From:	Januarie, V, Me [venita@sun.ac.za]
Cc:	Fouche, Malene, Mrs [mfouche@sun.ac.za]
Subject:	NRF CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: General Research Grants (Competitive support for Unrated, Rated and Y-Rated Researchers)
Date:	Thursday, 24 March 2022 09:37:30
Attachments:	image007.png Competitive-Programme-for-Rated-Researchers-CPRR-2023-Funding-Framework-Final.pdf Competitive-Support-for-Unrated-Researchers-CSUR-2023-Funding-Framework.pdf Development-Grants-for-Y-Rated-Researchers-2023-Funding-Framework.pdf NRF Feedback summary CPRR CSRU Y RATED.pdf

Let asb daarop dat hierdie inligting aan 'n verspreidingslys van alle US-navorsers gestuur word. Dit mag dus wees dat hierdie spesifieke oproep nie van toepassing is op u studieveld nie. Ons vertrou dat van die ander NNS oproepe wel relevant sal wees. / Please note that this information is sent to a distribution list of all SU researchers. It may, therefore, be that this specific call is not applicable to your specific research field. We trust that some of the other NRF calls will be relevant.

Beste Kollegas/ *Dear Colleagues*

Die NRF het sopas die volgende 2022/2023 Oproep vir Aansoeke uitgestuur/ *The NRF has just launched the following 2022/2023 Call for Applications.*

Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers (SU application deadline: 25 April 2022)

- CPRR grantholders may only hold ONE CPRR grant as a Principal Investigator at a time.
- Each new Principal Investigator may only submit ONE CPRR application to this call. However, a researcher may participate either as a co-investigator or collaborator in more than one project.
- **Full-time employees at an NRF recognized research institution** in South Africa, **who hold a valid NRF rating** at the time of application, are invited to apply.
- **NRF rated part-time employees on contract** at an NRF recognized research institution, who **do not currently hold a CPRR grant may apply**, but on condition that their appointment at the South African institution is for **(at least) the duration of the project applied for in the submission**. The length of the contract should be stated in the application. The **primary employment of the individual concerned must be at that institution**.
- A contract researcher appointed at a research institution on behalf of a third party to fulfil a very specific function **does not qualify for support**. In addition, postdoctoral fellows, students, technical and support staff are **NOT eligible to apply**.
- Retired academics/researchers, provided that they meet all set criteria as stipulated in 3.2 (iv) in attached framework document.
- It is the responsibility of the grantholder, in conjunction with the institution, to ensure that all research activities carried out in or outside South Africa comply with

the laws and regulations of South Africa and/or the foreign country in which the research activities are conducted. These include all human and animal subjects, copyright and intellectual property protection, and other regulations or laws, as appropriate. A **research ethics committee** must review and approve the ethical and academic rigor of all research prior to the commencement of the research and acceptance of the grant. The awarded amount will **not be released for payment until a copy of the required ethical clearance certificate, as indicated in the application, is submitted**.

- All CPRR grant awards without ethical clearance certificates on **1 June 2023 will be cancelled**. Please refer to the "Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices" at https://www.nrf.ac.za/statement-on-ethical-research-and-scholarly-publishingpractices/?hilite=Statement+Ethical+Research+and+Scholarly+Publishing+Practices.

Competitive Programme for Unrated Researchers (SU application deadline: 25 April 2022)

- CSUR grantholders will only qualify for ONE CSUR grant cycle (3 years). Thereafter, they will be expected to enter the rated stream and/or apply for funding to other NRF instruments such as CPRR. Current or previous CSUR grantholders are ineligible for further CSUR funding.
- Each new Principal Investigator (PI) may only submit ONE CSUR application to this call. However, a researcher may participate either as a co-investigator or collaborator in more than one project.
- Postdoctoral fellows, students, technical and support staff are **NOT eligible to apply**.
- **Full-time employees at NRF recognized research institutions** in South Africa, who are eligible to apply and **who do not hold a valid NRF rating** at the time of application, are invited to apply.
- **NRF unrated part-time employees on contract** at an NRF recognized research institution, **who do not currently hold a CSUR grant may apply**, on condition their appointment at the South African institution is for (**at least) the duration of the project applied for**. The length of the contract should be stated in the application. The **primary employment of the individual concerned must be at that institution**. A contract researcher appointed at a research institution on behalf of a third party to fulfil a very specific function **does not qualify for support**.
- Retired academics/researchers, provided that they meet all set criteria as stipulated in 3.2 in attached framework document.
- **NB:** Applicants who are completing their projects that were funded through the **Thuthuka rating track will not be considered for CSUR funding**, and are therefore advised to apply for rating so that they will be eligible to apply either to the Development Grant for Y-rated researchers or to the CPRR.
- If successful, the awarded amount will not be released for payment if a copy of the

required ethical clearance certificate, as indicated in the application, is not attached to the Conditions of Grant.

Support for Y-Rated Researchers (SU application deadline: 25 April 2022)

- Y-Rated researchers may only receive **ONE Y-Rated research grant**. Previous Y-rated grantholders are not eligible to apply again.
- Each new Principal Investigator may only submit ONE application to this call.
- Y-rated Principal Investigators must choose between submitting an application in this funding instrument or in the Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers (CPRR). Applicants will forfeit their application in this funding instrument if they apply to CPRR. Successful Y-rated applicants will be eligible for funding for the duration of their awarded grant, to a maximum period of 3 years.
- Full-time employees at an NRF recognized research institution in South Africa, who hold a valid NRF Y-rating at the time of application, are invited to apply.
- NRF rated part-time employees on contract at an NRF recognized research institution, who hold a valid Y-Rating may apply, on condition their appointment at the South African institution is for (at least) the duration of the project applied for in the submission. The length of the contract should be stated in the application. The **primary employment of the individual concerned must be at that institution**. A contract researcher appointed at a research institution on behalf of a third party to fulfil a very specific function **does not qualify for support**.
- If successful, the awarded amount will not be released for payment if a copy of the required ethical clearance certificate, as indicated in the application, is not attached to the Conditions of Grant.

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Application Process:

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All applications must be completed and submitted on the NRF connect system: https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za/

by the SU internal deadline: **25 April 2022 at 12:00 (noon)**

Due to high volumes of submissions, feedback will be provided directly to applicants **only if submitted before the internal deadline**.

NB: Applicants must ensure that their **Curriculum Vitae are updated on the NRF Connect System** at https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za . These CVs are used in the assessment processes, and incomplete or outdated inputs will jeopardise the success of the application.

Applicants are advised to review the attached documents:

- **Framework document** for detailed information regarding application instructions,

including: Project Information, Details of Research, Potential Impact and Outputs, Methodology and Proposed Research Plan, Alignment to National Imperatives, Data Management and Utilisation, Attachments, Ethical Clearance, and Financials.

- **Collated NRF feedback to applicants** based on the 2021-2022 call for applications (including call-specific feedback and proposal guidelines extracted from the NRF feedback).

or directly contact:

Good luck with your submission.

Ms Venita Januarie | BSc, PGCE, BEdHons, MEd

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COMPETITIVE PROGRAMME FOR RATED RESEARCHERS (CPRR)

KNOWLEDGE ADVANCEMENT AND SUPPORT

Framework Document

February 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

The NRF views support for basic disciplinary, multi-, inter and transdisciplinary research as an investment in the country's learning and knowledge production capabilities and capacities. Such research is considered critical for innovation and potentially, international competitiveness. The Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers (CPRR) is a discipline- and transdisciplinary-based, and demand-driven funding instrument. It is restricted to persons who hold a ***current NRF rating***. It is anticipated that these individuals, as established researchers, will continue to produce quality, high impact research, contributing to South Africa's global research and development output.

1.1 Description of Funding Instrument

The Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers (CPRR) is a highly competitive discipline-based funding instrument which supports both basic and applied research as the foundation of knowledge production in the disciplines of the Humanities, Social and Natural sciences. The instrument is aimed at enhancing the efficiency of the National Research Foundation (NRF) to drive transformation consistently and strategically through supporting primarily basic research as the foundation of knowledge production in the disciplines of the Humanities, Social and Natural Sciences.

As a competitive funding instrument, the chief eligibility criteria are:

i. **A principal investigator (applicant) who has a valid NRF rating at the time of application**

ii. **Scientific merit and feasibility of the research proposal.**

Although the funding instrument ostensibly has a broad and non-directed theme and structure, funding will be prioritised to the top scoring applications within broad field/discipline that are not supported through other NRF mission-driven funding instruments, such as African Origin Platform (Palaeosciences), Global Change Grand Challenge, South African National Antarctic Programme, Marine and Coastal Research, among others. The emphasis will be on basic and as appropriate, applied research in disciplinary fields, and will allow for multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary enquiry along the basic-applied research continuum.

Unlike some funding instruments, the NRF through the CPRR funding instrument does not dictate the direction of the research considered for support. However, research informed by

national priorities as described in the National Development Plan would be of particular interest in the context of contributing to wider system objectives.

2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The objective of the NRF is to contribute to National Development by:

i. Supporting, promoting, and advancing research and human capacity development through funding and the provision of the necessary research infrastructure, to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of science and technology, including humanities, social sciences and indigenous knowledge.
ii. Developing, supporting, and maintaining national research facilities.
iii. Supporting and promoting public awareness of, and engagement with science; and
iv. Promoting the development and maintenance of the national science system and support of government priorities.

Vision 2030

The overall objectives for 2030 are to shape, influence, and impact the national research system; to establish the NRF as a thought leader and source of knowledge within the science sector; to create a clear causal relationship between research and national development; to have a transformative effect on the national research enterprise and the relationship between science and society; and to enable, initiate, facilitate and perform excellent research with direct and indirect impact, whether immediate or long-term, that extends the frontiers of knowledge and addresses national challenges.

Strategy 2025

NRF Strategy 2025 is an implementation framework for the ten-year vision. This strategy is centred on the NRF's desire to contribute to national development through research with an impact. The strategic outcomes include:

i. A transformed (internationally competitive and sustainable) research workforce.
ii. Enhanced impact of the research enterprise.
iii. Enhanced impact of science engagement, and
iv. A transformed organisation that lives its culture and values.

2.1 Environmental scan

The CPRR resonates with the NRF mandate by being cognisant of the role that research plays in the innovation and the commercialisation value chain, and hence the socio-economic development of the country.

While it is recognised that the innovation value chain requires basic, strategic, and applied research, the emphasis in ***this*** funding instrument will primarily be on the support of both basic research and applied research. Support for basic disciplinary research is seen as an investment in a society's learning capabilities. At the same time, this funding instrument acknowledges that basic and applied research are a continuum and inter-dependent and that increasingly, the notion of "frontier research" transcends the distinction of basic and applied research and refers to leading edge research which is risky and often across different disciplines.

Social Sciences, Law and Humanities applications are important, just like those in the natural sciences, engineering and health science that have traditionally been supported. The NRF continues to support self-initiated bottom-up research ideas and research that address national strategic initiatives as reflected in national strategies like the National Development Plan, and those that are embedded in geographic advantage areas. At the International level the NRF is keen to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Agenda 2063 priorities.

2.2 Objectives

The objectives of the funding instrument are to:

i. contribute to the development of a sound fundamental basis to scientific and scholarly endeavour in South Africa, in the Humanities, Natural and Social Science disciplines.
ii. contribute to knowledge production across the research spectrum.
iii. achieve world-class research and to develop the associated human capacity, and
iv. advance or develop paradigms, theories, and methodological innovation across the research spectrum.

2.3 Financing support

The CPRR is made possible through the NRF's Parliamentary Core Funding. As a demand-driven funding instrument, there is no limit to the amount an applicant can request. However, the financial requests need to be in line with requirements and accurately reflect the financial needs of the proposed work. Excessive budget requests are not well received by the review

panels. The final number of successful applicants that will be supported will be determined by the available budget for 2023.

2.4 Key stakeholders

The key stakeholders involved in the CPRR are persons with a valid NRF rating based at public research institutions that are recognised by directive of the Minister of the Department of Science and Innovation. These include Public Universities, Museums, National Research Facilities and Science Councils.

3 *MODUS OPERANDI*

3.1 Call for proposals

All application materials must be submitted electronically via the NRF Connect System at **https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za** . All applications must be endorsed by the research office or equivalent of the principal applicant before submission to the NRF. It is the responsibility of each applicant to familiarise himself / herself with the internal closing dates set by the institution to meet the NRF closing dates included in the "General Application Guide 2023".

3.2 Eligibility

i. CPRR grantholders may hold **ONE** CPRR grant as a Principal Investigator at a time. CPRR grantholders with current grants that run beyond the end of 2022, are thus **ineligible** for funding in this round. CPRR grantholders with current grant awards that run to the end of 2022 are **eligible** for funding in this round. Funding in this round will support successful applications for a maximum period of 3 years, 2023-2025. A project with a duration of one year or less does not qualify.

ii. Each new Principal Investigator **may only submit ONE** CPRR application to this call. However, a researcher may participate either as a co-investigator or collaborator in more than one project.

iii. Full-time employees at an NRF recognized research institution in South Africa, **who hold a valid NRF rating at the time of application**, are invited to apply**.** Postdoctoral fellows, students, technical and support staff are NOT eligible to apply.

iv. NRF rated part-time employees on contract at an NRF recognized research institution (as defined above) in South Africa who do not currently hold a CPRR grant may apply,

on condition that their appointment at the South African institution is for (at least) the duration of the project applied for. The length of the contract should be stated in the application. The primary employment of the individual concerned must be at that institution. A contract researcher appointed at a research institution on behalf of a third party to fulfill a very specific function for the latter does not qualify for support.

v. Successful rated applicants will be eligible for funding **for the duration of their awarded grant,** to a maximum of 3 years. The grant allocation will be allowed to run for the duration of the award, even if the principal investigator loses his/her rating status during this period. However, once the grant period has expired, the principal investigator will not be able to reapply to the CPRR funding stream until a new rating is obtained.

vi. Retired unrated academics/researchers, provided they meet all set criteria as stipulated below:

- are resident in South Africa;
- are formally affiliated to a South African Higher Education Institution (e.g., appointed as an emeritus professor, honorary research associate/professor, supernumerary/contract employee);
- are active researchers with a distinguished track record in research and postgraduate student supervision;
- are actively mentoring/training postgraduate students/young research staff; and
- the institution ensures that a minimum of reasonable time (6 months minimum) is spent at the facility for the purpose of research and research capacity development.

3.3 Ethical clearance

It is the responsibility of the grantholder, in conjunction with the institution, to ensure that all research activities carried out in or outside South Africa comply with the laws and regulations of South Africa and/or the foreign country in which the research activities are conducted. These include all human and animal subjects, copyright and intellectual property protection, and other regulations or laws, as appropriate. A research ethics committee must review and approve the ethical and academic rigor of all research prior to the commencement of the research and acceptance of the grant.

The awarded amount will not be released for payment until a copy of the required ethical clearance certificate, as indicated in the application, is submitted. All CPRR grant awards without ethical clearance certificates on 1 June 2023 will be cancelled.

Please refer to the "Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices" at https://www.nrf.ac.za/statement-on-ethical-research-and-scholarly-publishing-practices/?hilite=Statement+Ethical+Research+and+Scholarly+Publishing+Practices.

3.4 Application assessment

The assessment of applications will be guided by a Panel Assessment Scorecard (see Annexure 1) and scored according to the Proposal Grading (see Annexure 2). Application assessment will occur by way of a two-tiered process.

Remote peer review

The remote peer reviewers will be specialists in the ambit of the respective proposals. Requests for written reviews will be solicited electronically, or through appropriate media platforms peers located at remote locations from the NRF. Applicants will be requested to provide between 6 to 10 possible reviewers. It is in the applicant's best interest to ensure that the selected reviewers are aware of the submission and are thus likely to respond. It is also in the applicant's best interest to ensure that selected reviewers have no possible conflict of interest in submitting a review. Should that be the case, review reports will be dismissed without consideration.

Panel peer review

The adjudication panel will be broadly constituted to include senior academics, selected based both on their respective knowledge fields and their research standing. The panel meeting will be held at a central location or by way of tele- or videoconferencing. Panel members will deliberate on submitted written reviews and will be expected to offer their own expert opinions.

NB: Applicants must ensure that their Curriculum Vitae are updated on the NRF Connect System at https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za . These Curriculum Vitae are used in the assessment processes, and incomplete or outdated inputs will jeopardise the success of the application.

3.5 Rules of participation

i. Principal Investigator

- Only rated researchers based at NRF recognized research institutions in South Africa (as defined above) are eligible to apply as principal investigators (PI) in this funding instrument.
- The PI (i.e., the applicant) must be an active researcher who takes intellectual responsibility for the project, its conception, any strategic decisions required in its pursuit, and the communication of results. The PI must have the capacity to make a serious commitment to the project and cannot assume the role of a supplier of resources for work that will largely be placed in the hands of others. The PI will take responsibility for the management and administration of resources allocated to the grant award, and for the meeting of reporting requirements.
- The principal investigator may submit only one CPRR application to this call for proposals.

ii. Co-investigators

A co-investigator is an active researcher who provides significant commitment, intellectual input and relevant expertise into the design and implementation of the research application. The co-investigator will be involved in all or at least some well-defined research activities within the scope of the application. Only South Africa-based co-investigators will be eligible for funding in successful grant applications. It is important to note that postdoctoral fellows, students, technical and support staff do not qualify as co-investigators.

iii. Research Associates / Collaborators

These individuals or groups make a relatively small, but meaningful contribution to the research endeavours outlined in the application, but do not participate in the research design. They are not considered as part of the core research team and are not eligible to receive NRF funds from the grant if the team's application is successful.

3.6 Data management and use

A data management Plan (DMP) is a formal document that describes the data you expect to acquire or generate during a research project, how you will manage, describe, analyze, and store those data, and what mechanisms (including digital data storage) you will use at the end

of your project to share and preserve your data. This may be included as an attachment to the application, or the information can be placed into the application template text, as preferred.

Research data sharing that underlies the findings reported in a journal article/conference paper/thesis as set out in the NRF Open Access Statement.

The findings reported in a journal article or conference paper should be deposited in accordance with the NRF Open Access Statement. It is acknowledged that some data generated are more sensitive than others. Before initiating the research, it is the grantholder's responsibility to consider the following: confidentiality, ethics, security, and copyright. Possible data sharing challenges should be considered in the DMP with solutions to optimise data sharing.

Researchers should note that publicly-funded research data should be in the public domain, with free and open access, by default. Collaborators and co-investigators in the research project should be informed by the applicant that due to public funding and funder mandate, one is expected to share research data as openly as possible. The DMP should indicate which data will be shared. If (some) research data is to be restricted, an appropriate statement in the DMP and subsequent publication should explain why access to data is restricted. The NRF has adopted and is given permission to use the DCC Checklist for Data Management Plan, and this can be used as a guide for developing the DMP.
(http://www.dcc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/resource/DMP/DMP_Checklist_2013.pdf)

3.7 Science Engagement

The NRF supports science engagement through its coordination and implementation of the Department of Science and Innovation's Engagement Strategy. The strategy embraces a broad understanding of science, encompassing systematic knowledge spanning natural and physical sciences, engineering sciences, medical sciences, agricultural sciences, mathematics, social sciences and humanities, technology, all aspects of the innovation chain and indigenous knowledge. Within this context, science engagement refers to activities, events, or interactions characterised by mutual learning and dialogue among people of varied backgrounds, scientific expertise, and life experiences, who articulate and discuss their perspectives, ideas, knowledge, and values. Science engagement is an overarching term for all aspects of public engagement with science, including science awareness, science education, science communication and science outreach, which aim to develop and benefit individuals and society. Researchers funded

through NRF programmes are required to contribute to science engagement and report the related outputs in their project's annual Progress Report.

4 FINANCIALS

4.1 Funding model

The grants of this funding instrument are to be primarily used for research purposes and for the development of associated human resources under the auspices of the NRF standard grant and finance policies. The allocation of funds is demand-driven, and as such there is no maximum or minimum proposal request. The number of applications that will be supported overall will depend on the availability of resources and the financial requirements of those successful applications. If successful applications have high financial requirements, fewer applications will be supported. The funds are released upon acceptance of the conditions of grant, both by the applicant and their employing institution. These grants will fall under the NRF audit requirements of beneficiary institutions.

4.2 Funding ranges

Successful applications will receive funding that accommodates the following budget items:

i. Staff development grants and Postdoctoral bursaries, and

ii. Research-related operating costs, including:

- Sabbaticals.
- Materials and Supplies.
- Travel and subsistence.
- Research / Technical / *Ad hoc* Assistants.
- Research Equipment.

iii. Funding to cater for disabilities.

i. Staff development grants and Postdoctoral Fellowships

Applicants may apply for Staff Development grants for South African **staff members** at their own and other institutions, and who are not NRF grantholders. These staff members must be registered for either a Masters or Doctoral degree, supervised by the applicant or a co-investigator of the applicant and must be directly involved in the NRF-approved project. These grants can be used to contribute towards the operating costs for research undertaken at the supervisor's facility, as well as the cost of travel and accommodation to enable staff members to meet with (co)supervisors. Grants usually range between R15

000 and R30 000 depending on the nature of the research and the proximity of the staff member in relation to the supervisor. Applicants themselves are **not** eligible for Staff Development Grants. **The maximum period of funding is three years.**

Postdoctoral fellowships, subject to budgetary constraints, are open to all who undertake research in South Africa. The value for Postdoctoral fellowships (pro-rata per month) amounts to R200 000 per annum.

ii. Research-related operating costs

These costs include materials and supplies, travel (including conferences) and subsistence, equipment and research/technical/*ad hoc* assistance and sabbaticals to other research organisations and institutions of higher learning may be included within the context of the project applications. These costs should be justified and commensurate with the planned outputs, as they will be assessed on this basis. The amount awarded within this framework can be used at the discretion of the applicant**.**

General guidelines

Sabbaticals

Sabbaticals will be considered for a period from two to six months. The maximum sabbatical amount requested should not exceed R80 000 for six months. Funding for sabbaticals of less than six months will be reduced pro-rata. Principal investigators and co-investigators are eligible to apply for sabbatical funding.

Materials and Supplies

Generally, the NRF does not provide financial support for:

- Basic office stationery, photocopying costs, and printing costs are excluded unless these items form part of the research tools.
- Basic office equipment including computers and consumables unless a specialised computer is required for the research itself.
- Journal publication costs, journal subscription costs and book costs.
- Telephone and internet costs.

Travel and subsistence

- International conference attendance: Generally, the NRF restricts this amount to R25 000 per person to a maximum of R50 000 per application per year for a team i.e., for principal investigators and co-investigators (South African-based only)
- International visits: These will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Such visits must be integral to the research plan and strong motivations should accompany these requests. Realistic funding allocations will be based on the requested activities. Only outgoing visits will be considered depending on the availability of funding.
- Local conference attendance: Generally, the NRF restricts expenditure against this item to R5 000 per person (all costs). Support for local conference attendance could be requested for all listed co-investigators and postgraduate students. The applicant should clearly motivate for the benefit to attend more than one local conference per annum, and for the number of people attending each local conference.
- Local travel: The NRF does not stipulate any rate for mileage as this will depend on the rate which varies per institution/organisation. Applicants are requested to provide details of this rate as well as the estimated distance to be travelled within the given year. This travel should be well-motivated and exclude travel to the conferences mentioned above.
- Local accommodation costs should not exceed a 3-star establishment. This relates to local travel for research purposes and an estimation of accommodation costs for each trip should be clearly presented in the motivation.

Research / Technical / *Ad hoc* Assistants

This instrument **does not provide funding for salaries**. Requests for research/technical/*ad hoc* assistance should be treated with caution. The NRF strongly encourages applicants to engage students to undertake the research rather than employing research consultants. The NRF will not pay for students to undertake research. This guideline however does not apply when specific and/or highly specialised research/technical expertise is required. This should be **clearly** motivated for in the application. Administrative assistance does not qualify as technical assistance.

Research Equipment

Funding for equipment will be limited to R200 000 per application. Requisitions for large equipment items should be submitted through the NRF's Research Equipment Programme.

iii. Funding to cater for disabilities

Additional funding support to cater for disability will be allocated to people with disabilities as specified in the Code of Good Practice on Employment of People with Disabilities as in the Employment Equity Act No 55 of 1998.

4.3 Postgraduate student support

The NRF has developed a new Postgraduate Student Funding Policy that will use postgraduate student funding as a lever to address the challenges of inequity of access, success, and throughput. The policy is underpinned by the pursuit of research excellence in all its dimensions and has transformation of the postgraduate cohort as the core objective. Its purpose is to retain high academic achievers in the system to pursue postgraduate studies up to the doctoral level, as part of a national drive to grow the next generation of academics to sustain South Africa's knowledge enterprise. The NRF is prioritising postgraduate students with research inclination, with the aim to grow the pool of early career researchers. Another motivation for this policy is to fast-track the development of postgraduate students in high-impact, priority, and vulnerable disciplines critical for national socio-economic development.

From the 2021 academic year onwards, the NRF began phasing out the block grant nomination process as well as the grant-holder-linked modalities of funding postgraduate students. All the postgraduate students are required to apply on the NRF Connect System by accessing the link: **https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za** . This single-entry point will allow the NRF to co-ordinate the applications that have not yet had the financial means test conducted. This financial means test will be conducted by Ikusasa Students Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP). Postgraduate students will be funded either at Full Cost of Study (FCS) or Partial Cost of Study (PCS) under the new policy. To ensure equity of access to postgraduate studies, financially needy students (i.e., those whose combined household income is R350 000 per annum or less) and students with a disability will be funded at FCS. Academic *"high-fliers"* achieving a distinction or first-class pass will also be eligible for funding at FCS. International students as well as any other South African students who are not eligible for FCS will be eligible for PCS funding.

The students are expected to meet the NRF minimum entry requirement to be eligible for FCS or PCS as illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Eligibility criteria for NRF postgraduate funding for FCS and PCS.

Study Level	Full Cost of Study *(South African Citizens and Permanent Residents only)*		Partial Cost of Study (*South African Citizens; South African Permanent Residents and 5% Non-South African Citizens)*
	Exceptional Achievers	**Financially Needy & Students with Disability**	**Other**
Honours	• ≥ 75% Mark in Final Year of study	• ≥ 65% Mark in Final Year of study	• ≥ 65% Mark in Final Year of study
	Honours students must be **28** years of age or younger in the year of application. Non-South African Citizens are not eligible for Honours Scholarships.		
Masters	• ≥ 75% Mark for Honours • Completed Honours in one year	• ≥ 65% Mark for Honours • Completed Honours in one year	• ≥ 65% Mark for Honours • Completed Honours in one year
	Masters students must be **30** years of age or younger in the year of application.		
Doctoral	• ≥ 75% Mark for Masters • Completed Masters in two years	• ≥ 65% Mark for Masters • Completed Masters in two years	• ≥ 65% Mark for Masters • Completed Masters in two years
	Doctoral students must be **32** years of age or younger in the year of application.		

In cases where a grade is not indicated, the application will not be considered for funding by the NRF.

The NRF will allocate all postgraduate bursaries under its management control as follows:

- 95% South African citizens and permanent residents.
- 5% students from SADC countries and from the rest of the world, and
- 55% women.

The NRF disaggregates these targets for South African citizens and permanent residents as follows:

- 90% Black (African, Coloured, and Indian).
- 10% White; and
- 1% students living with a disability.

Applicants are encouraged to identify postgraduate students that have a potential to complete their honours and Masters' degree with a minimum pass mark of 65%, and who are interested in pursuing research in the area of the proposed project. The interested students must apply on the NRF Connect system by accessing the link: **https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za**, and should include the reference number of your application in their applications. This will enable the identification of the students' applications for consideration for funding by the NRF. Should your application be unsuccessful, the students' chances of being funded will not be affected. In a situation where the students are not successful, you may contact the Postgraduate Office at your institution to identify students who succeeded to get the NRF bursaries, and who may require a supervisor. The success of the applications for your targeted students is not a guarantee that all of them will receive NRF bursaries. Student bursary approval will depend on the available budget and will be made in consideration of the NRF's key performance targets.

4.4 Financial control and reporting

Upon receipt of the signed Conditions of Grant, the NRF will release the awarded amount for the year. Grantholders will then be required to comply with the standard NRF financial management procedures, including the submission of a Progress Report. These are to be submitted by 15 February of the following year and is a prerequisite for the release of the subsequent year's funding. Failure to submit a Progress Report will result in the cancellation of ALL current awards held by the Principal Investigator.

5 ENQUIRIES

Funding rules related queries	Application process related queries
Mr Katleho Ralehoko Professional Officer: Knowledge Advancement and Support Tel: 012 481 4188 E-mail: K.Ralehoko@risa.nrf.ac.za	Ms. Jane Mabena Professional Officer: Grants Management & Systems Administration Tel: 012 481 4067 E-mail: JS.Mabena@risa.nrf.ac.za
Applicants may also contact the NRF Support Desk via email: supportdesk@nrf.ac.za	

6 LIST OF ACRONYMS

CI	Co-investigator
CPRR	Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers
DMP	Data Management Plan
DSI	Department of Science and Innovation
FCS	Full Cost of Study
ISFAP	Ikusasa Students Financial Aid Programme
KAS	Knowledge Advancement and Support
NRF	National Research Foundation
PCS	Partial Cost of Study
PI	Principal Investigator
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

7. ANNEXURE 1: Panel Assessment Scorecard for Rated Researchers

ANNEXURE 1: Panel Assessment Scorecard – CPRR					
Criteria	**Sub-Criteria**	**Details**	**Score / 4**	**Weight**	**Weighted score**
Proposals	Scientific merit and feasibility	Reflect on the proposed rationale, approach and methodology. Reflect on the scientific, ethical[1] logistics and technical feasibility as proposed		45%	0.00
Track record of the applicant	Past research	Reflect on past contributions to knowledge production (e.g. journal articles, book chapters, designs, performances, etc.)		5%	0.00
Equity	Of applicant	Race / Gender[2]		15%	0.00
	Of students supervised	M and D degrees.		5%	0.00
Collaboration	International, national and institutional collaborations	Are the appropriate collaborations proposed in the application? Are the roles of the proposed collaborators clearly indicated?		5%	0.00
Impacts	Impact on knowledge production	Will the proposed work significantly advance discovery and understanding in the field?		10%	0.00
	Wider impact	Has the possibility for economic, societal, or environmental impact been appropriately embedded in the proposal? Is it clear how such impact will be measured?		5%	0.00
Data management and use	Data management plan	A data management plan (DMP) is a formal document that describes the data you expect to acquire or generate during a research project, how you will manage, describe, analyse, and store those data, and what mechanisms (including digital data storage) you will use at the end of your project to share and preserve your data.		10%	
			Totals	**100%**	**0.00**

[1] [1] Ethical considerations and clearances for grant proposals are the responsibility of the research institute and/or institution of the applicant. Where ethical clearance is required, grant applicants will be expected to submit to the NRF signed statements and/or copies of clearance certificates before any grant funds are released.

[2] This is a preset score inserted by the NRF. See Annexure 3

7. ANNEXURE 1: Panel Assessment Scorecard for Rated Researchers

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Details	Score / 4	Weight
Proposal	Scientific merit and feasibility	Reflect on the proposed rationale, approach and methodology Is the proposal feasible as proposed? Has knowledge of relevant literature been adequately articulated?		45%
Equity	Of applicant	Race / Gender / Years post PhD[3]		10%
Transformation	Early career researchers/ postgraduates	Reflect on the historical compliance with transformational objectives		10%
Science Engagement	Plans for science engagement	Is there evidence of a science engagement strategy? Are the appropriate target groups adequately articulated?		10%
Impact	Wider Impact	Has economic/ societal/ environmental impact been embedded in the proposal? Is it clear how such impact will be measured?		15%
Data management and use	Plans for digital data storage, usage and/or dissemination	Has appropriate consideration been given to digital data storage, usage and/or dissemination beyond the immediate project team?		10%
			Total	**100%**

[3] This score is predetermined in accordance with an NRF-approved scale – see Annexure 3

8 ANNEXURE 2: Proposal Grading

ANNEXURE 2: Proposal Grading		
Score	**Meaning of score**	**Notes**
4	Excellent	Application demonstrates evidence of ***outstanding*** performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration
3	Above average	Application demonstrates evidence of ***above average*** performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration
2	Average	Application demonstrates evidence of ***average*** performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration
1	Below average	Application demonstrates evidence of ***below average*** performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by panel and relative to knowledge field under consideration
0	Poor	There are ***major shortcomings or flaws*** as relates to the scientific / scholarly merit and feasibility of the proposed work, as determined by the panel.
Context: Proposal grading is done with sensitivity to the context within which each application is submitted. The score of each criterion for each application will be contextualised to accommodate variability in such things as knowledge fields, institutional capacity, etc. Should a criterion not be applicable to a specific application (e.g., plans for digital data storage; collaborations; etc.), the weighting of that specific criteria will be made to equal zero, and the overall score normalised.		

It should be noted that non-South African citizens will be scored as White females or males, as appropriate.

COMPETITIVE SUPPORT FOR UNRATED RESEARCHERS (CSUR)

KNOWLEDGE ADVANCEMENT AND SUPPORT

Framework Document

February 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE FUNDING INSTRUMENT

The Competitive Support for Unrated Researchers (CSUR) is an instrument to support ring-fenced, once-off grants that is competitive and discipline-based in nature. The instrument is aimed at enhancing the efficiency of the National Research Foundation (NRF) to drive transformation consistently and strategically through supporting primarily basic research as the foundation of knowledge production in the disciplines of the Humanities, Social and Natural Sciences.

As a competitive funding instrument, the chief eligibility criteria are:

i. **A principal applicant who does not hold a valid NRF rating**
ii. **Scientific merit and quality of the research proposal.**

Although the funding instrument ostensibly has a broad and non-directed theme and structure, funding will be prioritized to the top scoring applications within each broad field/discipline that are not supported through other NRF funding instruments, such as African Origin Platforms (Palaeosciences), the Global Change Grand Challenge, the South African National Antarctic Programme, and Marine research, among others. The emphasis will be on basic and as appropriate, applied research in disciplinary fields, and will allow for multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary enquiry along the basic-applied research continuum.

Other than in the case of dedicated or ring-fenced funding that support identified fields, disciplines and funding instruments, the NRF through the CSUR does not guide the direction of research of the applicants. However, research informed by the national priorities would be of particular interest in the context of contributing to wider system objectives.

This is not a developmental funding instrument. Rather, it is anticipated that applicants who are established researchers that may either have lost their rating due to various circumstances or have never subjected themselves to the rating system will be afforded the support to continue to produce quality and impactful research, contributing to South Africa's global research and development output. It is envisaged that this funding instrument will enable these established researchers to (re-) enter the rating stream having had the opportunity to rebuild and or strengthen their research portfolios.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The objective of the NRF is to contribute to National Development by:

i. Supporting, promoting and advancing research and human capacity development, through funding and the provision of the necessary research infrastructure, in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of science and technology, including humanities, social sciences and indigenous knowledge;
ii. Developing, supporting and maintaining national research facilities;
iii. Supporting and promoting public awareness of, and engagement with science; and
iv. Promoting the development and maintenance of the national science system and support of

government priorities.

Vision 2030

The overall objectives for 2030 are to shape, influence, and impact the national research system; to establish the NRF as a thought leader and source of knowledge within the science sector; to create a clear causal relationship between research and national development; to have a transformative effect on the national research enterprise and the relationship between science and society; and to enable, initiate, facilitate and perform excellent research with direct and indirect impact, whether immediate or long-term, that extends the frontiers of knowledge and addresses national challenges.

Strategy 2025

NRF Strategy 2025 is an implementation framework for the ten-year vision. This strategy is centred on the NRF's desire to contribute to national development through research with an impact. The strategic outcomes include:

i. A transformed (internationally competitive and sustainable) research workforce;
ii. Enhanced impact of the research enterprise;
iii. Enhanced impact of science engagement; and
iv. A transformed organisation that lives its culture and values.

2.1 Environmental scan

The CSUR resonates with the NRF mandate by being cognisant of the role that research plays in the innovation and the commercialisation value chain, and hence the socio-economic development of the country.

While it is recognised that the innovation value chain requires basic, strategic and applied research, the emphasis in this funding instrument will primarily be on the support of both basic and applied research. Support for basic disciplinary research is seen as an investment in a society's learning capabilities. At the same time, this funding instrument acknowledges that basic and applied research are a continuum and inter-dependent and that increasingly, the notion of "frontier research" transcends the distinction of basic and applied research and refers to leading edge research which is risky and often across different disciplines.

Social Sciences, Law and Humanities applications are important, just like those in the natural sciences, engineering and health science that have traditionally been supported. The NRF continues to support self-initiated bottom-up research ideas and research that address national strategic initiatives as reflected in national strategies like the National Development Plan, and those that are embedded in geographic advantage areas. At the International level the NRF is keen to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Agenda 2063 priorities.

2.2 Objectives

The objectives of the funding instrument are to:

i. contribute to the development of a sound fundamental basis to scientific and scholarly

endeavour in South Africa, in the Humanities, Natural and Social Science disciplines;
ii. contribute to knowledge production across the research spectrum;
iii. achieve world-class research and to develop the associated human capacity; and
iv. advance or develop paradigms, theories and methodological innovation across the research spectrum.

2.3 Financing support

The CSUR is made possible through the NRF's Parliamentary Core Funding. As a demand-driven funding instrument, there is no limit to the amount an applicant can request. However, the financial requests need to be in line with requirements and accurately reflect the financial needs of the proposed work. Excessive budget requests are not well received by the review panels. The final number of successful applicants to be funded will be determined by the available budget.

2.4 Key stakeholders

The key stakeholders involved in the CSUR are persons based at public research institutions that are recognised by directive of the Department of Science and Innovation. These include Public Universities, Museums, National Research Facilities and Science Councils.

3. MODUS OPERANDI

3.1 Call for proposals

All applications must be submitted electronically via the NRF Connect system at **https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za**. All applications must be endorsed by the research office of the principal applicant before submission to the NRF. It is the responsibility of each applicant to familiarise himself / herself with the internal closing dates, set by his/ her institution in order to meet the NRF closing date included in the "General Application Guide 2022".

3.2 Eligibility

i. CSUR grantholders will only qualify for **ONE** CSUR grant cycle (3 years). Thereafter, they will be expected to enter the rated stream and apply for funding to other NRF instruments such as the Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers (CPRR). Current or previous CSUR grantholders are **ineligible** for further CSUR funding. Funding in this round will support successful applications for a maximum period of 3 years, 2023 - 2025. A project with a duration of one year or less does not qualify.

ii. Each new Principal Investigator (PI) **may only submit ONE** CSUR application to this call. However, a researcher may participate either as a co-investigator or collaborator in more than one project. Postdoctoral fellows, students, technical and support staff are NOT eligible to apply.

iii. Full-time employees at an NRF recognized research institutions in South Africa, **who do not hold a valid NRF rating at the time of application**, are invited to apply**.**

iv. NRF unrated part-time employees on contract at an NRF recognized research institution (as

defined above) in South Africa who do not currently hold a CSUR grant may apply, on condition their appointment at the South African institution is for (at least) the duration of the project applied for. The length of the contract should be stated in the application form. The primary employment of the individual concerned must be at that institution. A contract researcher appointed at a research institution on behalf of a third party to fulfill a very specific function for the latter does not qualify for support.

v. Successful unrated applicants will be eligible for funding **for the duration of their awarded grant,** to a maximum period of 3 years. The grant allocation will be allowed to run for the duration of the award, even if the principal investigator is awarded an NRF rating during this period. Once rated, the principal investigator will be expected to enter the CPRR funding stream.

vi. Applicants who are completing their projects that were funded through the Thuthuka rating track will not be considered for CSUR funding, and are therefore advised to apply for rating so that they will be eligible to apply either to the Development Grant for Y-rated researchers or to the CPRR.

vii. Retired unrated academics/researchers, provided that they meet all set criteria as stipulated below:
   - are resident in South Africa;
   - are formally affiliated to a South African Higher Education Institution (e.g., appointed as an emeritus professor, honorary research associate/professor, supernumerary/contract employee);
   - are active researchers with a distinguished track record in research and postgraduate student supervision;
   - are actively mentoring/training postgraduate students/young research staff; and
   - the institution ensures that a minimum of reasonable time (6 months minimum) is spent at the facility for the purpose of research and research capacity development.

3.3 Ethical Clearance

It is the responsibility of the grantholder, in conjunction with the institution, to ensure that all research activities carried out in or outside South Africa comply with the laws and regulations of South Africa and/or the foreign country in which the research activities are conducted. These include all human and animal subjects, copyright and intellectual property protection, and other regulations or laws, as appropriate. A research ethics committee must review and approve the ethical and academic rigor of all research prior to the commencement of the research and acceptance of the grant.

The awarded amount will not be released for payment if a copy of the required ethical clearance certificate, as indicated in the application, is not attached to the Conditions of Grant.
Please also refer to the “Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices” on the NRF website at https://www.nrf.ac.za/statement-on-ethical-research-and-scholarly-publishing-practices.

3.4 Application assessment

The assessment of applications will be guided by a Panel Assessment Scorecard (see Annexure 1), and scored according to the Proposal Grading (see Annexure 2). Application assessment will occur by way of a two-tiered process.

Remote peer review

The remote peer reviewers will be specialists in the ambit of the respective proposals. Requests for written reviews will be solicited electronically, or through appropriate media platform from peers located at remote locations from the NRF. Applicants will be requested to provide between 6 to 10 possible reviewers. It is in the applicant's best interest to ensure that the selected reviewers are aware of the submission and are thus likely to respond. It is also in the applicant's best interest to ensure that selected reviewers have no possible conflict of interest in submitting a review; should that be the case review reports will be dismissed without consideration.

Panel-peer review

The adjudication panel will be broadly constituted to include senior academics, selected based both on their respective knowledge fields and their research standing. The panel meeting will be held at a central location or by way of tele- or video-conferencing. Panel members will deliberate on submitted written reviews and will be expected to offer their own expert opinions.

NB: Applicants must ensure that their Curriculum Vitae are updated on the NRF Connect system at https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za.

These Curriculum Vitae are used in the assessment processes, and incomplete or outdated inputs will jeopardise the application.

3.5 Rules of participation

i. Principal Investigator

- Only unrated researchers based at NRF recognized research institutions in South Africa (as defined above) are eligible to apply as PI in this funding instrument.

- The PI (i.e. the applicant) must be an active researcher who takes intellectual responsibility for the project, its conceptualization, any strategic decisions required in its pursuit, and the communication of results. The PI must have the capacity to make a serious commitment to the project and cannot assume the role of a supplier of resources for work that will largely be placed in the hands of others. The PI will take responsibility for the management and administration of resources allocated to the grant award, and for the meeting of reporting requirements.

- The PI may not hold a current CSUR grant.

- The PI may submit only one CSUR application to this call for proposals.

ii. Co-investigators/partner principal investigator

A co-investigator/partner principal investigator is an active researcher who provides

significant commitment, intellectual input and relevant expertise into the design and implementation of the research application. The co-investigator/partner principal investigator will be involved in all or at least some well-defined research activities within the scope of the application. Only South Africa-based co-investigator/partner principal investigator will be eligible for funding in successful grant applications.

It is important to note that postdoctoral fellows, students, technical and support staff DO NOT qualify as co-investigators

iii. Research Associates / Collaborators

These individuals or groups make a relatively small, but meaningful contribution to the research endeavours outlined in the application, but do not participate in the research design. They are not considered a part of the core research team and are not eligible to receive NRF funds from the grant if the team's application is successful.

3.6 Data management and use

A data management Plan (DMP) is a formal document that describes the data expected to be acquired or generated during the course of a research project, how data will be managed, described, analyzed, and stored, and what mechanisms (including digital data storage) will be used at the end of the project to share and preserve the data. Research data sharing that underlies the findings reported in a journal article/conference paper/thesis as set out in the NRF Open Access Statement.

The findings reported in a journal article or conference paper should be deposited in accordance with the NRF Open Access Statement. It is acknowledged that some of the data generated is more sensitive than others. Before initiating the research, it is the grantholder's responsibility to consider the following: confidentiality, ethics, security and copyright. Possible data sharing challenges should be considered in the DMP with solutions to optimise data sharing.

Researchers should note that publicly funded research data should be in the public domain, with free and open access, by default. Collaborators and co-investigators in the research project should be informed by the applicant that due to public funding and funder mandate, one is expected to share research data as openly as possible. The Data Management Plan should indicate which data will be shared. If (some) research data is to be restricted, an appropriate statement in the DMP and subsequent publication should explain why access to data is restricted. The NRF has adopted and is given permission to use the DCC Checklist for Data Management Plan, and this can be used as a guide for developing the DMP.
(http://www.dcc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/resource/DMP/DMP_Checklist_2013.pdf)

3.7 Science Engagement

The NRF supports science engagement through its coordination and implementation of the Department of Science and Innovation's Engagement Strategy. The strategy embraces a broad understanding of science, encompassing systematic knowledge spanning natural and physical sciences, engineering sciences, medical sciences, agricultural sciences, mathematics, social

sciences and humanities, technology, all aspects of the innovation chain and indigenous knowledge. Within this context, science engagement refers to activities, events, or interactions characterised by mutual learning and dialogue among people of varied backgrounds, scientific expertise and life experiences, who articulate and discuss their perspectives, ideas, knowledge and values. Science engagement is an overarching term for all aspects of public engagement with science, including science awareness, science education, science communication and science outreach, which aims to develop and benefit individuals and society. Researchers funded through the NRF programmes are required to contribute to science engagement and report the related outputs in their project's Progress Report.

4. FINANCIALS

4.1 Funding model

The grants of this funding instrument are to be primarily used for research purposes and for the development of associated human resources under the auspices of the NRF standard grant and finance policies. The allocation of funds is demand-driven, and as such there is no maximum or minimum proposal request. The number of applications that will be supported overall will depend on the availability of resources and the financial requirements of those successful applications. If successful applications have high financial requirements, fewer applications will be supported.
The funds are released upon acceptance of the conditions of grant, both by the applicant and their employing institution. These grants will fall under the NRF audit requirements of beneficiary institutions.

4.2 Funding ranges

Successful applications will receive funding that accommodates the following budget items:

i. Staff development grants; and
ii. Research-related operating costs, including:
   - Sabbaticals
   - Materials and Supplies
   - Travel and subsistence
   - Research / Technical / *Ad hoc* Assistants
   - Research Equipment.
iii. Funding to cater for disabilities

i. Staff development grants

Applicants may apply for Staff Development grants for South African **staff members** at their own and other institutions, and who are not NRF grantholders in their own right. These staff members must be registered for either a Masters or Doctoral degree, supervised by the applicant or a co-investigator of the application and must be directly involved in the NRF approved project. These grants can be used to contribute towards the operating costs for research undertaken at the supervisor's facility, as well as the cost of travel and accommodation to enable staff members to meet with (co)supervisors. Grants usually range between R15 000 and R30 000 depending on the nature of the research and the proximity of the student in relation to the supervisor. Applicants themselves are **not** eligible for Staff Development Grants. **The maximum period of**

funding is three years.

ii. Research-related operating costs

These costs include materials and supplies, travel (including conferences) and subsistence, equipment and research/technical/*ad hoc* assistance and sabbaticals to other research organisations and institutions of higher learning may be included within the context of the project applications. These costs should be justified and commensurate with the planned outputs, as they will be assessed on this basis. The amount awarded within this framework can be used at the discretion of the applicant**.**

General guidelines

Sabbaticals

Sabbaticals will be considered for a period from two to six months. The maximum sabbatical amount requested should not exceed R80 000 for six months. Funding for sabbaticals of less than six months will be reduced pro-rata. Principal investigators and co-investigators are eligible to apply for sabbatical funding.

Materials and Supplies

Generally, the NRF does not provide financial support for:

i. Basic office stationery, photocopying costs, and printing costs are excluded unless these items form part of the research tools;
ii. Basic office equipment including computers and consumables unless the computer is required for the research itself;
iii. Journal publication costs, journal subscription costs and book costs; and
iv. Telephone and internet costs.

Travel and subsistence

i. International conference attendance: Generally the NRF restricts this amount to R25 000 per person to a maximum of R50 000 per application per year for a team i.e. for principal investigators and co-investigators (local only);
ii. International visits: These will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Such visits must be integral to the research plan and strong motivations should accompany these requests. Realistic funding allocations will be based on the requested activities. Only outgoing visits will be considered depending on the availability of funding;
iii. Local conference attendance: Generally the NRF restricts expenditure against this item to R5 000 per person (all costs). Support for local conference attendance could be requested for all listed co-investigators and postgraduate students. The applicant should clearly motivate for the benefit to attend more than one local conference per annum, and for the number of people attending each local conference;
iv. Local travel: The NRF does not stipulate any rate for mileage as this will depend on the rate which varies per institution/organisation. Applicants are requested to provide details of this rate as well as the estimated distance to be travelled within the given year. This travel should

be well motivated and exclude travel to the conferences mentioned above; and

v. Local accommodation costs should not exceed a 3-star establishment. This relates to local travel for research purposes and an estimation of accommodation costs for each trip should be clearly presented in the motivation.

Research / Technical / *Ad hoc* Assistants

This instrument **does not provide funding for salaries**. Requests for research/technical/*ad hoc* assistance should be treated with caution. Generally the NRF would encourage applicants to engage students to undertake the research rather than employing research consultants. The NRF will not pay for students to undertake research. This guideline however does not apply when specific and/or highly specialised research/technical expertise is required. This should be **CLEARLY** motivated for in the application.

Administrative assistance DOES NOT qualify as technical assistance.

Research Equipment

Funding for equipment will be limited to R200 000 per application. Requisitions for large equipment items should be submitted through the NRF's Research Equipment Programme.

Science Engagement

Pre-planned science engagement events can be awarded additional funds limited to a maximum of R30 000 per annum, and only events that are motivated upfront will be funded.

iii. Funding to cater for disabilities

Additional funding support to cater for disability will be allocated to people with disabilities as specified in the Code of Good Practice on Employment of People with Disabilities as in the Employment Equity Act No 55 of 1998.

4.3 Postgraduate student support

The NRF has developed a new Postgraduate Student Funding Policy that will use postgraduate student funding as a lever to address the challenges of inequity of access, success and throughput. The policy is underpinned by the pursuit of research excellence in all of its dimensions and has transformation of the postgraduate cohort as the core objective. Its purpose is to retain high academic achievers in the system to pursue postgraduate studies up to the doctoral level, as part of a national drive to grow the next generation of academics to sustain South Africa's knowledge enterprise. The NRF is prioritising postgraduate students with research inclination, with the aim to grow the pool of early career researchers. Another motivation for this policy is to fast-track the development of postgraduate students in high-impact, priority and vulnerable disciplines critical for national socio-economic development.

From the 2021 academic year onwards, the NRF began phasing out the block grant nomination process as well as the grant-holder linked modalities of funding postgraduate students. All the postgraduate students are required to apply on the NRF Connect system by accessing the link: https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za/. This single entry point allows the NRF to co-ordinate the

applications that have not yet had the financial means test conducted, this financial means test will be conducted by Ikusasa Students Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP). Postgraduate students will be funded either at Full Cost of Study (FCS) or Partial Cost of Study (PCS) under the new policy. To ensure equity of access to postgraduate studies, financially needy students (i.e., those whose combined household income is R350 000 per annum or less) and students with a disability will be funded at FCS. Academic high fliers achieving a distinction or first-class pass will also be eligible for funding at FCS. International students as well as any other South African student who is not eligible to be funded at FCS will be eligible for PCS funding.

The students are expected to meet the NRF minimum entry requirement in order to be eligible for FCS or PCS as illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Eligibility criteria for NRF postgraduate funding for FCS and PCS.

<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">Study Level</th><th colspan="2">Full Cost of Study

(South African Citizens and Permanent Residents only)</th><th>Partial Cost of Study

(South African Citizens; South African Permanent Residents and 5% Non-South African Citizens)</th></tr>
<tr><th>Exceptional Achievers</th><th>Financially Needy & Students with Disability</th><th>Other</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Honours</td><td>• ≥ 75% Mark in Final Year of study</td><td>• ≥ 65% Mark in Final Year of study</td><td>• ≥ 65% Mark in Final Year of study</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Honours students must be 28 years of age or younger in the year of application. Non South African Citizens are not eligible for Honours Scholarships.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Masters</td><td>• ≥ 75% Mark for Honours
• Completed Honours in one year</td><td>• ≥ 65% Mark for Honours
• Completed Honours in one year</td><td>• ≥ 65% Mark for Honours
• Completed Honours in one year</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Masters students must be 30 years of age or younger in the year of application.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Doctoral</td><td>• ≥ 75% Mark for Masters
• Completed Masters in two years</td><td>• ≥ 65% Mark for Masters
• Completed Masters in two years</td><td>• ≥ 65% Mark for Masters
• Completed Masters in two years</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Doctoral students must be 32 years of age or younger in the year of application.</td></tr>
</table>

In cases where a grade is not indicated, the application will not be considered for funding by the NRF.

The NRF will allocate all postgraduate bursaries under its management control as follows:

- 95% South African citizens and permanent residents;
- 5% students from Southern African Development Community countries and from the rest

of the world; and
- 55% women.

The NRF disaggregates these targets for South African citizens and permanent residents as follows:

- 90% Black (African, Coloured, and Indian);
- 10% White; and
- 1% students living with a disability.

Applicants are encouraged to identify Postgraduate students that have a potential to complete their honours and Masters' degree with a minimum pass mark of 65%, and who are interested in pursuing research in the area of the proposed project. The interested students must apply on the NRF Connect system by accessing the link: https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za/, and should include the reference number of your application in their applications. This will enable the identification of the students' applications for consideration for funding by the NRF. Should your application be unsuccessful, the student's chances of being funded will not be affected. In a situation where the students are not successful, you may contact the Postgraduate Office at your institution to identify students who succeeded to get the NRF bursaries, and who may require a supervisor. The success of the applications for your targeted students is not a guarantee that all of them will receive NRF bursaries. Student bursary approval will depend on the available budget and will be made in consideration of the NRF's key performance targets.

4.4 Financial control and reporting

Upon receipt of the signed Conditions of Grant, the NRF will release the awarded amount for the year. Grantholders will then be required to comply with the standard NRF financial management procedures, including the submission of a Progress Report. These are to be submitted by 15 February of the following year, and are a prerequisite for the release of the subsequent year's funding. Failure to submit a Progress Report will result in the cancellation of the grant award.

5. ENQUIRIES

Funding rules related queries	Application process related queries
Ms Zodwa Masinga Professional Officer: Knowledge Advancement and Support Tel: 012 481 4310 Email: ZM.Masinga@risa.nrf.ac.za	Ms Jane Mabena Professional Officer: GMSA Tel: 012 481 4067 E-mail: JS.Mabena@risa.nrf.ac.za

6. LIST OF ACRONYMS

CPRR	Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers
CSUR	Competitive Support for Unrated Researchers
DMP	Data Management Plan
GMSA	Grants Management and Systems Administration
KAS	Knowledge Advancement and Support
NRF	National Research Foundation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PI	Principal Investigator
RE	Reviews and Evaluation
RISA	Research and Innovation Support and Advancement
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

7. ANNEXURE 1: Panel Assessment Scorecard for Unrated Researchers

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Details	Score / 4	Weight (Total = 100%)
Proposals	Scientific merit and feasibility	Reflect on the proposed rationale, approach and methodology. Reflect on the scientific, ethical[1] logistics and technical feasibility as proposed		45%
Impact	Impact on knowledge production	Will the proposed work significantly advance discovery and understanding in the field? Should be related to Scientific merit		5%
	Wider impact	Has the possibility for economic, societal or environmental impact been appropriately embedded in the proposal?		5%
Track record of the applicant	Past research	Reflect on past contributions to knowledge production (e.g. journal articles, book chapters, designs, performances, etc.)		5%
Equity	Of applicant	Race / Gender		25%
	Of students supervised in the past	M and D degrees.		5%
Collaboration	International, national and institutional collaborations	Are the appropriate collaborations proposed in the application? Are the roles of the proposed collaborators clearly indicated?		5%
Data management and use	Plans for digital data storage, usage &/or dissemination	A data management plan (DMP) is a formal document that describes the data expected to be acquired or generated during the course of a research project, how data will be managed, described, analyzed, used and stored, and what mechanisms (including digital data storage) will be used at the end of your project to share and preserve the data		5%

8. ANNEXURE 2: Proposal Grading

Score	Meaning of score	Notes
4	Excellent	Application demonstrates evidence of ***outstanding*** performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration
3	Above average	Application demonstrates evidence of ***above average*** performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration
2	Average	Application demonstrates evidence of ***average*** performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration
1	Below average	Application demonstrates evidence of ***below average*** performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by panel and relative to knowledge field under consideration
0	Poor	There are ***major shortcomings or flaws*** as relates to the scientific / scholarly merit and feasibility of the proposed work, as determined by the panel.

Context:
Proposal grading is done with sensitivity to the context within which each application is submitted. The score of each criterion for each application will be contextualised to accommodate variability in such things as knowledge fields, institutional capacity, etc. Should a criterion not be applicable to a specific application (e.g. plans for digital data storage; collaborations; etc.), the weighting of that specific criteria will be made to equal zero, and the overall score normalised.

RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT GRANTS FOR Y-RATED RESEARCHERS

KNOWLEDGE ADVANCEMENT AND SUPPORT

Framework Document

February 2022

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1. DESCRIPTION OF THE FUNDING INSTRUMENT

Research Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers is an instrument to support ring-fenced, once-off grants that is competitive and discipline-based in nature. The instrument is aimed at enhancing the efficiency of the National Research Foundation (NRF) to drive transformation consistently and strategically through supporting primarily basic research as the foundation of knowledge production in the disciplines of the Humanities, Social and Natural Sciences.

As a competitive funding instrument, the chief eligibility criteria are:

i. A valid NRF Y-rating of the principal applicant;
ii. Scientific merit and quality of the research proposal

Although the funding instrument ostensibly has a broad and non-directed theme and structure, funding will be prioritised to the top scoring applications within each broad field/discipline that are not supported through other NRF funding instruments, such as African Origin Platforms (Palaeosciences), Global Change Grand Challenge, South African National Antarctic Programme, and Marine research, among others. The emphasis will be on basic and as appropriate, applied research in disciplinary fields, and will allow for multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary enquiry along the basic-applied research continuum.

Other than in the case of dedicated or ring-fenced funding that supports identified fields, disciplines and funding instruments, the NRF through the Research Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers does not guide the direction of research of the applicants. However, research informed by the national priorities would be of particular interest in the context of contributing to wider system objectives.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The NRF contributes to national development by:

i. Supporting, promoting and advancing research and human capacity development, through funding and the provision of the necessary research infrastructure, in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of science and technology, including humanities, social sciences and indigenous knowledge;
ii. Developing, supporting and maintaining national research facilities;
iii. Supporting and promoting public awareness of, and engagement with science; and
iv. Promoting the development and maintenance of the national science system and support of Government priorities.

Vision 2030

The overall objectives for Vision 2030 are to shape, influence, and impact the national research system; to establish the NRF as a thought leader and source of knowledge

within the science sector; to create a clear causal relationship between research and national development; to have a transformative effect on the national research enterprise and the relationship between science and society; and to enable, initiate, facilitate, and perform excellent research with direct and indirect impact, whether immediate or long-term, that extends the frontiers of knowledge and addresses national challenges.

Strategy 2025

NRF Strategy 2025 is an implementation framework for the ten-year vision. This strategy is centred on the NRF's desire to contribute to national development through research with an impact. The strategic outcomes include:

i. A transformed (internationally competitive and sustainable) research workforce;
ii. Enhanced impact of the research enterprise;
iii. Enhanced impact of science engagement; and
iv. An organization that has been transformed and is living its culture and values.

2.1 Environmental scan

The Research Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers is one of the NRF instruments that develops transformed and highly skilled science and technology community. In driving this programme both the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) and the NRF recognise the need to deliberately provide dedicated support to emerging and promising researchers to hasten their process of establishing themselves as established researchers.

While it is recognised that the innovation value chain requires basic, strategic and applied research, the emphasis in this funding instrument will primarily be on the support of both basic and applied research. Support for basic disciplinary research is seen as an investment in a society's learning capabilities. At the same time, this funding instrument acknowledges that basic and applied research are a continuum and inter-dependent and that increasingly, the notion of "frontier research" transcends the distinction of basic and applied research and refers to leading edge research which is risky and often across different disciplines.

Social Sciences, Law and Humanities applications are important, just like those in the natural sciences, engineering and health science that have traditionally been supported. The NRF continues to support self-initiated bottom-up research ideas and research that address national strategic initiatives as reflected in national strategies like the National Development Plan, and those that are embedded in geographic advantage areas. At the International level the NRF is keen to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Agenda 2063 priorities.

2.2 Objectives

The objectives of the funding instrument are to:

i. Contribute to the development of a sound fundamental basis to scientific and scholarly endeavour in South Africa, in the Humanities, Natural and Social Science disciplines;
ii. Contribute to knowledge production across the research spectrum;
iii. Achieve world-class research and to develop the associated human capacity;
iv. Provide dedicated support to emerging and promising researchers to strengthen their research portfolio and contribute towards their achievement of established researcher status; and
v. Advance or develop paradigms, theories and methodological innovation across the research spectrum.

2.3 Financing support

The Research Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers is made possible through contract funding from the DSI. **Each application may request funding of not more than R300 000 for a period of 3 years.** Financial requests need to be in line with requirements and accurately reflect the financial needs of the proposed work. Excessive budget requests are not well received by the review panels.

2.4 Key stakeholders

The key stakeholders involved in the Research Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers are persons with a valid NRF Y-rating based at recognised research institutions that have been approved by the DSI. These include mainly, Public Universities, Museums, National Research Facilities and Science Councils

3. MODUS OPERANDI

3.1 Call for proposals

All applications must be submitted electronically via the NRF Connect system at **https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za**. All applications must be endorsed by the research office of the principal applicant before submission to the NRF. It is the responsibility of each applicant to familiarise himself / herself with the internal closing dates, set by his / her institution in order to meet the NRF closing date included in the "General Application Guide 2023".

3.2 Eligibility

i. Research Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers grantholders may only hold **ONE** Y-Rated research grant. Previous Y-rated grantholders are **not eligible** to apply again.

ii. Each new Principal Investigator **may only submit ONE** application to this call.

iii. Principal Investigators **must choose** between submitting an application in this funding instrument or in the Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers (CPRR). An application submitted to this instrument will not be reviewed if there is another application that is submitted for CPRR funding.

iv. Full-time employees at an NRF recognized research institution in South Africa, **who are eligible to apply and who hold a valid NRF Y-rating at the time of application**, may submit an application**.**

v. NRF rated part-time employees on contract at an NRF recognized research institution (as defined above) in South Africa who hold a valid Y-Rating may apply, on condition their appointment at the South African institution is for (at least) the duration of the project applied for in the application. The length of the contract should be stated in the application form. The primary employment of the individual concerned must be at that institution. A contract researcher appointed at a research institution on behalf of a third party to fulfill a very specific function for the latter does not qualify for support.

vi. Successful Y-rated applicants will be eligible for funding **for the duration of their awarded grant,** to a maximum of 3 years. The grant allocation will be allowed to run for the duration of the award, even if the principal investigator loses his / her rating status during this period.

3.3 Ethical Clearance

It is the responsibility of the grantholder, in conjunction with the institution, to ensure that all research activities carried out in or outside South Africa comply with the laws and regulations of South Africa and/or the foreign country in which the research activities are conducted. These include all human and animal subjects, copyright and intellectual property protection, and other regulations or laws, as appropriate. A research ethics committee must review and approve the ethical and academic rigor of all research prior to the commencement of the research and acceptance of the grant.

The awarded amount will not be released for payment if a copy of the required ethical clearance certificate, as indicated in the application, is not attached to the Conditions of Grant.

Please also refer to the "Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices" on the NRF website at https://www.nrf.ac.za/statement-on-ethical-research-and-scholarly-publishing-practices.

3.4 Application assessment

The assessment of applications will be guided by a Panel Assessment Scorecard (see Annexure 1), and scored according to the Proposal Grading (see Annexure 2). Application assessment will occur by way of a two-tiered process.

Remote peer review

The remote peer reviewers will be specialists in the ambit of the respective proposals. Requests for written reviews will be solicited electronically, or through appropriate media / means from peers located at remote locations from the NRF. Applicants will be requested to provide between 6 and 10 possible reviewers. It is in the applicant's best interest to ensure that the selected reviewers are aware of the submission and are thus

likely to respond. It is also in the applicant's best interest to ensure that selected reviewers have no possible conflict of interest in submitting a review; should that be the case review reports will be dismissed without consideration.

Panel-peer review

The adjudication panel will be broadly constituted to include senior academics, selected based both on their respective knowledge fields and their research standing. The panel meeting will be held at a central location or by way of tele- or video-conferencing. Panel members will deliberate on submitted written reviews and will be expected to offer their own expert opinions.

NB: Applicants must ensure that their Curriculum Vitae are updated on the NRF Connect System at https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za.

These Curriculum Vitae are used in the assessment processes, and incomplete or outdated inputs will jeopardise the application.

3.5 Rules of participation

i. Principal Investigator

Only Y-rated researchers based at the NRF recognized research institutions in South Africa (as defined above) are eligible to apply as principal investigators (PI) in this funding instrument.

The principal investigator (i.e. applicant) must be an active researcher who takes intellectual responsibility for the project, its conception, any strategic decisions required in its pursuit, and the communication of results. The PI must have the capacity to make a commitment to the project and cannot assume the role of a supplier of resources for work that will largely be placed in the hands of others. The PI will take responsibility for the management and administration of resources allocated to the grant award, and for the meeting of reporting requirements.

ii. Co-investigators

A co-investigator is an active researcher who provides significant commitment, intellectual input and relevant expertise into the design and implementation of the research application. The co-investigator will be involved in all or at least some well-defined research activities within the scope of the application. Only South Africa-based co-investigator will be eligible for funding in successful grant applications.

It is important to note that postdoctoral fellows, students, technical and support staff DO NOT qualify as co-investigators

iii. Research Associates / Collaborators

These individuals or groups make a relatively small, but meaningful contribution to the research endeavours outlined in the application, but do not participate in the

research design. They are not considered a part of the core research team and are not eligible to receive NRF funds from the grant if the team's application is successful.

3.6 Data management and use

A data management Plan (DMP) is a formal document that describes the data expected to be acquired or generated during the course of a research project, how the data will be managed, described, analyzed, and stored, and what mechanisms (including digital data storage) will be used at the end of the project to share and preserve the data. Research data sharing that underlies the findings reported in a journal article/conference paper/thesis as set out in the NRF Open Access Statement.

The findings reported in a journal article or conference paper should be deposited in accordance with the NRF Open Access Statement. It is acknowledged that some of the data generated is more sensitive than others. Before initiating the research, it is the grantholder's responsibility to consider the following: confidentiality, ethics, security and copyright. Possible data sharing challenges should be considered in the DMP with solutions to optimise data sharing.

Researchers should note that publicly funded research data should be in the public domain, with free and open access, by default. Collaborators and co-investigators in the research project should be informed by the applicant that due to public funding and funder mandate, one is expected to share research data as openly as possible. The Data Management Plan should indicate which data will be shared. If (some) research data is to be restricted, an appropriate statement in the DMP and subsequent publication should explain why access to data is restricted. The NRF has adopted and is given permission to use the DCC Checklist for Data Management Plan, and this can be used as a guide for developing the DMP.

(http://www.dcc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/resource/DMP/DMP_Checklist_2013.pdf)

3.7 Science Engagement

The NRF supports science engagement through its coordination and implementation of the Department of Science and Innovation's Engagement Strategy. The strategy embraces a broad understanding of science, encompassing systematic knowledge spanning natural and physical sciences, engineering sciences, medical sciences, agricultural sciences, mathematics, social sciences and humanities, technology, all aspects of the innovation chain and indigenous knowledge. Within this context, science engagement refers to activities, events, or interactions characterised by mutual learning and dialogue among people of varied backgrounds, scientific expertise and life experiences, who articulate and discuss their perspectives, ideas, knowledge and values. Science engagement is an overarching term for all aspects of public engagement with science, including science awareness, science education, science communication and science outreach, which aims to develop and benefit individuals

and society. Researchers funded through the NRF programmes are required to contribute to science engagement and report the related outputs in their project's Progress Report.

4. FINANCIALS

4.1 Funding model

The grants of this funding instrument are to be primarily used for research purposes and for the development of associated human resources under the auspices of the NRF standard grant and finance policies. The funds are released upon acceptance of the conditions of grant, both by the applicant and their employing institution. These grants will fall under the NRF audit requirements of beneficiary institutions.

4.2 Funding ranges

The allocation of funds is capped at R300 000 per application. Successful applications will receive funding that accommodates research-related operating costs, including:

i. Materials and Supplies
ii. Travel and subsistence
iii. Research / Technical / *Ad hoc* Assistants
iv. Research Equipment

The application assessment process will consider proposed budget items in terms of cost, risk and reward ratios. Decisions relating to budget items will also be governed by the overall funding instrument funds available for the period. **Applications must adhere to set budget limits presented in these guidelines; exceeding these limits may result in the approval of a reduced budget by the NRF**.

Research-related operating costs

These costs include materials and supplies, travel (including conferences) and subsistence, equipment and research/technical/*ad hoc* assistance and sabbaticals to other research organisations and institutions of higher learning may be included within the context of the project applications. These costs should be justified and be commensurate with the planned outputs, as they will be assessed on this basis. The amount awarded within this framework can be used at the discretion of the applicant**.**

General guidelines

<u>Materials and Supplies</u>

Generally, the NRF does not provide financial support for:

i. Basic office equipment including computers and consumables unless the computer is required for the research itself.

ii. Basic office stationery, photocopying costs, and printing costs unless these items form part of the research tools.
iii. Journal publication costs, journal subscription costs and book costs.
iv. Telephone, fax and internet costs.

Travel and subsistence

i. International conference attendance: Generally, the NRF restricts this amount to R25 000 per person to a maximum of R50 000 per application per year for a team application i.e. for principal investigators and co-investigators (local only) and local postgraduate students.
ii. International visits: These will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Such visits must be integral to the research plan and strong motivations should accompany these requests. Realistic funding allocations will be based on the requested activities. Only outgoing visits will be considered depending on the availability of funding.
iii. Local conference attendance: Generally, the NRF restricts expenditure against this item to R5 000 per person (all costs). Support for local conference attendance could be requested for all listed co-investigators and postgraduate students. The applicant should clearly motivate for the benefit to attend more than one local conference per annum, and the number of people attending each local conference.
iv. Local travel: The NRF does not stipulate any rate for mileage as this will depend on the rate which varies per institution/organisation. Applicants are requested to provide details of this rate as well as the estimated distance to be travelled within the given year.
v. Local accommodation costs should not exceed a 3-star establishment
vi. Science engagement activities: A budget of up to R30 000 may be allocated for science communication/awareness/education activities, if there are no funds for these from other sources. Specific motivation for these additional funds must be made in the proposal.

Research / Technical / *Ad hoc* Assistants

This instrument **does not provide funding for salaries**. Requests for research/technical/*ad hoc* assistance should be treated with caution. Generally the NRF would encourage applicants to engage students to undertake the research rather than employing research consultants. The NRF will not pay for students to undertake research. This guideline however does not apply when specific and/or highly specialised research/technical expertise is required. This should be **CLEARLY** motivated for in the application.

Administrative assistance DOES NOT qualify as technical assistance.

Research Equipment

Funding for small equipment will be limited to R50 000 which can be used over the duration of the project.

Funding to cater for disabilities

Additional funding support to cater for disability will be allocated to people with disabilities as specified in the Code of Good Practice on Employment of People with Disabilities as in the Employment Equity Act No 55 of 1998.

4.3 Financial control and reporting

Upon receipt of the signed Conditions of Grant, the NRF will release the awarded amount for the year. Grantholders will then be required to comply with the standard NRF financial management procedures, including the submission of a Progress Report. These are to be submitted by 15 February of the following year, and are a prerequisite for the release of the subsequent year's funding. Failure to submit a Progress Report will result in the cancellation of the grant award.

5. ENQUIRIES

Funding rules related queries	Application process related queries
Ms Zodwa Masinga Professional Officer: Knowledge Advancement and Support Tel: 012 481 4310 Email: ZM.Masinga@risa.nrf.ac.za	Ms Jane Mabena Professional Officer: GMSA Tel: 012 481 4067 E-mail: JS.Mabena@risa.nrf.ac.za

6. LIST OF ACRONYMS

CPRR	Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers
DSI	Department of Science and Innovation
DMP	Data Management Plan
GMSA	Grants Management and Systems Administration
KAS	Knowledge Advancement and Support
NIHSS	National Institute for the Humanities and Social Science
NRF	National Research Foundation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PI	Principal Investigator
RE	Reviews and Evaluation
RISA	Research Innovation Support and Advancement

7. ANNEXURE 1: Panel Assessment Scorecard for Y Rated Researchers

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Details	Score / 4	Weight
Proposals	Scientific merit and feasibility	Reflect on the proposed rationale, approach and methodology. Reflect on the scientific, ethical logistics and technical feasibility as proposed		50%
	Knowledge production and contribution	Will the proposed contribute to the development and understanding of knowledge in the field?		5%
Track record of the applicant	Past research	Reflect on past contributions to knowledge production (e.g. journal articles, book chapters, designs, performances, etc.)		5%
Equity	Of applicant	Race / Gender		25%
Collaboration	International, national and institutional collaborations	Are the appropriate collaborations proposed in the application? Are the roles of the proposed collaborators clearly indicated?		5%
Impact	Wider impact	Has the possibility for economic, societal or environmental impact been appropriately embedded in the proposal?		5%
Data management and use	Data management plan	A data management plan (DMP) is a formal document that describes the data expected to be acquired or generated during the course of a research project, how the date will be managed, described, analyzed, and stored, and what mechanisms (including digital data storage) will be used at the end of the project to share and preserve the data		5%
Totals				**100%**

8. ANNEXURE 2: Proposal Grading

Score	Meaning of score	Notes
4	Excellent	Application demonstrates evidence of ***outstanding*** performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration
3	Above average	Application demonstrates evidence of ***above average*** performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration
2	Average	Application demonstrates evidence of ***average*** performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration
1	Below average	Application demonstrates evidence of ***below average*** performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by panel and relative to knowledge field under consideration
0	Poor	There are ***major shortcomings or flaws*** as relates to the scientific / scholarly merit and feasibility of the proposed work, as determined by the panel.

Context:

Proposal grading is done with sensitivity to the context within which each application is submitted. The score of each criterion for each application will be contextualised to accommodate variability in such things as knowledge fields, institutional capacity, etc. Should a criterion not be applicable to a specific application (e.g. plans for digital data storage; collaborations; etc.), the weighting of that specific criteria will be made to equal zero, and the overall score normalised.

NRF FEEDBACK TO APPLICANTS

1. **Writing and structuring of proposal:**

All applications given feedback received a scientific merit rating 50% or lower of the overall score.

The plan is not clear and needs more context to be evaluated.

The rational and literature review is weak, and often citations do not match up with the reference list. There seems to be some merit to the topic, but the fact that no reviews were obtained seems quite worrying (certainly at CPRR level).

What is listed at Aims seem more like objectives, the listed Objectives seem like items that belong in a research plan. Clearly formulated aims are not stated.

Possibly new knowledge will be generated, but since there are no reviews, this is difficult to assess. There is no specific Methodology paragraph included, but a few comments in this direction are contained in the work plan.

There is a poor alignment of objectives to the study aim.

Aligned to national imperatives but could be strengthened.

The research proposal is incomplete. There is not enough detail provided to justify what will be done.

The problem statement is shallow and does not have references. Relevant literature reviewed but poorly written and not referenced.

The objectives are poorly written, most read like activities e.g., selection of samples, selection of in-vitro analysis etc.

The project has the potential to generate novel knowledge, but the aim was not aligned to the study objectives.

The aim of study aligns to the study title. However, its relevance to the problem statement is not clear.

The significance and impact sections of the study are not properly filled as it is too brief.

The application has demonstrated timelines which are broad and are spaced by at least six months or a year. Additionally, there are no activities. It is therefore not feasible.

The work plan is in summary form to the extent that the veracity cannot be properly evaluated thereof.

There is not sufficient and clear description of the methodology. The study participants have not been described, while the procedures are also lacking.

The gap this study was going to address, has not been well described.

The methodology will not conclude reliable results. The methodology lacks details, in terms of measurements and outcomes. The timelines are excessive.

“The methodology is devoid of timelines”.

In general, it is a not well-written proposal. The applicant is advised to work on the methodology part. It lacks detail and does not give an adequate explanation of how the study will be carried out. Therefore, the feasibility of the study cannot be assessed. Details of the target group are not outlined, there are also no timelines. Study participants are not clear. There is no study plan. There are no activities that are linked to timelines.

The major flaw of this application is the issue of sample size and timeline of the project. These two criteria may seem minor, but based on your application, the results and deductions that will be made from this study is completely reliant upon the number of participants that will be recruited for the study, which is totally linked to the duration of the study. Since this proposed research will be done to solve the identified problem stated in the proposal based on statistical approaches, it is ideal that the size of the study population is deduced using proper sample size calculation. The was panel not convinced that the sample size calculation was done properly or that the sample stated in the application is enough to make any reasonable deductions from the study. The timeline of the study must be specific.

The feasibility of the research is questionable- the work plan is not well developed. Timelines are also not provided. The methodology is not well detailed.

The methodology must be more formulated and well described.

2. **Data management:**

The study has described a data management plan. However, this is not an institutional data management plan. The study has described how the data will be analysed and who will have access to it. However, the details on their storage security and length of storage have not been provided.

A data management plan is given, but it is not clear how the data will be analysed.

Data management and use are not spelt out.

“Data Management: Does not explain how data will be managed. Will use repositories”.

The study has described a data management plan for this study. However, this is not an institutional data management plan. The study has described how the data will be analysed and who will have access to it. However, the details on their storage security and length of storage have not been provided.

3. **Novelty and Impact:**

Impact on Knowledge production: This is somewhat difficult for me to judge as there are no reports for this application. This fact, however, seems to suggest that it might be limited.

No direct impact is intended to come out of the proposed research, and it is unclear if this will happen though eventual applications.

The wider impact is not clearly spelt out, this further lessens the scientific merit of the proposed study. The research is not novel.

Impact measurability is not clear.

There is no evidence of new knowledge to be generated since the topic is new in literature. The same technical works from the topic are repeated. It is not really detailed in terms of explaining what the complexity that it is to be solved is.

The research study is vague and lacks novelty.

The potential scientific contribution and novelty of the project is uncertain whether it will be significant enough.

The novelty needs to be more clearly presented because the project appears to be more of a cut and paste from previous work by the same group at Stellenbosch.

4. **References:**

There is no indication of how this (research outcomes) can be achieved by referencing other studies.

The problem statement has no reference. Literature is not cited.

Applicant did not provide a list of references in the document although there were in-text citations in the document.

The application has shown problem statement and literature review which were not cited. However, the reference list has been included which has not been cited.

5. **Human capacity development and Collaborators:**

A good representation of students is not there. Diversity is lacking, transfer of knowledge generation and training to a more diverse academic body must be addressed (in terms of participants at postgraduate level and collaborators from HDIs).

The applicant has supervised predominantly white male students. Good history of supervision but not transformative. Targeted students will be transformative.

It is foundational work, but collaborations could be started for real implementation to be more far reaching.

Has collaborations but affiliations unclear. The roles of the collaborators not explained. National and international collaborators could have been preferable.

There is no indication of any collaborators in the project.

There are no collaborations indicated, a major shortfall of the study.

Majority of supervised students are white. A poor representation in terms of race and background. Fairly good gender balance.

Less than 50% African females; equal gender balance but strong bias towards white students, while this may be a reflection of the institution.

6. **Outputs:**

The projected outputs are not specific, although the application has stated a certain number of outputs, but their clear projections have not been described, concerning projected titles for publications or targeted journals.

The anticipated output is also doubtful since the track record of the applicant is not convincing.

The anticipated outputs are not clearly stated.

Depth of the expected output and wider impact is only limited to just being an academic exercise.

7. **Budget:**

Not well done. Not itemised. Details relating to pre-clinical animal testing costs are lacking.

Not well done, no itemised budget.

Due to insufficient information on the methodology in terms of statistical measures, number of samples sizes, description of study participants and study sites, it is not possible to assess the budget.

The budget is very little and there is not much detail given on it.

Due to insufficient information on the methodology in terms of statistical measures, number of samples sizes, description of study participants and study sites, it is not possible to assess the budget.

8. **General Comments:**

Proposals that were less detailed in terms of the research methodology, activities/work plan, literature cited, possible outputs and budget, and feasibility, were less likely to be successful.

Applicants should pay particular attention to purposeful transformation in terms of human capacity development and collaborations with HDIs.

9. **Positive feedback to follow when writing proposals:**

The PIs have relevant experience in the survey methodologies. The methodology is clearly outlined, and the complementarity of methods well explained.

The applicant has a relevant publication record. A Doctoral degree was obtained in 2008 with 18 journal publications in the past 5 years. An excellent track record.

The project's timeline and plan are feasible and achievable within the lifetime of the project as presented by the applicant.

The importance of the research study is presented.

Proposed collaborations are both inside South Africa and in Ghana are appropriate for the proposal and should fulfil the requirements to accomplish the proposed goals.

Two local collaborators will participate in this study; they are experts with an outstanding research track record in their field of study. Their role is very important for the successful completion of this project. The roles of each collaborator are indicated.

Roles and responsibilities of collaborators are indicated in the proposal.

There are three collaborators, with one being within the institution, and two are national. Their roles have been clearly described and there are specific to the project.

The economic and societal impact of the proposal was appropriately embedded in the proposal with clear identification of how the impact can be measured. For example, the applicant aims at recruiting 4 students (2 PhD and 2 M.Sc.), in addition to providing them opportunities to develop their careers through the knowledge and skills gained during their research.

The applicant adequately described in details of how the data will be managed. The data management plan is at a satisfactory level with the duties of the research team are clear.

The participation of students is clearly indicated in the work plan.

The budget is well outlined.

The track record of the applicant is excellent and well established.

There are three collaborators, with one being within the institution, and two are national. Their roles have been clearly described and there are specific to the project.

The problem statement is backed up with citations. The literature review is extensive with reference list included. Stated aims and objectives are aligned with the research problem and rationale provided. Problem statement, backed with citations, outlined alluding to the fact that further investigation into the cause of PD is of considerable importance. The literature review is extensive with reference list included. The stated aims and objectives are aligned with the problem statement and rationale provided.

This approach might lead to the discovery of novel drug targets to eliminate the M.Tb by the host (Host directed therapy). Therefore, the academic merit of this study is good. The aims and objectives of this study were well outlined and aligned with the problem statement. The applicant provided sufficient literature to justify the rationale of the study. These works of literature are relevant to the subject matters and were well referenced.

The proposed study has three major aims that are logically linked, and each aim has several clearly defined objectives. The research aim and objectives are sufficient and well structured, they align with a well-defined problem statement.

The applicant has a robust track record in steroid Biochemistry in which the current project falls. He has extensively contributed to his field of study as evident with a notable number of publications in high impact factor journals and recipient of many awards. Thus, the applicant's capability for this project is evident.

Six collaborators (four local and two international) with an excellent track record in their respective fields of study are stated. They are essential for overall project success. The roles of each collaborator are well indicated and expertise relevant to the study. But there is no inclusion of the PDI and this is encouraged.

The data management plan is well informative and adequate. The applicant provided comprehensive information that addresses all the components of DMP including data collection, data analysis, data sharing, and data storage.

Relating to the past five years, the applicant has received several awards, published 41 peer reviewed articles, one conference proceeding, one complete book and 8 book chapters and three patents (date/year not specified). A very good research output record. Considering the reported research outputs, the applicant has the appropriate research experience to undertake the proposed project.

The project will advance discovery and understanding in the field of Applied Medical Research. In terms of human capital development, six students (1 PhD, 2 Masters and 3 BSc Honours) will be trained through this project. The applicant has also detailed how the project impact will measure against scientific merit (i.e., anticipation of journal articles and conference presentations). The wider impact is well described, descriptive and highlights a multi-disciplinary research approach. The applicant has explicitly outlined the contribution of the project and economic, societal, and environmental impact.

The applicant details how data will be stored, backed-up and shared. The applicant also mentions everyone involved in data management and utilisation, all of which is indicative of a good data management plan.

This is a novel study, which will advance the field and there is potential.

A high number of postgraduate students will be trained in the study, PhD and Masters. Five articles will be published each year in high Impact journals, meaning a total of 15 years at the end of the three year period of study. Papers will be presented at national and international conferences. The project has the potential to lead to patent publications.

The applicant intends to convert his thesis into a book and has provided an abstract of the book. The proposed work does not have academic merit because this is not new research, and the data will be about 8 years old at the completion of the book. It was finished a couple of years ago. It is based on ‘old’ data. The proposal was most probably submitted to the wrong platform. This is not a research funding application and might be more appropriate for the Knowledge Interchange funding instrument. Overall, there is no primary research.

The proposed project lacks a methodology, which is a concern. Primary data has been collected. However, it is not clear which methodology will be adopted/has been adopted for the project.

Feedback to specific programmes:

CPRR

A lot of work has been done before in this area; therefore, the potential contribution of the project is uncertain whether it will be significant enough.

There is no significance in novelty. Depth of the expected output and wider impact is only limited to just being an academic exercise. The output that can have the necessary impact is just not there. Only a few students are involved, so societal impact is also low. There is also uncertainty in the number of publications that are to be published. It is not clear what fine work can be produced out of the study. The novelty is questionable.

The significance and impact sections of the study are not properly filled as it is too brief. There are brief timelines, but the work plan is in summary form to the extent that the veracity cannot be properly evaluated thereof. There is not sufficient and clear description of the methodology. The application has shown problem statement and literature review which were not cited.

The objectives have not clearly described and how they will be achieved. The scientific basis is not adequate as the literature review has no citation.

Information from this study will provide novel information. However, the gap this study was going to address, has not been well described. The clear work plan has not been described. However, the application has demonstrated timelines which are broad and are spaced by at least six months or a year. Additionally, there are no activities. It is therefore not feasible. The methodology has not been satisfactorily described. The study participants have not been described, while the procedures are also lacking.

The study would have been able to produce new knowledge if properly executed. The application is not clear enough for the feasibility to be evaluated. The applicant has only provided a summary of the methodology. The significance and impact of the study are understated and not referenced. The feasibility of the project could thus not be properly evaluated. The applicant attention is drawn to the shortcomings and should address these issues when applying in the next round.

The proposal does not have significant academic merit. The problem statement is very vague and sketchy. The aims and objectives are not aligned with the problem statement. The two sentences provided in the problem statement do not give enough information to clarify the research issue. The applicant indicates that the use of artificial radionuclides as sediment tracers has negative environmental effects. He does not mention the radionuclides or says what impacts they may cause. This weakens the study prematurely.

Only five (5) literature references are cited. This weakens the proposal as many claims are not supported. Overall, the scientific basis for the project is not articulated very well. The project could be feasible if redesigned. For example, there is no justification of study area selection and scientific basic of the selected research techniques. The work plan does not state how guidelines for sedimentation proposal. There are also

no specific times lines or work plans were given. The methodology does not adequately describe how the sampling and measurements will be conducted.

The study is poorly designed. The applicant did not make a compelling research issue as no details were provided. The problem statement is not well formulated, and the literature review lacks detail on background information. The objectives are not conceived and developed in the research plan. The budget is not consistent with the planned work.

The project has academic merit. However, it does not have scientific bases because it is merely a community engagement project. It gives the impression that the study is a spin-off of results generated from a Doctoral degree. The applicant wants to stand on the shoulders of existing knowledge to build further. The proposed project is designed to contribute towards empowering the community but will not generate new knowledge.

Although a work-plan has been provided and aligned to a realistic timeline, it is not easy to assess the feasibility of a project that is designed to be driven by a community. The proposed methodology is not in line with a scientific research project. It is a methodology for a community empowerment project. Therefore, it could be further developed.

The applicant has inadequately explained a data management plan. She has also not adequately explained how they will manage, describe, analyse, and store data, and what mechanisms (including digital data storage) they will use at the end of the project to share and preserve that data.

There is very little scientific basis for the project and the literature review is barely adequate and there is no reference list.

One other drawback of the project is the lack of an accessible and attractive interface for the contemporary digital world, and it does not compare favourably with international examples of similar offerings. The proposed work is not novel and new knowledge is unlikely to be created. This is an overambitious project, and the work may not be completed in 3 years. Thus, the feasibility of the project is disputed. The research methodology is not strong, essential details are missing.

Applicant has supervised 3 Doctoral students, 2 males and 1 female. All white students. He has also supervised 9 Masters Students: 1 African male, 5 white females and 3 white males. The applicant has supervised predominately white students. Racial equity has not been addressed.

The collaboration does not include historically disadvantaged institutions. The roles of collaborators are clear but do not amount to much given the project’s limited potential.

A list of expected outputs is provided but there are no further details given. The number of entries he intends making on the database over 2 years does not seem feasible, especially since no timelines are given. The study impact on knowledge generation, inclusivity and open access are clear. How the impact will be measured is not clear.

Very sparse information is given on data management. How the applicant will manage, describe, analyse, and store data, and what mechanisms (including digital data storage) they will use at the end of the project to share and preserve that data, is not clearly stated in the relevant section.

The strength of this approach is that it utilises a combination of in silico tools to guide the subsequent experimental work, and therefore provides a starting point where very limited information is available. Nevertheless, it would have been useful to see some preliminary analysis, as the entire project is dependent on this step. There was also no indication of an alternative strategy, should this approach fail to identify motifs.

The applicant mentions the estimated durations of key research components of the project. However, the timelines are not well outlined in the work plan.

However, the applicant needs to provide more relevant literature on the subject matter to further strengthen the rationale of the study. Without this first being established the study is built on a weak foundation.

The study lacks feasibility and merit, and it is not well written. One of the hypotheses of the study does not speak to the aim, objective, and problem statement of the study. The proposal requires revision with a clear research focus following the funding framework document.

Other than the use of the microscopy, the proposed research idea is not novel. Most of the proposed work embraces methods that have been used numerous times before. The aims and objectives of the project are also not clear. There is an overlap of the research objectives, which disrupts the flow of the project. Furthermore, the rationale of the project is not clearly articulated. The applicant's contribution to the project is also minimal. Seemingly the bulk of the work will be performed by the research collaborators.

Lack of novelty, hypotheses and collaborations weakened the proposal, and they could be revisited and strengthened.

CSUR

Whilst various research efforts have been conducted on these supergroups, only one publication has been produced to date. The outputs will be novel for the Southern African region. This begs the question; why there have not been more publication outputs from previous work on humpback supergroups, which the PIs claim to have collaborated on since 2011?

There is no formal data management plan, but the applicant describes how data will be stored and disseminated "upon request to the PI or co-investigator". It is outlined very briefly how the data will be managed. Given that there is no plan to share data on a repository, the "open source" philosophy the applicant mentions could not be certain.

Scope of study very broad, bit no adequate record of outputs from previous research of the team to confirm its feasibility. No risk assessment of a study that is dependent on the appearance of supergroups of feeding humpback whales in the study area, which may not happen as this is a migratory species with variable distribution.

Methodology and budget not clearly linked to objectives.

The applicant states four aims with motivation for each aim. It is not clear however if an objective is linked to each aim as this is not indicated. The work plan is poorly formulated. It is also not clear which students will be performing which activities in the project. Thus, the feasibility of the work is uncertain based on the information provided.

The sample size is questionable and thus the feasibility of the project is not clear. It would have been helpful if the applicant clearly stated how many samples would realistically form part of the 3-year project. The fact that the applicant states that more samples will be collected further raises questions about feasibility. The applicant indicates that 1 PhD student will be involved in developing this research, however, it is not clear what this student will be doing.

In the past five years, the applicant produced 3 journal articles and 5 conference proceedings. She obtained her Doctorate in 2011. Based on the applicant's years in research her contribution to knowledge production is not adequate. The applicant states she was absent from research for the period 2011 until 2017, however she indicates that she was working at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases and research outputs in the form of publications were generated. It is thus not clear why this research output is not part of the applicant CV.

The applicant has only mentored 1 female white master's Student to completion. The equity of students supervised in terms of race, gender and background was not adequately addressed.

The applicant indicates journal article and conference proceedings as anticipated outputs. Details are not provided on journals or conferences intended. The possibility for economic, societal, or environmental impact has not been appropriately embedded, and it is not clear how much impact will be measured. The study has potential for public health impact, but it is not quite clear, though it could be inferred from the prevalence data that will be generated from the study. A data management plan of sorts is provided. The applicant indicates the type of data that will be generated, and that data will be disseminated via publications. There is no information provided on who is responsible for data management, analysis of data, and storage of data or how data will be preserved.

RDYR

Aims and objectives are not well aligned with the problem statement. The work plan does not fit into the proposed project. The methodology is not feasible for the study, it is rather flawed.

The problem statement was fairly written, but not referenced. Objectives were not elaborated and structured. The aim is poorly written, and not well aligned to the problem statement. It is an important area of study, but there was not much motivation to justify the undertaking of the research.

The problem statement is fairly well written but does not have references. The objectives are poorly written, and most read like activities e.g., selection of samples, selection of in-vitro analysis etc. There is a poor alignment of objectives to the study aim.

This is not a new study, there are many similar studies already done. Should have demonstrated the uniqueness of this study. The methodology given for the project is fairly clear but is compromised by the poor structuring of the study and the inadequate demonstration of novelty. There is also a poor structure of the study and the applicant should have clearly explained the novelty of the study.

An average of 3 publications per year on average for the period 2014 to 2019. Equity of students supervised: Has not supervised to graduation any female students. Only 1 while male master's student graduated.

There are no collaborations indicated, a major shortfall of the study.