

# Sister Transplant Centers (STC) Program

ISN-TTS STC Application Guidelines

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## 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND NOMENCLATURE

The ISN-TTS Sister Transplant Centers Program is a joint partnership set up between the ISN and The Transplantation Society (TTS). It fosters capacity-building partnerships between centers in need of training - located in low-resource areas such as low-income countries (LICs), lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) or upper-middle-income countries (UMICs) - and more advanced centers from the same region or from high income countries (HICs). The program provides a structured framework and a range of benefits to support these partnerships.

### SOME DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS:

**Pair applications:** The Emerging Center (EC) is the center in need of training from either a LIC, LMIC or UMIC. The Supporting Center (SC) is the experienced training center which can be from any country in the same region or another high-income country (as per the World Bank List of Economies).

**Trio applications:** In a trio application, the EC is the new addition to the recently graduated ISN-TTS STC partnership. The previously called EC becomes the SC and the formerly Supporting Center now acts as the Mentor Center (MC) in the new trio partnership.

<b>Emerging Center (EC)</b>	The center in need of training
<b>Supporting Center (SC)</b>	The experienced training center which will provide support to the EC
<b>Mentoring Center (MC)</b>	In a trio application, the EC is the new addition to the recently graduated STC partnership. The previously called EC becomes the SC and the former SC acts as the Mentor Center in the new trio partnership
<b>SRC Program</b>	Sister Renal Centers Program
<b>STC Program</b>	Sister Transplant Centers Program

## 2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The EC must be from a low-resource area: LIC, LMIC, UMIC as per the list of the World Bank of Economies [here](#).

Each center must have at least one **ISN or TTS full member**, who will serve as the **center's liaison officer** and must remain in good standing throughout the duration of the partnership.

The STC program aims at enhancing the transplantation practice in nephrology at EC through a variety of training exchanges between SC (and/or MC) and EC. The partnerships need to state clearly their goals and how they are planning to achieve them.

The application must include an overview of the various measures that will be undertaken in the context of the ISN-TTS STC Program, as well as a clear description of the measurable outcomes. ISN and TTS

also expect a detailed action plan and budget proposal, and a clear description of how the collaboration will develop the services of the EC and positively reflect the SC.

Priority consideration will be given to partnerships:

- Showing a real commitment to develop capacity in renal pathology (e.g. training of health care workers, capacity to perform renal biopsy and pathological diagnosis).
- EC and SC/MC are within the same region or close to each other geographically.
- EC and/or SC/MC is a recognized ISN [Regional Training Center](#)
- Showing a commitment to develop capacity for a multidisciplinary team (including non-medical staff and allied-health professionals)
- Already participating in other ISN programs

### 3. OVERVIEW OF THE ISN-TTS STC PROGRAM

The ISN-TTS Sister Transplant Centers Program is a joint initiative aimed at supporting partnerships between two centers to create new kidney transplant program or develop existing ones in low-resource areas. Following the success of the ISN Sister Renal Centers Program, this initiative encourages transplant centers to work together to increase opportunities for kidney transplant patients in low-resource areas.

An experienced transplant center lends its support to an emerging transplant center to facilitate vital multidisciplinary training, exchange of knowledge and expertise. The results are beneficial to both sides. SCs get involved in global health, spread ethical and competent transplantation knowledge and practices to regions of the world with limited or no current access to transplantation. ECs benefit from multidisciplinary exchange and experience from the SC's team, increase their capacity in transplantation and gradually become independent and self-sufficient transplant centers.

The STC Program provides a structure framework for collaboration, along with a range of benefits for the two centers that vary according to their status level (C, B or A) within the program. As a highly competitive program, only the most promising and sustainable partnerships are eligible to advance to the next levels. The number of available positions at each level is limited and depends on the overall program budget. As partnerships progress through the program, fewer slots become available at the higher levels.

#### **Program Levels**

##### **Level C**

This is the entry level of the program. Partnerships begin at Level C for a two-year period, during which they receive basic annual funding from ISN and TTS to establish and develop a strategic training plan, and to carry out initial training exchanges aimed at strengthening collaboration (see Section 6.D below for further details). At the end of this period, partnerships may apply for an upgrade to Level B, provided they submit all required documentation and their final progress report demonstrates satisfactory progress.

##### **Level B**

Partnerships that demonstrate significant achievements during Level C may be promoted to Level B, subject to a successful application and review process. Partnerships that fail to show sufficient progress in implementing Level C activities, do not submit an application, or fail to provide the required documentation will be discontinued from the program.

### **Level A**

Level B partnerships may competitively apply for an upgrade to Level A. These upgrades are reserved for a selected number of partnerships whose Emerging Centers (ECs) demonstrate the most significant achievements and impacts at Level B, and show strong potential to become self-sufficient, advanced centers capable of delivering training within their region (see Section 6.D below for further details). At Level A, ECs are expected to establish connections with another potential center in need of support within the region and consider how they might support this center (as a Supporting Center, or SC) after graduating from the program. This cascading approach is designed to maximize the program's regional impact. Partnerships that do not show sufficient progress, fail to submit an application, or do not provide the required documentation will be discontinued from the program.

### **Level Honorary C or B**

Only a few failed upgrade applications from Level C to Level B, or from Level B to Level A can be given one additional chance to apply for an upgrade after one year, based on the review score of the STC Committee and on the partnerships' potential. These partnerships remain in the program at Level Honorary C (HC) or Honorary B (HB) for one year without funding, even though they continue to benefit from priority consideration when applying to other ISN programs and other ISN benefits (see section 4 below). If they do not apply after one year at Level HC or HB, they will be discontinued from the program.

### **What's next after Level A?**

After 2 years at level A and upon submission and approval of a comprehensive report describing the achievements over the past 6 years across all levels of the STC Program, the partnerships graduate from the program.

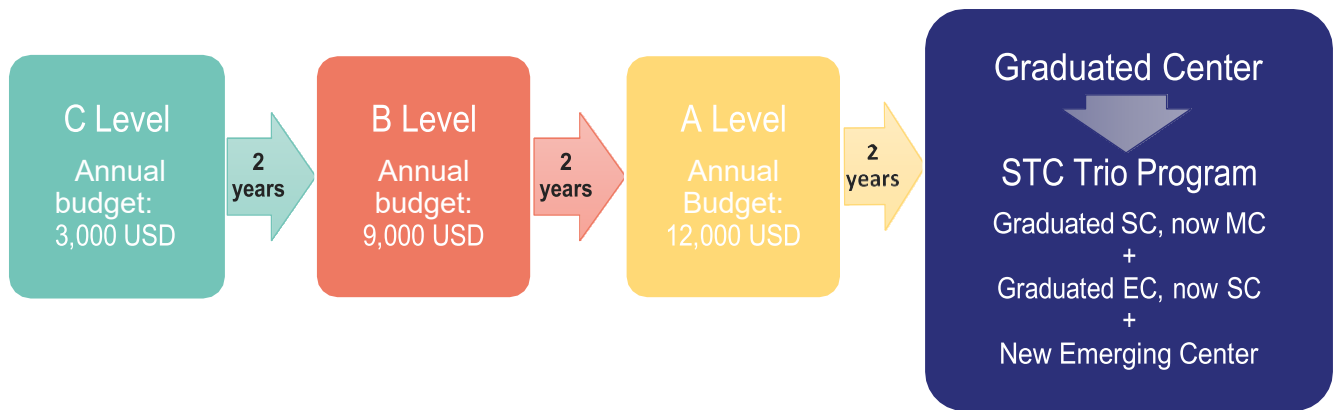
Successful STC graduating pairs are encouraged to establish **STC trio** partnerships to further enhance training and experience within the region of the original EC.

The ISN-TTS STC trio program allows graduating pairs to remain involved in the program and for the EC to diffuse their know-how to other centers in their region.

In this system, the recently graduated EC would form a new partnership with another local renal center and would work with the original SC to support the EC in a STC Trio.

The graduated SC (which would act as a Mentor Center - MC) in fact would support the newly formed trio by providing guidance and any other possible means of support. Activities and budgets would be shared among MC, SC and EC. For instance, a funded expert from the MC would visit both SC and EC in the same visit or ensure that personnel from the SC/EC are present at the other center during the visits to benefit from training.

Although partnerships no longer receive funding after graduating from the program, they retain their ISN benefits (see Section 7) for additional two years. Graduated pairs or trios from the ISN SRC and ISN-TTS STC Programs are also eligible to compete for the Schrier Award, which recognizes the most impressive achievements. In addition, they may be invited to apply to become [ISN Regional Training Centers](#) when such opportunities arise.



## 4. BENEFITS

Enrolling in the STC Program gives access to some significant benefits:

### **Financial benefits**

The ISN and TTS support the participation of a pair/trio within the STC program with a total grant of 48,000 USD spread over 6 years and broken down as follows:

Level C	3,000 USD per annum
Level B	9,000 USD per annum
Level A	12,000 USD per annum

There is no funding at HC/HB level.

### **In-kind benefits**

The successful STC pairs/trios will also receive the following:

- **Certificates (for levels A, B, C and graduated pairs/trios)** are issued to the EC, SC (and MC) when they are first accepted into the Program as well as with each upgrade to a higher level and graduation. The certificate is valid for two years during which the pair/trio is active at the same level. Graduated pairs/trios also receive a certificate.
- As ISN full members, the liaison officers of both the Emerging Center (EC) and the Supporting/Mentoring Center (SC/MC) have access to the ISN Academy, which offers a wide range of educational resources, virtual learning tools, podcasts, and recorded webinars featuring the latest advancements in nephrology. Other staff members from the EC and SC/MC are encouraged to become ISN full members or subscribe to the [ISN Academy](#) to benefit from these valuable learning opportunities.
- **Priority access to ISN Programs (for levels A, B, HB, C, HC and graduation from the last 2 years)**  
The grants related to successful applications to other ISN Programs will be on top of the budget already received through the STC program. Please be aware that an application is not guaranteed a successful outcome since the criteria of the Programs prevail and they remain competitive in nature. Priority consideration will be given in the review process of the following programs:

- [Clinical Research Program and Scientific Writing Course](#) supports research and screening projects addressing local issues in kidney care and provides hands-on one-to-one mentoring by experts in the field of scientific writing.
  - [Educational Ambassador Program](#) offers support for a specific hands-on training by an expert for up to four weeks to advance new initiatives, skills or services.
  - [Fellowship Program](#) gives physicians from disadvantaged parts of the world the opportunity to spend 3-12 months at host center getting customized training to advance kidney care in their home region. In the unfortunate event that the STC is unsuccessful in upgrading to the next level, it will not affect if a fellow from the EC has been accepted in the ISN Fellowship Program to train at the SC.
  - [Emerging Leaders Program](#) provides early-career professionals in integrated kidney care the opportunity to work with international experts in the field to become qualified for a leadership role in the advancement of global kidney care.
  - [CME Program](#) supports faculty to present talks and workshops at regional nephrology-related meetings. The CMEs can be organized in conjunction between the EC and the SC as part of an ISN STC Program event.
  - The ISN [Mentorship Program](#) is a nice option for mentees who would like to benefit from some guidance from a dedicated mentor on a specific subject and for mentors to share their expertise and develop their coaching and leadership skills.
  - The ISN [Interventional Nephrology Training Program](#) provides targeted training in interventional procedures at a recognized training center.
- **Priority for travel/virtual grants to WCN and TTS Congress**
    - Pairs and trios at level A, B, HB, C, HC and graduated from the last 2 years are given priority points towards travel/virtual grant applications for WCNs.
    - The grants are reserved for ISN members in good standing and for the benefit of physicians and scientists who are residents of low- and middle-income countries. The final decision is based on other several scoring criteria which include successful abstract(s) submission, age, and current and/or past participants in ISN Programs. Note that the maximum number of grants that any individual may receive in a lifetime is limited to 3.
    - In the event that we receive numerous applications from the same STC partnership, you will be asked to choose a maximum of 2 applicants to be considered for the grants. This will ensure equitable access to different participants around the world.
    - STC participants should directly apply to the events' organizers via the official relevant website. The amount of the grant may change depending on the WCN organization. The actual arrangements and confirmations are announced via a personal letter and depend on the WCN organization.
    - Graduating pairs may have the opportunity to apply to receive a travel grant to go to TTS Congress to present a poster summarizing the activities undertaken under their partnership. The TTS will contact the pairs to offer the opportunity.

- Invitation to compete for the Schrier award (while submitting application for graduation) by presenting the collective achievements throughout their SRC partnership. The Schrier award session is hosted at the World Congress of Nephrology (WCN) every year.
  - Mrs. and Professor Schrier made a very generous donation to the ISN – **The Schrier fund** which is dedicated to supporting ISN's substantial [outreach and capacity building programs](#) in emerging countries. All A-level centers that have graduated in the same year as WCN are invited to participate and demonstrate their achievements throughout their participation in the ISN SRC or ISN-TTS STC Program.
  - A jury composed of the ISN Sister Renal Centers Program chair and deputy chair, the ISN-TTS Sister Transplant Centers Program co-chairs, the ISN Programs Chair and Deputy Chair and family of Robert Schrier (if available) selects the most deserving winner. The award is of 2,500 USD and comes together with a travel grant to attend WCN.

All the above benefits remain applicable 2 years after graduation from the Program – apart from the Schrier award for which one can only compete once.

## 5. APPLICATION PROCESS

The application forms can be found on the online platform: <http://stc.theisn.org>

One needs to register to have an account on the online platform in order to access the forms.

**The deadline to apply is on 15<sup>th</sup> October each year.** The application platform usually opens 3 months before the deadline (i.e. usually around July).

## 6. HOW TO SUBMIT A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION?

A few important points of guidance:

- Education vs research activities  
The primary focus of the Sister Centers Program is **education**, not research. While limited epidemiological or clinical research may be included as part of the educational process, **basic (laboratory) research is not supported** by the program.
- Educational grant  
The STC grant is strictly intended to fund **educational activities**. It **does not cover staff salaries**, capital expenses, or consumable supplies under any circumstances.
- Virtual activities and technical support  
In order to facilitate virtual interactions between EC and SC/MC and organisation of webinars and in-person workshops and events by Emerging Centers, **10% of the budget is allowed to be used for virtual and technical support for Emerging Centers only**. Please note that this does not include medical equipment.
- Events and Abstracts  
10% of your STC grant can be used to attend nephrology conferences and events (eg WCN) and submit abstracts.



The submitted budget should be in accordance with the allocated ISN-TTS grant, i.e. the budget proposal should be consistent with the corresponding levels. One should not ask for more or less. Below are the amounts corresponding to each level:

- Level C => 3,000 USD/year
- Level B => 9,000 USD/year
- Level A => 12,000 USD/year

The form should not include activities that will be supported with other sources of funding. These can be mentioned in the reports.

Please note the ISN-TTS STC grant will **not** cover:

- Capital costs
- Consumable costs
- Equipment \*
- Salaries
- Basic research activities (except some limited epidemiology or clinical research)
- Membership fees (ISN, ERA, APSN, IPNA, ASN, etc.)

\* In rare cases when the partnership expects a small amount of expenditure on equipment costs for ECs, please provide a detailed explanation and justification in the application to explain why this equipment is essential for your partnership's activities. These expenses will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the STC Committee when they review the application.

The STC Program is unlikely to support applications from well-developed centers in developing countries, due to the overwhelming demand to support less developed ones.

### **Applications for Level C:**

The following forms need to be submitted:

- 1. Application form** should include a detailed description of the EC's needs, the objectives and measurable outcomes. One should think about some measurable indicators: what will the pair/trio achieve? What will be a good outcome of the Sister Centers partnership? For instance:

Objective	Example of Measurable
establish a transplant unit	number of transplants performed
establish a deceased donation transplant program	number of DD transplants performed
	...

Regarding renal pathology, below are some examples of attainable objectives that could be developed progressively:

- o A first step could be to begin with mounting the renal biopsy procedure and standard light microscopy.
- o A second step could be to expand to immunofluorescence and possibly special histology staining.
- o A third step could be to apply to the ISN Educational Ambassadors Program to get

support for specific hands-on training by experts in renal pathology.

- 2. Annual budget proposals (Y1/Y2)** should include a realistic overview of all the activities planned in the next 2 years (there is one form per year) and provide an estimate of a budget breakdown per activities. Whenever possible the centers should supplement the STC grant with their own means – eg STC grant pays airfare and local center endeavors to cover ground costs (accommodation, ...). See further guidance for budget planning above.

### **Applications for Upgrade to Level B and A:**

The following forms need to be submitted:

- 1. Application form** should include a detailed description of the EC's objectives and measurable outcomes at the next level.

- 2. Activities & Budget Report** (for the past 2 years):

Level C and B partnerships are required to submit a final report at the end of the 2-year period, which includes details on implemented activities and expenses. The report constitutes the basis for reviewing the achievements of the pairs and trios and for releasing further funding. Progress, achievements and challenges must be clearly articulated as the scoring parameters for upgrades are greatly influenced by previous activities and results.

- 3. Annual budget proposals (Y1/Y2)** should include a realistic overview of all the activities planned for 2 years at the next level 2 years (there is one form per year) and provide an estimate of a budget breakdown per activities. Whenever possible, the centers should supplement the STC grant with their own means – eg STC grant pays airfare and local center endeavours to cover ground costs (accommodation, ...). See further guidance for budget planning above.

### **Applications for Graduation**

Level A pairs or trios completing their second year of partnership will be required to submit a comprehensive graduation report that includes the following:

- A summary of their original goals upon entering the STC Program.
- An overview of the progress made, including key activities implemented, outcomes achieved, and challenges encountered.
- A financial report detailing the activities carried out and related expenses during Level A.
- Information on whether they have established contact with a new potential Emerging Center (EC), and whether they intend to submit a new trio application in the same year. (Note: Any new Level C trio application must be submitted separately via the platform.)

The graduation report is a mandatory final step for Level A partnerships. Pairs or trios will formally graduate from the program once the SRC Committee has reviewed and approved the report.

### **Examples of activities at different levels in the program:**

#### **Level C:**

Within the allocated funding at Level C, partnerships are expected to carry out the following

activities:

- **Conduct a needs assessment and strategic planning** to develop a clear roadmap for training, education, and the progressive development of skills at the Emerging Center (EC).
- **Facilitate short-term visits** between the EC and the SC. These may include:
  - Visits from EC to SC and/or SC to EC to assess the EC's resources, infrastructure, and training needs.
  - Observerships or shadowing opportunities for key EC staff at the SC.
  - *At least one in-person visit*, either from EC to SC or vice versa, is expected during Level C, if circumstances allow.
- **Provide remote educational support** through virtual meetings, webinars, online case-based discussions, and participation in e-learning modules (e.g., those offered by the ISN Academy).
- **Organize local training and outreach activities at the EC**, including training courses, workshops, stakeholder meetings, and World Kidney Day (WKD) events.

### **Level B:**

The partnerships are more mature. With the increased amount of funding at Level B, the partnerships are expected to shift the focus to capacity expansion, structured training, and service development. They are expected to carry out the following activities:

- **Organise short to medium-term visits** from EC to SC for nephrologists, nurses, technicians to get hands-on training in subspecialty areas. Training for non-medical staff and allied-health professionals are encouraged in order to build a multidisciplinary team at EC.
- **Support the EC to develop and strengthen clinical services**, introducing multidisciplinary care models, implementation of standard treatment protocols, clinical guidelines and checklist.
- **Conduct visits from SC to EC** to deliver on-site mentorship, workshops, structured educational programs (courses, symposia, workshops, seminars).
- **Provide remote educational support** through virtual meetings, webinars, online case-based discussions, and participation in e-learning modules (e.g., those offered by the ISN Academy).
- **Organise community and stakeholder engagement activities** at the EC.

### **Level A:**

The ECs are expected to approach self-sufficiency in delivering kidney care. The partnerships are expected to focus on consolidating service development at the ECs, sustaining gains and extending impacts through leadership, training, research and regional outreach. In addition to continuation of some activities at Level B, the following activities are expected:

- **The EC begins to train its own nephrologists, nurses, technicians** and potentially those from other centers in the country and region. Training for non-medical staff and allied-health professionals should be continued and reinforced.

- **Organise national and regional workshops, courses and CME events** at the EC with participation of staff from other centers in the country and region.
- **Expand specialized services at EC**
- **Conduct and publish clinical or operational research** led by EC with the guidance from the SC, present findings at national, regional and international conferences
- **Develop local or regional renal registries**, using the [ISN SharE-RR toolkit](#)
- **Develop a sustainability plan** to maintain services and training at the EC after the STC support ends.

## 7. SCORING PROCESS AND TIMING

Applications must be in line with the STC Program objectives, i.e. enhance the clinical practice of nephrology at EC through a variety of educational activities and training exchanges between the EC and SC (or MC).

The STC Committee will evaluate the needs of the EC and the potential to address them through the collaboration with the SC (and MC). They will look at the level of activities and commitment between the centers and assess the appropriate and sustainable use of the funding.

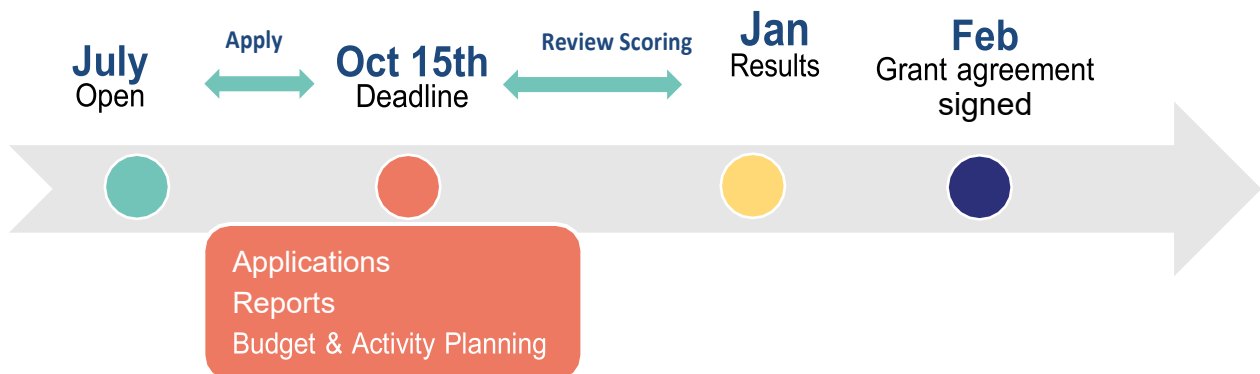
The following aspects will be taken into account:

- Relevance of main objective(s) and proposed measurable outcomes
- Motivation, progress and plan for development
- Planned activities: exchanges and capacity-building projects
  - Visits & Virtual Interaction: Multidisciplinary training exchanges between the EC and the SC/MC,
  - Capacity-Building Projects: development of new skills like transplant programs, local and regional CMEs, provision of educational materials at the EC, attendance on training courses whilst on training attachments at the SC/MC, ...
- Previous participation by the institutions and/or liaison officers in any existing ISN Programs.
- The level of support that can be provided by a SC/MC already involved in other STC links
- Priority consideration given to partnerships showing a real commitment to develop capacity in renal pathology, develop a multidisciplinary team, EC and/or SC/MC being recognised as ISN Regional Training Center
- Priority consideration given to partnerships with regional proximity for reasons like similar cultures and languages, similar resource settings and budget optimization (to reduce the geographic distance for the flights)

As far as upgrades are concerned, the unsuccessful pairs/trios will drop out of the program or may become HC/HB Level centers (for those applying from Level C to B or Level B to A) depending on the quality level of their application.

The pairs/trios eligible for upgrading to the next level who do not submit any application will automatically drop out of the Program.

Below is an overview of the usual timing of an application session:



## 8. REPORTING PROCESS

### Interim & Final Reports

To enable the STC Committee to evaluate the progress of partnerships, measure the impact of the Program, and ensure appropriate use of funds, all partnerships at **Levels C, B and A** are required to submit:

- **An interim report at the end of Year 1**, detailing implemented activities and expenses. This report must also include a **confirmed plan of activities and budget for Year 2** to support the release of the second grant instalment (see Section 9.B. below for further details).
- **A final report at the end of the 2-year period**, summarizing achievements, challenges, and outcomes, along with activity and budget plans for the next level (if applying for an upgrade) to support the release of the fourth grant instalment (See Section 9.B below for further details).

For **Levels A and B**, an additional **expense interim report must be submitted six months into Year 2**, before the third grant instalment is disbursed (see Section 9.B below for further details).

These reports form the basis for evaluating the progress and accomplishments of each partnership (pair or trio), determining eligibility for upgrade to the next level of the Program, and authorizing further funding. It is essential that they clearly present the progress made, key achievements, and any challenges encountered, as these directly influence upgrade decisions.

The final report should include an analysis of outcomes, highlighting how the Emerging Center (EC) has developed over the course of the partnership. This information is crucial for the STC Committee's review and overall assessment of the Program's impact.

### Mid-term quality control: random mini-audits

To strengthen oversight without adding unnecessary burden, the STC Committee may implement light-touch quality control measures, such as random mini-audits as below:

Each year, 10–15% of partnerships (across all levels) may be selected at random for a brief desk-based audit. These audits will require the submission of a short (1–2 page) document to:

- Spot check alignment between reported activities and submitted budget
- Confirm completion of key deliverables (e.g., training visits, workshops)
- Review receipts or documentation for selected expenses

These audits are not punitive and aim to enhance transparency, encourage timely record-keeping, and support quality improvement across the Program.

### **Submission Deadline**

**Reports and development plans for the next level must be submitted by October 15.**

### **Report Guidelines**

Please ensure the reports are concise and address the following key elements:

- **Names of all persons involved**
- **Budget breakdown** for each activity, with a brief description (e.g., visits, projects)
- **Impacts** of the activities carried out
- **Confirmed plan** of upcoming activities (include names, dates, and required budget)
- **Motivation and sustainability plan** for continued partnership development
- **Overall impact assessment**

### **Visual Documentation**

Photos are welcome and appreciated. Please include **high-quality .jpg images** with short descriptions in the **file names** (e.g., *Visit\_LagosTeam\_2025\_Fieldwork.jpg*).

**Do not embed photos in PowerPoint or PDF files**, as we are unable to extract and use them from those formats.

## **9. GRANTS & PAYMENTS**

As a reminder, the amounts of the grants are as follows:

Level C	3,000 USD per year
Level B	9,000 USD per year
Level A	12,000 USD per year

### **Grant Agreements**

STC partnerships will receive a grant agreement upon acceptance at Level C or successful upgrade to a higher level. This agreement outlines the terms and conditions of participation and covers a two-year period at the same level.

The agreement must be signed by a **legal representative or authorized staff** member from both the Emerging Center (EC) and the Supporting or Mentoring Center (SC/MC), who is eligible to sign on behalf of their respective institutions.

The staff member who submits the application will serve as the main point of contact between their organization and ISN. This person should be the designated liaison officer from either the EC, SC, or MC. **The contact details of the liaison officer for each center** must be provided in the application form.

If the liaison officer is not authorized to sign the agreement on behalf of their institution, they must inform ISN of the appropriate authorized representative's name and contact details. In such cases, ISN will include both the liaison officer and the authorized signatory in the agreement.

### **Payment of Grants**

- **Level C**

The total grant amount for Level C is disbursed in two instalments:

- **First instalment:** 100% of the Year 1 grant, disbursed after the partnership signs the agreement in Year 1.
- **Second instalment:** 100% of the Year 2 grant, disbursed at the beginning of Year 2 upon submission and approval of the Year 1 activity and expense report and confirmation of the activity and budget plan for Year 2.

- **Levels B and A**

Grant payments for Levels B and A are disbursed in four instalments:

- **First instalment:** 50% of the Year 1 grant, disbursed after the grant agreement is signed.
- **Second instalment:** The remaining 50% of the Year 1 grant, disbursed at the end of Year 1, upon submission and approval of a satisfactory Year 1 activity and expense report and a confirmed activity and budget plan for Year 2.
- **Third instalment:** 50% of the Year 2 grant, disbursed six months into Year 2, upon submission of a satisfactory expense report for the first six months of Year 2.
- **Fourth instalment:** The final 50% of the Year 2 grant, only disbursed following submission and approval of the final two-year report and a successful upgrade or graduation application.
- ✓ For partnerships successfully upgraded to Level A, this instalment will be disbursed together with the first instalment (50%) of the Year 1 grant of Level A.
- ✓ For partnerships with successful graduation application, this instalment will be disbursed after notification of the successful outcome.

Grants may be transferred to the EC, SC, or MC, or to another institution officially designated by any of these centers. **Grants cannot be transferred to individuals.** If an external institution is nominated to receive the funds, a signed agreement between that institution and the respective center must be submitted to ISN prior to the transfer.

The EC, SC, and/or MC must jointly determine how the yearly grant amount will be distributed among the involved institutions based on their planned activities and estimated expenses. These agreed amounts must be communicated to ISN when requesting each instalment,

along with all required and duly completed documentation.

The following points are important for the approval of the transfer of the grants:

- The STC budget must be spent within the calendar year (by the end of December). All activities and related expenses must be implemented and incurred in the same year. Any unused funds from Year 1 **cannot** be carried over to Year 2 or to a higher level in the program.
- Grant payments will only be made if the submitted activity and expense reports are satisfactory, properly justified, and aligned with the approved plan and the budget guidelines. ISN Headquarters staff may consult with the Co-Chairs of the STC Committee for approval, if necessary.
- ISN and TTS reserve the right to withhold the next grant instalment if the activity and expense reports are unsatisfactory, not in line with the approved plan and the budget guidelines.
- The ISN and TTS strongly encourage cooperation between centres in the program, particularly when such collaboration can enhance the educational scope, flexibility, and impact of the training programme. In situations where the original plan must change—due to visa delays, personal or health circumstances, or other unforeseen events—participants in the STC partnership are encouraged to explore alternative training options. **Any proposed changes to the original plan**, including alternative uses of funding for educational purposes (e.g., journal subscriptions, textbooks, CME/congress registration and attendance, or other educationally valuable items), must be communicated in advance to ISN staff before implementation. All changes will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be approved by the STC Committee Co-Chairs, at their discretion.
- It is of crucial importance to **keep a record of all expenses** to detail them in the STC reports.

The financial support (budget) and services (in-kind benefits) provided by ISN and TTS are intended only to provide a framework. ISN and TTS's funding is not intended to form the sole basis of what should ideally be a long lasting and fruitful collaboration among the centers. The grant funds must be used only for the educational activities agreed upon jointly by the partnership and carried out at the initiative of either the EC or SC in the context of the STC Program and cannot be used for the private benefit of any institution. ISN and TTS's support cannot carry all expenses linked to the development of an EC and the joint activities undertaken among centers.

## 10. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **1. Can I apply for a second SRC or STC with a different center?**

No, if your Emerging Center is currently in an active partnership in the SRC or STC program, application for a second partnership will not be accepted. Priority is given to centers that have not yet received funding. An EC can take part in only one SRC or STC partnership at any given time. It is encouraged that the EC finishes the SRC program and then applies to the STC program.

### **2. I cannot access the STC application platform with my ISN credentials**

This is because the two platforms are separate. You will need to use a separate password to log in to the STC Application Platform.



### **3. What to do if I need a visa letter?**

If a visa is required, it is strongly recommended that travellers begin the application process as early as possible, as it can take several months and may, in some cases, be declined.

The ISN global operations center can provide an official invitation letter to support visa applications, if needed. To request this letter, please submit the traveller's full name, place and date of birth, country of origin, passport number, and passport expiry date.

### **4. What happens if an incident occurs during my travel or my stay abroad?**

By accepting to travel and volunteer on behalf of the International Society of Nephrology (ISN), individuals acknowledge and accept that ISN cannot be held liable for any consequences arising from travel or time spent abroad, including those related to COVID-19.

Staff from the Emerging Center (EC), Supporting Center (SC), or Mentoring Center (MC) are responsible for making their own travel arrangements for exchange visits under the STC program. All applicable rules, regulations, and safety measures must be strictly followed during travel.

It is the responsibility of each traveller to obtain appropriate health, accident, and travel insurance. ISN and TTS will not be held responsible for any incidents, injuries, or losses incurred during the trip, and neither the traveller nor their relatives may hold ISN and TTS liable for any such events.

## **11. CONTACT**

For more information and assistance, please contact [src@theisn.org](mailto:src@theisn.org)

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