
From: Januarie, V, Me [venita@sun.ac.za] <venita@sun.ac.za>
Sent: Friday, 19 February 2021 12:54
Subject: NRF CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: General Research Grants (Competitive support for Unrated, Rated and Y-Rated Researchers)
Attachments: 2021 CPRR Framework Final_0.pdf; 2021 Framework for CSUR Final.pdf; 2021 Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers Framework Final.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 2021/2022 Oproep vir Aansoeke uitgestuur/ *The NRF has just launched the following 2021/2022 Call for Applications.*

Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers (SU application deadline: 23 April 2021)

- Postdoctoral fellows, students, technical and support staff are **NOT eligible to apply**.
- CPRR grantholders may only hold ONE CPRR grant as a Principal Investigator at a time. CPRR grantholders with current grants that run beyond the end of 2021, are ineligible for funding in this round. CPRR grantholders with current grant awards that run to the end of 2021 are eligible for funding in this round. Funding in this round will support successful applications for a maximum period of 3 years, 2022-2024.
- 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 are eligible to apply and 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 (as defined above) in South Africa 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**.
- Retired academics/researchers, provided that they meet all set criteria as stipulated in 3.2 in attached framework document.

Competitive Programme for Unrated Researchers (SU application deadline: 23 April 2021)

- 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 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, 2022 – 2024.
- 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 (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. 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.
- Previous CSUR applicants who were successful in the past but were not awarded funding due to insufficient funds can also re-apply taking into account the feedback provided by the review panel.

Support for Y-Rated Researchers (SU application deadline: 23 April 2021)

- Y-Rated grantholders may only hold **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, 2022 – 2024.
- 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, are invited to apply.
- 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 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.**

Application Process

All applications must be completed and submitted on the NRF online system: <https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za/nrfmkii/Default.aspx> by the **SU application deadline.** Applications will then go through an internal review process and feedback will be provided directly to applicants, where necessary.

Kindly refer to the **attached framework documents** 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.

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*This notice was sent to you by the Division for Research Development (DRD) of Stellenbosch University.
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me to communication regarding funding opportunities administered by DRD.*

Good luck with your submission.

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COMPETITIVE PROGRAMME FOR

RATED RESEARCHERS (CPRR)

KNOWLEDGE ADVANCEMENT AND SUPPORT

Framework Document

February 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

The National Research Foundation (NRF) recognises that in order for South Africa to be internationally competitive and to meaningfully contribute to the global economy, the country must have the capability to understand the knowledge it produces, and that produced by others. This understanding can best be developed in part through producing new knowledge and translating and developing existing knowledge. Publicly funded basic and applied research is critical for innovation and potentially, international competitiveness.

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 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.

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, *etc.* Even though funding priority will be given to top scoring applicants, the NRF will also take into consideration the strategic imperatives such as transformation when making funding decisions. The emphasis will be on basic and as appropriate, applied research in disciplinary fields, and will allow for multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary enquiry along the innovation value chain.

2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The mandate of the NRF is to support and promote research through funding, human resource development and the provision of the necessary research facilities so as to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of science and technology, including indigenous knowledge and thereby to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of all the people of the Republic (NRF Act, 1998).

In support of its purpose, the NRF's *Strategy 2025, and the NRF Vision 2030*, aspire to contribute to the development of *a vibrant and globally connected national system of innovation*.

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 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.

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.

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 research¹. In order to participate in an international system of innovation, a nation needs to produce knowledge and understand the knowledge produced by others. Support for basic disciplinary research is thus seen as an investment in a society's learning capabilities (Salter and Martin, 2001).

At the same time, this funding instrument acknowledges that basic and applied research are a continuum and inter-dependent (ICSU, 2004) and that increasingly, the notion of "frontier research" is gaining purchase internationally, as it 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 especially encouraged, to enable support traditionally skewed towards the natural sciences, engineering and health science. 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, the 10-year Innovation Plan and those that are embedded in our geographic advantage areas. The NRF also supports the African Union Agenda 2063 priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals as contained in the United Nations 2030 of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In respect to the social sciences and humanities however, the NRF would like to highlight the fact that it is supportive and committed to working closely with the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) on the advancement of social sciences and the humanities scholarship in South Africa.

2.2 Objectives

The objectives of the funding instrument are:

¹ The Frascati Manual (OECD, 2002) defines **Basic research** as experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundation of phenomena and observable facts, without any particular application or use in view. It further defines **Applied research** as also original investigation undertaken in order to acquire new knowledge. It is, however directed primarily towards a specific practical aim or objective.

- To 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;
- To contribute to knowledge production across the research spectrum;
- To achieve world-class research and to develop the associated human capacity; and
- To advance or develop paradigms, theories and methodological innovation across the research spectrum.

2.3 NRF Perspective

The CPRR is a discipline- and transdisciplinary-based, demand-driven funding instrument that focuses on basic disciplinary and cross-disciplinary research, while allowing (where appropriate) for the “continuum of knowledge” approach alluded to above. This is in line with the NRF’s view that support for basic disciplinary research is an investment in South Africa’s learning capabilities. The CPRR directly, and in part, addresses the following strategic objectives of the *NRF Strategy 2025*:

- A transformed (internationally competitive and sustainable) research workforce;
- Enhanced impact of the research enterprise; and
- Enhanced impact of science engagement (SE).

2.4 Institutional structure

The strategic direction and outcomes of the funding instrument are managed by the Knowledge Advancement and Support (KAS) Directorate. The Reviews and Evaluation (RE) Directorate is responsible for the review processes up to the recommendations of grant awards. The Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA) Directorate’s responsibilities include posting of the research call, disbursement of grant funds and ensuring adherence to the conditions of the grant.

2.5 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, which is approximately R30 000 000.00 (thirty million Rand) for 2022.

2.6 Key stakeholders

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

2.7 Information sources

International Council for Science (ICSU) 2004. The value of basic scientific research, <http://www.icsu.org/publications/icsu-position-statements/value-scientific-research/the-value-of-basic-scientific-research-dec-2004>

Frascati Manual: Proposed standard practice for surveys on Research and Experimental Development, 2002. OECD, Paris

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

The Department of Science and Technology, 2013. *The ministerial guidelines for improving equity in the distribution of DST/NRF bursaries and fellowships.*

The National Research Foundation, 2020. *2025 Strategic Plan of the National Research Foundation: NRF Vision 2030.* Pretoria. National Research Foundation. South Africa.

The African Union, 2015. *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*, <https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/agenda2063.pdf>

Salter, A.J., and Martin, B (2001) The economic benefits of publicly funded basic research: a critical review. *Research Policy* 30(3):509-532

United Nations, 2016. *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

3 MODUS OPERANDI

3.1 Call for proposals

All application materials **must** be submitted electronically via the NRF Online Submission System at <https://nrfs submission.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 in order to meet the NRF closing date included in the “General Application Guide 2022”.

Incomplete OR late submissions will not be accepted for review.

3.2 Eligibility

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

- **A valid National Research Foundation (NRF) rating of the principal applicant;**
- **Scientific merit and quality of the research proposal**

Postdoctoral fellows, students, technical and support staff are NOT eligible to apply.

CPRR grantholders may only hold **ONE** CPRR grant as a Principal Investigator at a time. CPRR grantholders with current grants that run beyond the end of 2021, are **ineligible** for funding in this round. CPRR grantholders with current grant awards that run to the end of 2021 are **eligible** for funding in this round. Funding in this round will support successful applications for a maximum period of 3 years, 2022-2024.

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 are eligible to apply and 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 (as defined above) in South Africa 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 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.

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 CPRR funding stream until a new rating is obtained.

- Retired academics/researchers, provided that they meet all set criteria as stipulated below:
 - hold a current and valid NRF rating;
 - are resident in SA;
 - 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/media-room/news/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**). **Annexure 3 details the pre-selected equity scores for each applicant.** 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 from national and international peers. 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** (project partners, academics in the same department, close personal or professional relationships, etc.). in submitting a review; as such review reports are dismissed without consideration. On average, a 30% response rate is achieved by the NRF in requesting postal peer reviews.

- **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 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 Online Submission System at <https://nrfs submission.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

a) 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 principal investigator (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.

The research team may also include:

b) Co-investigators

A co-investigator (CI) is an active researcher who provides significant commitment, intellectual input and relevant expertise into the design and implementation of the research application. The CI 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

c) 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 the course of 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 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 National Research Foundation has adopted and is given permission to use the [DCC Checklist for Data Management Plan](http://www.dcc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/resource/DMP/DMP_Checklist_2013.pdf), 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 Science 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, science awareness, science education, science communication and science outreach, which aim 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 annual Progress Report.

3.8 Management of funding instrument

The **KAS Directorate** of the NRF – Research and Innovation Support and Advancement (RISA) manages the CPRR funding instrument, and is responsible for:

- Strategic oversight and management of the funding instrument;
- Conceptualizing and developing the funding instrument;
- Coordinating and facilitating activities of the funding instrument;
- Compiling funding instrument research and evaluation reports;
- Stakeholder engagement; and
- Ensuring that the funding instruments delivers on its intended goal(s).

The **RE Directorate** of the NRF – RISA is responsible for managing the adjudication process including:

- sourcing of reviewers both for remote reviews and panels;
- managing the peer review process;
- organizing and managing the review panels as and where appropriate;
- providing feedback as appropriate; and
- awarding of grants.

The **GMSA Directorate** of the NRF – RISA is responsible for

- Managing the call process, that is,
 - Posting the call;
 - Receiving and assessing application eligibility;
- Coordinating and facilitating the granting processes
- Managing the granting and administration of awards;
- Administering grant payments; and
- Ensuring adherence to conditions of grants.

3.9 Lines of authority

The CPRR Director in the KAS Directorate manages the funding instrument. The Director responsible for this instrument reports to the Executive Director of the KAS Directorate. Directors from RE and GMSA manage the review and granting processes. The Directors in both RE and GMSA report to their respective Executive Directors.

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 money is released upon acceptance of the conditions of grant, both by the applicant and his/her employing institution. These grants will fall under the NRF audit requirements of beneficiary institutions.

4.2 Funding ranges

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.

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

- a) Staff development grants
- b) Research-related operating costs, including:
 - Sabbaticals
 - Materials and Supplies
 - Travel and subsistence
 - Research / Technical / *Ad hoc* Assistants
 - 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. Awards will be made in line with the NRF funding rules and guidelines as outlined in **Section 4.3**.

4.3 Funding support

The NRF funds the CPRR funding instrument on an ongoing basis. Science councils, public universities, museums, national research facilities and other NRF recognized institutions are the primary beneficiaries of this funding instrument. The NRF has systems in place to ensure that there is no double-dipping for projects that are already funded by the Medical Research Council, and those funded by the National Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences.

a) Postgraduate student support

The National Research Foundation (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 grantholder-linked modalities of funding postgraduate students. All the postgraduate students are required to apply on the NRF Online Submission System by accessing the link: <https://nrfsubmission.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 may be funded at PCS. The academic minimum requirements for NRF postgraduate

funding is 65% in order to be eligible for FCS and PCS support. Detailed eligibility criteria for NRF postgraduate funding for FCS and PCS are outlined in Table 1.

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

Study Level	Full Cost of Study <i>(South African Citizens and Permanent Residents only)</i>		Partial Cost of Study <i>(South African Citizens; South African Permanent Residents and 5% Non-South African Citizens)</i>
	Exceptional Achievers	Financially Needy & Students with Disability	Other
Honours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 75% Mark in Final Year of study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 65% Mark in Final Year of study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 65% Mark in Final Year of study
	<p>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.</p>		
Masters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 75% Mark for Honours • Completed Honours in one year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 65% Mark for Honours • Completed Honours in one year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 65% Mark for Honours • Completed Honours in one year
	<p>Masters students must be 30 years of age or younger in the year of application.</p>		
Doctoral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 75% Mark for Masters • Completed Masters in two years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 65% Mark for Masters • Completed Masters in two years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 65% Mark for Masters • Completed Masters in two years
	<p>Doctoral students must be 32 years of age or younger in the year of application.</p>		

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.

For further details on the DSI-NRF Postgraduate Funding policy, kindly refer to the Postgraduate Funding framework document which is available on www.nrf.ac.za.

b) Staff development grants

Applicants may apply for Staff Development grants for South African **staff members** at their own and other institutions, on condition that they 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 support is three years.

c) 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. Only 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 equipment including computers and consumables unless the computer is required for high-end computing for the research itself.
- Basic office stationery, photocopying costs, printing costs unless these items form part of the research tools.
- **Journal publication costs, journal subscription costs and book costs.**
- Telephone, fax 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 application i.e. for principal investigators and co-investigators (local only) and local postgraduate students.
- 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 excludes travel to conferences mentioned above.
- Local accommodation costs should not exceed a three-star establishment. This relates to local travel for research purposes and estimation of accommodation cost 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. However, this guideline does not apply when specific and/or highly specialised research/technical expertise is required. This should be **CLEARLY** motivated for in the application. **The NRF will not pay for students to undertake research.**

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 National Equipment Programme. Equipment requests are capped at R200 000 per application, that is across all three years of the project.

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.

d) 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.

4.4 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 for **ALL current NRF awards**. Failure to submit a Progress Report will result in the cancellation of ALL current awards held by the Principal Investigator.

5 MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE FUNDING INSTRUMENT

The NRF is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the CPRR.

5.1 Reporting

The KAS Director is responsible for reporting quarterly on the contribution of the CPRR funding instrument to the KAS Directorate's Key Performance Indicators. In addition, the Director is responsible for reviewing and reporting on the progress of the funding instrument.

5.2. Timeframes for funding instrument review

The CPRR funding instrument will be evaluated by an appropriate external reviewer as appointed by the RE Directorate. In consultation with this directorate, KAS will agree to and set timeframes for the review in line with existing guidelines.

5.3 Broad terms of reference for the funding instrument review

The broad terms of reference for the programme review of the CPRR funding instrument will be determined by the KAS Directorate prior to the evaluation taking place, and in accordance with tenets set in the RE Directorate's Guidelines.

5.4 Utilisation of funding instrument review findings and recommendations

The results of the evaluation will be used in line with the purpose set in the Terms of Reference for the evaluation, as well as for instrument improvement and development.

6 CONTACT DETAILS

Please direct all queries to the individuals detailed below. Applicants may also direct their queries to the Support desk via email: supportdesk@nrf.ac.za	
Funding instrument related queries	NRF Technical queries
KAS	GMSA
Mr Katleho Ralehoko Professional Officer: KAS E-mail: Katleho.ralehoko@nrf.ac.za Tel: 012 481 4188	Ms Jane Mabena Professional Officer: GMSA E-mail: Jane@nrf.ac.za Tel: 012 481 4067 Applicant may also contact the Support desk via email: supportdesk@nrf.ac.za

7 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
GMSA	Grant Management and Systems Administration
ISFAP	Ikusasa Students Financial Aid Programme
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
PCS	Partial Cost of Study
PI	Principal Investigator
RE	Reviews and Evaluation
RISA	Research and Innovation Support and Advancement
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

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.		45%	0.00
		Reflect on the scientific, ethical ² logistics and technical feasibility as proposed			
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 ³		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?		5%	0.00
		Are the roles of the proposed collaborators clearly indicated?			
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 the course of 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

² 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.

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

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.

ANNEXURE 3: Pre-set equity scores

Equity Status	Pre-set Equity Score
Disabled	4
Black female; Black male, young ⁴	4
Black male, not young	3
White female, young	3
White female, not young	2
White male, young	2
White male, not young	1

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

⁴ “Young” refers to 5 years post-PhD as per the applicant’s CV. Applicants will be classified as “young” if their graduation date is less than 5 years prior to the date of assessment.



***RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT GRANTS FOR
Y-RATED RESEARCHERS***

**KNOWLEDGE ADVANCEMENT AND SUPPORT
Framework Document**

February 2021

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RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT GRANTS FOR Y-RATED RESEARCHERS

1 DESCRIPTION OF FUNDING INSTRUMENT

Research Development grants for Y-Rated Researchers are ring-fenced, once-off grants and competitive discipline-based funding instrument aimed at enhancing the efficiency of the National Research Foundation (NRF) to drive our 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:

- **A valid NRF Y-rating of the principal applicant;**
- **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 Origins Platform (Palaeosciences), Global Change Grand Challenge, South African National Antarctic Programme, Marine and Coastal Research *etc.* 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 Research Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers does not drive nor attempt in any way to “dictate” the direction of research of the applicants, but research into national priorities would be of particular interest in the context of making a contribution to wider system objectives.

2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

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

- (a) 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;
- (b) Developing, supporting and maintaining national research facilities;
- (c) Supporting and promoting public awareness of, and engagement with science; and
- (d) Promoting the development and maintenance of the national science system and support of Government priorities.

NRF recently developed its vision 2030 as well as strategy 2025.

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 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.
- iv. A transformed organisation that lives 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 basic research (Frascati Manual, 2002). In order to participate in the international system of innovation, a nation needs to understand the knowledge produced by others. Support for basic disciplinary research is thus 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 (ICSU, 2004) and that increasingly, the notion of "frontier research" is gaining purchase internationally, as it transcends the distinction of basic and applied research and refers to leading edge research which is risky and often across different disciplines.

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 (Frascati Manual, 2002). In order to participate in an international system of innovation, a nation needs to produce knowledge and understand the knowledge produced by others. Support for basic disciplinary research is thus seen as an investment in a society's learning capabilities (Salter and Martin, 2001).

Social Sciences, Law and Humanities applications are encouraged, 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 our geographic advantage areas. In respect to the social sciences and humanities however, the NRF would like to highlight the fact that it is supportive and committed to working closely with the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) on the advancement of social sciences and the humanities scholarship in South Africa.

The NRF should not be seen to be driving a particular research agenda, nor attempting in any way to be “dictating” to the direction of research, but research into these specific areas would be of particular interest in the context of making a contribution to wider system objectives.

2.2 Objectives

The objectives of the funding instrument are:

- To 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;
- To contribute to knowledge production across the research spectrum;
- To achieve world-class research and to develop the associated human capacity;
- Provide dedicated support to emerging and promising researchers to strengthen their research portfolio and contribute towards their achievement of established researcher status;
- To advance or develop paradigms, theories and methodological innovation across the research spectrum.

2.3 NRF Perspective

The Research Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers is a discipline-based, demand-driven funding instrument that focuses on basic disciplinary and cross-disciplinary research, while allowing (where appropriate) for the “continuum of knowledge” approach alluded to above and supports emerging researchers. This is in line with the NRF’s view that support for basic disciplinary research is an investment in South Africa’s learning capabilities. The Research Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers directly, and in part, addresses the following strategic outcomes of the *NRF Strategy 2025*:

- A transformed (internationally competitive and sustainable) research workforce.
- Enhanced impact of the research enterprise.
- Enhanced impact of science engagement.

2.4 Institutional structure

The strategic direction and outcomes of the funding instrument are managed by the Knowledge Advancement and Support (KAS) Directorate. The Reviews and Evaluation (RE) Directorate is responsible for the review processes up to the recommendations of grant awards. The Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA) Directorate’s

responsibilities include posting of the research call for applications, disbursement of grant funds, and ensuring adherence to the conditions of the grant.

2.5 Financing support

The Research Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers is made possible through contract funding from the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI). Each application may request no 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.

2.6 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 Department of Science and Innovation. These include mainly, Public Universities, Museums, National Research Facilities and Science Councils.

2.7 Information sources

Frascati Manual: Proposed standard practice for surveys on Research and Experimental Development, 2002. OECD, Paris

Salter, A.J. and Martin, B.R. The Economic Benefits of Publicly Funded Basic Research A Critical Review. Research Policy, 30, 509-532, 2001.

International Council for Science (ICSU). The value of basic scientific research, 2004
Accessed 10/12/2009.

National Research Foundation, South Africa Strategic Plan 2025. 2020.

National Research Foundation Vision 2030. Pretoria. National Research Foundation, South Africa. 2020.

3 MODUS OPERANDI

3.1 Call for proposals

All applications **must** be submitted electronically via the NRF Online Submission System at <https://nrfs submission.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 him / herself with the **internal closing dates** set by his / her institution in order to meet the NRF closing date indicated in the "General Application Guide 2022.

Incomplete OR late submissions will not be accepted.

3.2 Eligibility

- 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.
- 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.
- 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**, are invited to apply.
- 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 submission. 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.
- 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 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 grant holder, 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/media-room/news/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 / means from peers located at remote locations from the NRF. Applicants should list remote reviewers that are peers in their field and have a good research track record. Additionally, applicants are encouraged to forward remote reviewers from across the globe for fairness and critical assessment of the application and can suggest more than 6 reviewers. It is also in the applicant's best interest to ensure that selected reviewers have no possible conflict of interest in submitting a review; as such review reports are dismissed without consideration. On average, a 30% response rate is achieved by the NRF in requesting postal peer reviews.

- **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 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 Submission system at**

<https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za>.

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

3.5 Rules of participation

a) Principal Investigator

Only Y-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 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 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 research team may also include:

b) 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

c) 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 Timelines

The Research Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers grants will be awarded for a period of no more than three years (**2022 – 2024**). Funding via this funding instrument is once off.

3.7 Data management and use

A data management Plan (DMP) is a formal document that describes the data you expect to acquire or generate during the course of 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.

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 is 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 National Research Foundation has adopted and is given permission to use the [DCC Checklist for Data Management Plan](http://www.dcc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/resource/DMP/DMP_Checklist_2013.pdf), 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)

3.8 Science Engagement

The NRF supports science engagement through its coordination and implementation of the Department of Science and Technology's Science 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, science awareness, science education, science communication and science outreach, which aim 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.

3.9 Management of funding instrument

The **KAS Directorate** of the NRF – Research and Innovation Support and Advancement (RISA) manages the Y-Rated funding instrument, and is responsible for:

- Strategic oversight and management of the funding instrument;
- Conceptualizing and developing the funding instrument;
- Coordinating and facilitating activities of the funding instrument;
- Compiling funding instrument research and evaluation reports;
- Stakeholder engagement; and
- Ensuring that the funding instruments delivers on its intended goal(s).

The **RE Directorate** of the NRF – RISA is responsible for managing the adjudication process including:

- sourcing of reviewers both for remote reviews and panels;
- managing the peer review process;
- organizing and managing the review panels as and where appropriate;
- providing feedback as appropriate; and

The **GMSA Directorate** of the NRF – RISA is responsible for

- Managing the call process, that is,
 - Posting the call;
 - Receiving and assessing applications eligibility;
- Coordinating and facilitating the granting processes
- Managing the granting including the administration of awards;
- Administering grant payments; and
- Ensuring adherence to conditions of grants

3.10 Lines of authority

The Research Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers Director in the KAS Directorate manages the funding instrument. The Director responsible for this instrument reports to the Executive Director of the KAS Directorate. Directors from RE and GMSA manage the review and granting processes. The Directors in both RE and GMSA report to their respective Executive Directors.

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 money is released upon acceptance of the conditions of grant, both by the applicant and his/her 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:

- Materials and Supplies
- Travel and subsistence
- Research / Technical / *Ad hoc* Assistants
- 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. Awards will be made in line with the NRF funding rules and guidelines as outlined in **Section 4.3**.

4.3 Funding support

Science councils, public universities, museums and other NRF recognized institutions are the primary beneficiaries of this funding instrument.

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

Materials and Supplies

Generally, the NRF does not provide financial support for:

- Basic office equipment including computers and consumables unless the computer is required for the research itself.
- Basic office stationery, photocopying costs, printing costs unless these items form part of the research tools.
- Journal publication costs, journal subscription costs and book costs.
- Telephone, fax 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 application i.e. for principal investigators and co-investigators (local only) and local postgraduate students.
- 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.
- Local accommodation costs should not exceed a 3* establishment
- 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.

d) 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.

4.4 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 MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE FUNDING INSTRUMENT

The NRF is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the Research Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers.

5.1 Reporting

The KAS Director is responsible for reporting quarterly on the contribution of the Research Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers funding instrument to the KAS Directorate's Key Performance Indicators. In addition, the Director is responsible for reviewing and reporting on the progress of the funding instrument.

5.2. Timeframes for funding instrument review

The funding instrument will be evaluated by an appropriate external reviewer as appointed by the RE Directorate. In consultation with this directorate, KAS will agree to and set timeframes for the review in line with existing guidelines.

5.3 Broad terms of reference for the funding instrument review

The broad terms of reference for the programme review of the Research Development Grants for Y-Rated Researchers funding instrument will be determined by the KAS Directorate prior to the evaluation taking place, and in accordance with tenets set in the RE Directorate's Guidelines.

5.4 Utilisation of funding instrument review findings and recommendations

The results of the evaluation will be used in line with the purpose set in the Terms of Reference for the evaluation, as well as for instrument improvement and development.

Please direct all enquiries to:

NRF Online application and grants management related queries	
GMSA	
Ms Jane Mabena E-mail: jane.mabena@nrf.ac.za Tel: 012 481 4067	
KAS	
Ms Zodwa Masinga E-mail: Zodwa.masinga@nrf.ac.za Tel: 012 481 4310	

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
DSI	Department of Science and Innovation
DMP	Data Management Plan
GMSA	Grants Management and Systems Administration
ISC	International Science Council
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 and Innovation Support and Advancement

ANNEXURE 1: Panel Assessment Scorecard – 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 ¹ 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		20%
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? Is it clear how such impact will be measured?		5%
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 the course of 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?		10%
			Totals	100%

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.



***COMPETITIVE SUPPORT FOR
UNRATED RESEARCHERS (CSUR)***

**KNOWLEDGE ADVANCEMENT AND SUPPORT
Framework Document**

February 2021

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1 INTRODUCTION

The National Research Foundation (NRF) recognises that in order for South Africa to be internationally competitive and to meaningfully contribute to the global economy, the country must have the capability to understand the knowledge it produces and that produced by others. This understanding can best be developed in part through producing new knowledge, translating and developing existing knowledge. Publicly-funded basic and applied research is critical for innovation and potentially, international competitiveness.

The NRF views support for basic disciplinary, multi- and transdisciplinary research as an investment in the country's learning and knowledge production capabilities and capacities. The Competitive Support for Unrated Researchers (CSUR) is a discipline- and transdisciplinary-based, and demand-driven funding instrument. It is restricted to persons who are established researchers but do not currently hold an NRF rating. **This is not a developmental funding instrument. Rather, it is anticipated 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, who 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. Thus an APPLICANT WILL BE FUNDED ONLY ONCE as principal investigator (PI) through the CSUR funding instrument.

The budget for CSUR grants that will be awarded funding in 2022 is limited. Based on the past experience of annual total applications and success rates, this amount is likely to fund close to 40% of the total number of applicants. It is therefore important to note that this is a very highly competitive instrument in terms of available resources and success rate. The submitted applications must be well aligned to the eligibility criteria and objectives of this instrument, and must be of the highest quality.

1.1 Description of Funding Instrument

The CSUR 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.

Although this funding instrument ostensibly has a broad and non-directed theme and structure, funding will be prioritised to the top scoring applications within broad-field/disciplines that are not supported through other NRF mission-driven funding instruments such as, the African Origins Platform (Palaeosciences), Global Change Grand Challenge, South African National Antarctic Programme, Marine Sciences Research, etc. Although funding priority will be given to top scoring applicants, the NRF will also take into consideration the strategic imperatives such as transformation when making funding decisions. Emphasis will be on basic and as appropriate, applied research in disciplinary fields, and will allow for multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary enquiry along the innovation value chain.

2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

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

- a) 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;
- (b) Developing, supporting and maintaining national research facilities;
- (c) Supporting and promoting public awareness of, and engagement with science; and
- (d) Promoting the development and maintenance of the national science system and support of Government priorities.

NRF recently developed its vision 2030 as well as strategy 2025.

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 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 (Frascati Manual, 2002). In order to participate in an international system of innovation, a nation needs to produce knowledge and understand the knowledge produced by others. Support for basic disciplinary research is thus seen as an investment in a society's learning capabilities (Salter and Martin, 2001). At the same time, this funding instrument acknowledges that basic and applied research are a continuum and inter-dependent (ICSU, 2004) and that increasingly, the notion of "frontier research" is gaining purchase internationally,

as it 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 our geographic advantage areas. At the International level the NRF is keen to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Agenda 2063 priorities.

In respect to the social sciences and humanities however, the NRF would like to highlight the fact that it is supportive and committed to working closely with the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) on the advancement of social sciences and the humanities scholarship in South Africa.

2.2 Objectives

The objectives of the funding instrument are:

- To 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;
- To contribute to knowledge production across the research spectrum;
- To achieve world-class research and to develop the associated human capacity; and
- To advance or develop paradigms, theories and methodological innovation across the research spectrum.

2.3 NRF Perspective

The CSUR is a discipline- and transdisciplinary-based, demand-driven funding instrument that focuses on basic disciplinary and cross-disciplinary research while allowing (where appropriate) for the “continuum of knowledge” approach alluded to above. This is in line with the NRF’s view that support for basic disciplinary research is an investment in South Africa’s learning capabilities. The CSUR directly, and in part, addresses the following strategic objectives of the strategic outcomes of the *NRF Strategy 2025*:

- A transformed (internationally competitive and sustainable) research workforce.
- Enhanced impact of the research enterprise.
- Enhanced impact of science engagement.

2.4 Institutional structure

The strategic direction and outcomes of the funding instrument are managed by the Knowledge Advancement and Support (KAS) Directorate. The Reviews and Evaluation (RE) Directorate is responsible for the review processes up to the recommendations of grant awards. The Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA) Directorate’s responsibilities include posting of the research call, communicating funding decisions, disbursement of grant funds, and ensuring adherence to the conditions of the grant.

2.5 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.

2.6 Key stakeholders

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

2.7 Information sources

Frascati Manual OECD: Proposed standard practice for surveys on Research and Experimental Development, 2002.

Salter, A.J. and Martin, B.R. The Economic Benefits of Publicly Funded Basic Research A Critical Review. Research Policy, 30, 509-532, 2001.

International Council for Science (ICSU). The value of basic scientific research, 2004

National Research Foundation, South Africa Strategic Plan 2025. 2020.

National Research Foundation Vision 2030. Pretoria. National Research Foundation, South Africa. 2020.

3 *MODUS OPERANDI*

3.1 Call for proposals

All application materials **must** be submitted electronically via the NRF Online Submission System at <https://nrfs submission.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

- CSUR grantees 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 Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers (CPRR). Current or previous CSUR grantees are **ineligible** for further CSUR funding. Funding in this round will support successful applications for a maximum period of 3 years, 2022 – 2024.

- 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 (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.
- 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.
- Retired unrated academics/researchers, provided that they meet all set criteria as stipulated below:
 - are resident in SA;
 - 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.
- Previous CSUR applicants who were successful in the past but were not awarded funding due to insufficient funds can also re-apply taking into account the feedback provided by the review panel.

In an effort to support as many fundable proposals across all fields and spectrum of researchers as possible, and increase the country's levels of international competitiveness in research and innovation, the NRF would like to inform all those applicants who submitted proposals in the last round of the CSUR call in 2020 for funding from 2021, and received communication that their research projects were fundable but could not be funded due to insufficient funds, not to re-apply/resubmit the same proposals for this call. NRF will in parallel to this call send personal communication to these applicants (copied to their Designated authorities) requesting them to

confirm whether or not their research projects should still be considered for this open 2021 call for funding from 2022.

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/media-room/news/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 / means 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; as such review reports are dismissed without consideration. On average, a 30% response rate is achieved by the NRF in requesting postal peer reviews.

- **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 Online Submission System at <https://nrfs submission.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

a) 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 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 PI may not hold a current CSUR grant.
- The PI may submit only one CSUR application to this call for proposals.

The research team may also include:

b) 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

c) 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 you expect to acquire or generate during the course of 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. 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 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 National Research Foundation 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, science awareness, science education, science communication and science outreach, which aim 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.

3.8 Management of funding instrument

The **KAS Directorate** of the NRF – Research and Innovation Support and Advancement (RISA) manages the CSUR funding instrument, and is responsible for:

- Strategic oversight and management of the funding instrument;
- Conceptualizing and developing the funding instrument;
- Coordinating and facilitating activities of the funding instrument;
- Compiling funding instrument research and evaluation reports;
- Stakeholder engagement; and
- Ensuring that the funding instruments delivers on its intended goal(s).

The **RE Directorate** of the NRF – RISA is responsible for managing the adjudication process including:

- sourcing of reviewers both for remote reviews and panels;
- managing the peer-review process;
- organizing and managing the review panels as and where appropriate; and
- providing feedback as appropriate;

The **GMSA Directorate** of the NRF – RISA is responsible for

- Managing the call process, that is,
 - Posting the call;
 - Receiving and assessing applications eligibility;
- Coordinating and facilitating the granting processes
- Managing the granting including the administration of awards;
- Administering grant payments; and
- Ensuring adherence to conditions of grants

3.9 Lines of authority

The CSUR Director in the KAS Directorate manages the funding instrument. The Director responsible for this instrument reports to the Executive Director of the KAS Directorate. Directors from RE and GMSA manage the review and granting processes. The Directors in both RE and GMSA report to their respective Executive Directors

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 money is released upon acceptance of the conditions of grant, both by the applicant and his/her employing institution. These grants will fall under the NRF audit requirements of beneficiary institutions.

4.2 Funding ranges

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.

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

- a) Staff development grants
- b) Postdoctoral Fellowships
- c) Research-related operating costs, including:
 - o Sabbaticals
 - o Materials and Supplies
 - o Travel and subsistence
 - o Research / Technical / *Ad hoc* Assistants
 - o 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. Awards will be made in line with the NRF funding rules and guidelines as outlined in **Section 4.3**.

4.3 Funding support

The NRF funds the CSUR funding instrument on an ongoing basis. Science councils, public universities, museums, national research facilities and other NRF recognized research institutions are the primary beneficiaries of this funding instrument. The NRF has systems in place to ensure that there is no double funding of projects that are already funded by the Medical Research Council and those funded by the NIHSS.

Postgraduate student support

The National Research Foundation (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 Online Submission System by accessing the link: <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/>. This single entry point allows the NRF to coordinate 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.

Study Level	Full Cost of Study <i>(South African Citizens and Permanent Residents only)</i>		Partial Cost of Study <i>(South African Citizens; South African Permanent Residents and 5% Non-South African Citizens)</i>
	Exceptional Achievers	Financially Needy & Students with Disability	Other
Honours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 75% Mark in Final Year of study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 65% Mark in Final Year of study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 65% Mark in Final Year of study
	<p>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.</p>		
Masters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 75% Mark for Honours • Completed Honours in one year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 65% Mark for Honours • Completed Honours in one year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 65% Mark for Honours • Completed Honours in one year
	<p>Masters students must be 30 years of age or younger in the year of application.</p>		
Doctoral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 75% Mark for Masters • Completed Masters in two years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 65% Mark for Masters • Completed Masters in two years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 65% Mark for Masters • Completed Masters in two years
	<p>Doctoral students must be 32 years of age or younger in the year of application.</p>		

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.

For further details on the NRF Postgraduate Funding policy, kindly refer to the framework document which is available on www.nrf.ac.za.”

b) 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 support is three years for a Master's degree and five years for a Doctoral degree.**

c) 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. Only 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 equipment including computers and consumables unless the computer is required for the research itself.

- Basic office stationery, photocopying costs, printing costs unless these items form part of the research tools.
- Journal publication costs, journal subscription costs and book costs.
- Telephone, fax 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 (local 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 conferences mentioned above.
- Local accommodation costs should not exceed a 3* 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 National 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.

d) 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.

4.4 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 MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE FUNDING INSTRUMENT

The NRF is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the CSUR.

5.1 Reporting

The KAS Director is responsible for reporting quarterly on the contribution of the CSUR funding instrument to the KAS Directorate's Key Performance Indicators. In addition, the Director is responsible for reviewing and reporting on the progress of the funding instrument.

5.2. Timeframes for funding instrument review

The CSUR funding instrument will be evaluated by an appropriate external reviewer as appointed by the RE Directorate. In consultation with this directorate, KAS will agree to and set timeframes for the review in line with existing guidelines.

5.3 Broad terms of reference for the funding instrument review

The broad terms of reference for the programme review of the CSUR funding instrument will be determined by the KAS Directorate prior to the evaluation taking place, and in accordance with tenets set in the RE Directorate's Guidelines.

5.4 Utilisation of funding instrument review findings and recommendations

The results of the evaluation will be used in line with the purposes set in the Terms of Reference for the evaluation, as well as for instrument improvement and development.

QUERIES

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

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CI	Co-investigator
CPRR	Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers
CSUR	Competitive Support for Unrated Researchers
DMP	Data Management Plan
DSI	Department of Science and Innovation
GMSA	Grants Management and Systems Administration
ISC	International Science Council
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 and Innovation Support and Advancement
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

ANNEXURE 1: Panel Assessment Scorecard – 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%
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		15%
	Of students supervised	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%
Impacts	Impact on knowledge production	Will the proposed work significantly advance discovery and understanding in the field? Should be related to Scientific merit		10%
	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%
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 you expect to acquire or generate during the course of a research project, how you will manage, describe, analyze, use and store data, and what mechanisms (including digital data storage) will be used at the end of your project to share and preserve your data		10%

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.