainability of the Program*
- *Location of the e-ASIA Secretariat Office*

followed by discussion within the Board.

Mr. Sato was appointed as Secretary-General at the 2015 Annual Board Meeting held in Yangon, Myanmar for a three-year term. Facing expiration of Mr. Sato's three-year term, the Board extended Mr. Sato's term as e-ASIA JRP Secretary-General to correspond with his position as Director of the JST Singapore office.

The Program Secretariat consists of three full-time personnel provided by JST and one part-time one-day-per-week personnel provided by NSTDA. However, with a growing number of e-ASIA JRP activities, the workload that can be distributed among the current Program Secretariat staff is reaching its limits. Particularly difficult times in terms of the workload are during preparations for Annual Board Meetings, SAC Meetings and during calls for proposals. In this regard the Secretariat offered MOs to consider options such as sending additional personnel to the e-ASIA JRP Secretariat office or to contribute to the Secretariat by sharing costs or taking over some of the workload.

During the discussion it was noted that some of the meetings preparation tasks could be transferred from the Secretariat to host MOs (e.g. communication with meeting participants related to logistics and visa support; creating lists for accommodation and transportation; or drafting minutes of the meetings etc.) as well as some travel costs (e.g. accommodation) could be covered for Program Secretariat personnel. The Board also supported the suggestion that host MOs may assist the Program Secretariat with the workload related to meeting preparation. As a first practical step in that direction RFBR agreed to take over the task of preparing meeting minutes as well as covering accommodation costs for the Program Secretariat in Vladivostok. The Secretariat would also consider which tasks could potentially be shared among MOs to assist with the increasing workload.

The other recognized problem was budget restrictions of certain MOs resulting in limited possibilities of traveling to e-ASIA JRP meetings, especially Annual Board Meetings and SAC meetings. For this reason, the Secretariat raised the question of whether any kind of financial support could be provided by some of the MOs, such as for accommodation and airfare, as both are crucial as some of the MOs were unable to come to the current meeting even with the host MO willing to cover accommodation costs. RFBR and DOST informed that due to budget restrictions it would not be possible to cover airfare, while covering some local travel costs

(transportation, accommodation), on the other hand, is possible; the others would investigate options to cover airfare for the Program Secretariat or for MOs with significantly limited travel budgets. The MOs agreed to explore other funding options for covering meetings costs (both internal and external, such as mobility programs, etc.) as well as for airfare. As an option, RFBR mentioned the ASEAN-Russia opportunity support fund for projects that could be explored for additional funding. This fund, however, requires time consuming procedures and paperwork to be completed, and further takes significant time before decisions are made. RFBR noted how that in the Belmont Forum member organizations are required to pay annual fees but may alternatively offer in-kind contributions, such as sharing some tasks of the Secretariat without sending a staff to the Secretariat office.

The Secretary-General mentioned that the period of use for the 2nd term e-Asia JRP office facilities located in Thailand Science Park (Bangkok), provided by NSTDA, will expire in 2020. Due to this situation, the e-ASIA JRP Secretariat must either agree on renewing the agreement with NSTDA or find a new location, much preferably in one of the ASEAN countries. As a follow-up, DOST requested the Program Secretariat to provide facility specifications requirement information, for them to explore the potential of hosting the Secretariat. NSTDA declared that, while understanding that the spirit of collaboration may call for relocating the e-ASIA JRP office to a new country, NSTDA with pleasure are open to continuing its support by hosting the e-ASIA JRP office facilities in Bangkok if such decision is taken.

- 11) The Program Secretariat informed the Board on details of ***negotiations with potential member organizations***, including MESTECC of Malaysia, Quasi-Member of e-ASIA and challenges faced. The Board encouraged further expansion of the e-ASIA JRP membership and agreed that MOs would use bilateral ties to assist the Program Secretariat with bringing new members on board (e.g. Australian Research Council, Department of Science and Technology of India, Ministry of Education of Malaysia and others).
- 12) The Board reconfirmed that e-ASIA JRP call ***national evaluation results*** should be submitted to the Program Secretariat according to the agreed rating categories, namely “A”, “B” and “C”. If any MO needs to distinguish proposals within a single category, an additional number category element, consisting of “1” and “2”, may be introduced to the general category, i.e. as “A1”, “A2”, “B1”, “B2”, “C”.
- 13) The Board agreed to ***revise the Program Statutes*** as follows, where underlined text represents revisions:

Article 4 Paragraph 7 “Guest Partners”:

“Guest Partners” are organizations other than Member Organizations or Quasi Member Organizations that are, with the consent of the Board, involved in the Program on a call-by-call basis. Guest Partners are eligible organizations from within and outside of the EAS participating countries that operate under common agendas. Guest Partners are not represented on the Board, but may observe the Board Meetings with approval of the Board. They may only participate in a call for proposals when at least three Member Organizations also are participating. Guest Partner status may be acquired by submitting a LoI to be a Guest Partner in the Program to the Program Secretariat. The Board will then consider approval to be a Guest Partner after deliberating the degree of contribution the prospective Guest Partner organization is able to make to the Program.

Article 6 Paragraph 2 and 3:

(2) Conditions for convening Board Meetings and Delegation of Power:

The Annual Board Meeting requires the attendance of more than half of the Board Members who have a voting right. Board Members must give written notification of their intention to physically attend or not attend the meeting (by e-mail, fax, etc.) at least two weeks in advance.

When a Board Member is unable to physically attend a Board Meeting, there are alternative ways of representation or voting in a Board decision, as follows:

Alternative 1: to delegate his/her right to vote to a proxy from the Member Organization he/she represents;

Alternative 2: to express his/her consent or dissent to the Board's decision in writing (by e-mail, fax, etc.) to the Board in advance of the Board Meeting;

Alternative 3: to participate in the Board's decision making by other means agreed upon by the Board Members.

(3) Authorities of the Board:

The authorities of the Board, in addition to those specified elsewhere, consist of the following:

- (i) To approve and revise, as appropriate, policies, procedures, and by-laws, as specified in Article 11, of the Program;
- (ii) To approve and revise the framework of the Program, including:
 - (a) Mechanisms for managing the Program such as formation of organs or operation procedures
 - (b) Fields of collaboration,
 - (c) Guidelines for research agreement among cooperating institutions, as well as treatment of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) (refer to the Appendix: Program-Related Documents);
 - (d) Process of application review (refer to the Appendix: Program-Related Documents)
- (iii) To approve:

- (a) Projects to receive funding,
- (b) The Program activity plan,
- (c) The annual report on the progress of the Program;
- (iv) To approve changes to the Membership of the Program, including accession and secession, and invitation of Guest Partners and Observers;
- (v) To deliberate and decide on other matters as requested by Member Organizations and to approve activities necessary to achieve the objectives of the Program.

Decisions are made on a consensus basis among the attending Board Members who have voting rights at Annual and Ad Hoc Board Meetings. However, when voting is needed, decisions regarding items (iii), (iv) or (v) are made by a two-thirds majority vote. The attending Board Members at Annual Board Meetings are defined as the Board Members attending the Annual Board Meeting physically or represented through alternative ways described in Article 6 (2). The decisions of the Board will be reflected in the operation of the Program in such ways as designated by the Board.

Member Organizations acknowledge the responsibilities of the Board and agree to accept its decisions.

- 14) The Board decided that the “*observer*” status for Annual Board Meeting participation of each “Guest Partner” will be subject to annual approval.
- 15) The Board agreed that when the e-ASIA JRP *call is launched with participation of Guest Partner organizations*, the following requirements must be met in project applications:
 - The lead PI of the project should be a PI from a country represented in the call by the respective national MO.
 - A project consortium should consist of at least three PIs from three countries represented in the call by respective national MOs, thus participation of a PI from a country represented by a Guest Partner may be only be as a fourth or latter additional participant.
- 16) The Secretariat and JST informed the Board on the “5th JASTIP Symposium” which will be organized on 16-18 October in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, under the “Disaster Risk Reduction & Environmental Sustainability for Social Resilience” thematic area.
- 17) JST informed the Board on Japanese government scholarships related to e-ASIA JRP Projects. The information covered statistics on participation from previous years as well as information on the next round of opportunities.
- 18) The Secretariat informed the Board about a workshop on “Intelligent Infrastructure for Water” which will be organized by the Directorate of Water Resources (DWR), Institute of Water

Resources Planning (IWRP) (MARD, Vietnam) and JST (Japan) and the e-ASIA JRP Secretariat on 21-22 February 2019 in Hanoi, Vietnam.

- 19) AMED informed the Board that AMED, HRC and NHMRC started preparations for organizing a workshop on infectious diseases and cancer to be held in January-February 2019. The proposed location is Singapore. All MOs are invited to active participate.
- 20) JST will welcome NSF of Sri Lanka to be a Guest Partner and informed the Board that JST will host a workshop on animal genomics in Japan on 10 October 2019, inviting senior researchers from both Sri Lanka and Japan.
- 21) The 8th Annual Board Meeting will be held in September 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand, co-hosted by NSTDA, TCELS and TRF.
- 22) Since the Board discussed the reorganization of the SAC and needs to know how the SAC members themselves consider their role, the next SAC meeting will be held back-to-back with the 8th Annual Board Meeting.
- 23) MEXT informed the Board that it is in talks with the ASEAN Secretariat about the “Japan-ASEAN STI for SDGs Bridging Initiative”, in which MEXT are planning a forum to bridge stakeholders in science and technology organizations with organizations for social implementation.
- 24) The Board closed its meeting with a unanimous expression of appreciation for the Program Secretariat and to the Chair, Mr. Sorokotyaga, for the two day conference. The Board also expressed appreciation for RFBR and FEFU’s staff work in regards to meeting arrangements, including the evening program, as well as their hospitality extended to all participants.

Appendix
Meeting Participants:

	Country	Organization	Name	Title
1	Australia	NHMRC	Dr. Tony Willis	Executive Director of the Research Quality and Priorities Branch
2	Japan	MEXT	Mr. Masaki Uemura	Senior Specialist for International Research Coordination
3	Japan	JST	Mr. Osamu Kobayashi	Director for Department of International Affairs
4	Japan	JST	Ms. Shoko Hirakawa	Chief, Department of International Affairs
5	Japan	JST	Dr. Takashi Kawabe	Program Coordinator, Department of International Affairs
6	Japan	JST	Ms. Izumi Tsune	Program Coordinator, Department of International Affairs
7	Japan	AMED	Mr. Masahiko Noda	Managing Director
8	Japan	AMED	Mr. Hiroki Hori	Director, Singapore Office
9	Japan	AMED	Dr. Yuriko Suzuki	Manager, Division of International Collaboration, Department of International Affairs
10	Japan	AMED	Mr. Shuhei Furukawa	Deputy Manager, Division of International Collaboration, Department of International Affairs
12	New Zealand	HRC	Prof. Kathryn McPherson	Chief Executive
13	Philippines	DOST	Dr. Rowena Cristina L. Guevara	Undersecretary for Research and Development
14	Philippines	DOST - Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (DOST-PCHRD)	Dr. Jaime C. Montoya	Executive Director
15	Philippines	DOST - Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology Research and Development (DOST-PCIEERD)	Engr. Raul C. Sabularse	Deputy Executive Director

16	Russia	RFBR	Dr. Alexander Usoltsev	Head of International Relations
17	Russia	RFBR	Mr. Yaroslav Sorokotyaga	International Relations Department Division Director
18	Russia	RFBR	Dr. Denis Rudik	International Relations Department, Chief expert
19	Secretariat	Program Secretariat	Mr. Masaki Sato	Secretary-General
20	Secretariat	Program Secretariat	Mr. Yoshihide Kobayashi	e-ASIA Special Program Coordinator
21	Thailand	NSTDA	Prof. Dr. Prasit Palittapongarnpim	Executive Vice President
22	Thailand	NSTDA	Dr. Lily Eurwilaichitr	Vice President
23	Thailand	TCELS	Mr. Sirasak Teparkum	Deputy CEO
24	Thailand	TCELS	Ms. Taweeporn Gedarram	Director of Pharmaceuticals Programs
25	Thailand	TCELS	Ms. Rawiwan Kongluer	Executive Secretary
26*	USA	NIAID	Ms. Gayle Bernabe	Regional Program Officer-East/SE Asia and the Pacific
27	Vietnam	VMOST	Ms. Le Thi Viet Lam	Deputy Director-General Department of International Cooperation
28	Vietnam	VMOST	Ms. Trinh Tran	Official, Department of International Cooperation

* participation via videoconference