

Brazil puts \$680m into innovation centres

BY LUISA MASSARANI | 3 JUNE 2013

Funding will keep multi-disciplinary projects running for up to 11 years

The São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP) in Brazil will provide \$680 million (£445 million) of funding for 17 Research, Innovation and Dissemination Centers (RIDCs). The money will keep the centres going for up to 11 years and will link 535 scientists from the state of São Paulo with another 69 from abroad.

A breakdown of the funding show that FAPESP will deliver \$370 million and another \$310 million will come from the host institutions where the centres will be based. FAPESP, an independent public foundation with a mission to foster scientific and technological development in the state of São Paulo, created the RIDCs programme in 2000. Originally, there were 11 RIDCs and now another seven have been created in this second round of funding.

‘Our motivation was to offer conditions for São Paulo scientists to attack complex and challenging issues,’ says [Carlos Henrique de Brito Cruz](#), scientific director of FAPESP. ‘With such goals, the funding is offered in proper amounts in order to allow several scientists to be engaged on a long term basis – up to 11 years, with an evaluation of whether the project should follow on or not at years two, four and seven.’

Research proposals were accepted from any area and, in total, 90 proposals have been evaluated in a process that included 150 peer reviewers and an international committee of 11 experts. The criteria for selection were scientific merit, originality and international competitiveness, as well as an assessment of the scientific credentials of the principal investigators and their teams. Proposals that won include such diverse areas as food and obesity, drug development, new materials and biodiversity.

As the centres’ names suggest, they need to not only foster high quality research but also to encourage technology transfer and innovation. [Vanderlan Bolzani](#), a researcher at the institute of chemistry at São Paulo State University and vice-director of an RIDC on biodiversity and new drugs, says an important challenge for the centres is technology transfer. ‘In Brazil, we don’t have a culture among entrepreneurs that science is important for industry; we need to change that mentality, which is a long-term process,’ she says. The objective of her RIDC will be to search for

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