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Study of the impact of publicly funded research in chemistry and chemical technology

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Scientists in Sri Lanka are encouraged to be engaged in various research projects, by providing them with necessary means as grants. This study was conducted to identify outcomes of research projects funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) in chemistry and chemical technology from 1993 to 2008. The total amount spent on 74 projects during the period was LKR 37.6 billion. The highest and the lowest amount were granted in 2004 and 1994 respectively. Data were gathered through a questionnaire and direct interviews.

The findings revealed that 90% the allocated amounts were adequate. The major fraction (47%) of outcomes from the total, had been report submission only. 186 publications were generated by the time of submission of final reports and 48 publications were made after completion of projects. The number of abstract presentations (foreign and domestic) was 48.92% of the research projects had created opportunities for postgraduate studies. This includes M.Sc. (26), M.Phil. (43), and Ph.D. (23). A total of 56 new technologies were developed and 32 had been transferred. The total number of patents was eight, and six projects had developed commercialised products.

As stated by 68% of the respondent grantees, the major obstacle in carrying out research had been the shortage of key instrumentation. 13% mentioned that problems arose due to junior worker turnover, 13% had issues due to unawareness and less preparedness of junior co-workers. Only 6% stated that the discrepancies were due to non timely realization of funds. In conclusion, it will be beneficial, if a system is developed to store information on diverse outputs. Maintaining a database with updated contacts of grantees will be advantageous to find the research impact. Having a complete evaluation criterion to check the availability of major instrumentation for sharing will also be beneficial.