

Q/A South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI)

Question: Do I budget for 2008 even though the year is nearly over?

Answer: Yes please budget for a full year for 2008. This will make comparison simpler. When the chair is eventually placed the actual budgets can be shifted and adapted based on the actual time of placement. The NRF recognises that it may take up to a year to get a non-South African in to the chair with all necessary work permits etc. Please do not ramp up to the full expenditure, imagine that you can kick off at full steam.

Question: Can I keep using NRF core budget to support the chair?

Answer: No, Chair holders are not eligible for additional NRF parliamentary core grant funding, except in respect of large equipment, which is expected to be addressed through the National Research Equipment and Infrastructure strategy.

Question: Should I include the money I raise from the University for publishing and graduating post-grads?

Answer: No, do not include this money. Include only the money raised in the form of research grants or contract research income.

Question: Are there any guidelines as to what should go into the expenditure side of my budget?

Answer: Some guidelines were provided in the initial Guide for the programme, which is on the web. The only change here is that the university may also add a 5 to 10% overhead to the budget. It is important to note that the guidelines are just that, guidelines. Variations can be presented but should be motivated. Of importance though is the number of students supported through the Chair: This must not be overshadowed by equipment expenditure, for example.

Question: Can I hire other staff using this grant, for example a lab manager?

Answer: No, the grant is not meant to support lab managers and the like. These costs would need to be paid for by the institution hosting the chair. The Chair is allowed limited admin support, teaching time buy out and research assistants, all of which are seen as transient assistance rather than permanent infrastructure. These costs must also be balanced against the support provided for students, which is imperative.

Question: Will the grant be reduced if I indicate plenty of other income?

Answer: Clearly as the funding is limited and there is a need to make it stretch as far as possible, the full R2.5 m will not be given to every successful applicant. On the other hand, success at leveraging support from various sources is seen as a strength and is key to success in this competition. Of course there is no magic limit to the amount of other support needed as it is very dependent on research area. So successful candidates will not be punished from their success, but there is no guarantee that every successful applicant will get R2.5 m per annum.

Question: Should I focus my pre-proposal on candidates from outside the country?

Answer: The overall purpose of the initiative is to grow the research base. And so renewal is important, but retention cannot be over looked. The ultimate answer then is that each case needs to be motivated individually with a clear link starting from National strategy through institutional strategy to the skills of the individual candidate.