



Incentive Funding for Rated Researchers

Strategic Knowledge Fields Grants Programme

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Framework Document

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1. Executive Summary

The recent review of the NRF's evaluation and rating system endorsed the value of the system, but recommended that the NRF re-establish its link to funding. Based on this recommendation, the Incentive Funding for Rated Researchers programme was created. The programme aims to incentivize excellent research.

Funding will be awarded to rated researchers on an annual basis for the duration of their rating based on their current rating.

These grants are to be used for research purposes. However, there needs to be considerable flexibility built into their administration, allowing researchers to use it where necessary and to glue their research programme together when other funding streams are closed.

2. Strategic Context

The 2007 independent, HESA lead review of the NRF's evaluation and rating system essentially endorsed the value of the system. However, it did request the NRF to re-examine the design of the adjudication processes, looking carefully at the balance between complexity, speed and quality and to make changes if necessary. More importantly though, the review panel recommended that the NRF use the system for its intended purpose, that is to identify quality researchers and to fund their research work.

3. Objectives

The programme aims to incentivize excellent research. Collateral objectives include encouraging researchers to:

1. Subject themselves for rating,
2. Maintain their ratings once they are rated, and
3. Attain ever higher ratings until they reach the top rating (A1).

4. Modus Operandi

Funding will be awarded to rated researchers on an annual basis for the duration of their rating. There will be no direct competition for these funds as the rigorous rating evaluation process will provide a global competitiveness necessary to remain a fair process.

The proposed funding levels are shown in **Table 1**.

Rating	A	B	C	P	Y	L
Maximum amount contributed by the NRF / R 000	100	80	40	40	20	20
Matching amount contributed by host institution / R 000	0	0	0	40	20	20
Total / R 000	100	80	40	80	40	40

Table 1: Value of Incentive Grants per annum

The timeline for these grants is illustrated in **Figure 1**.

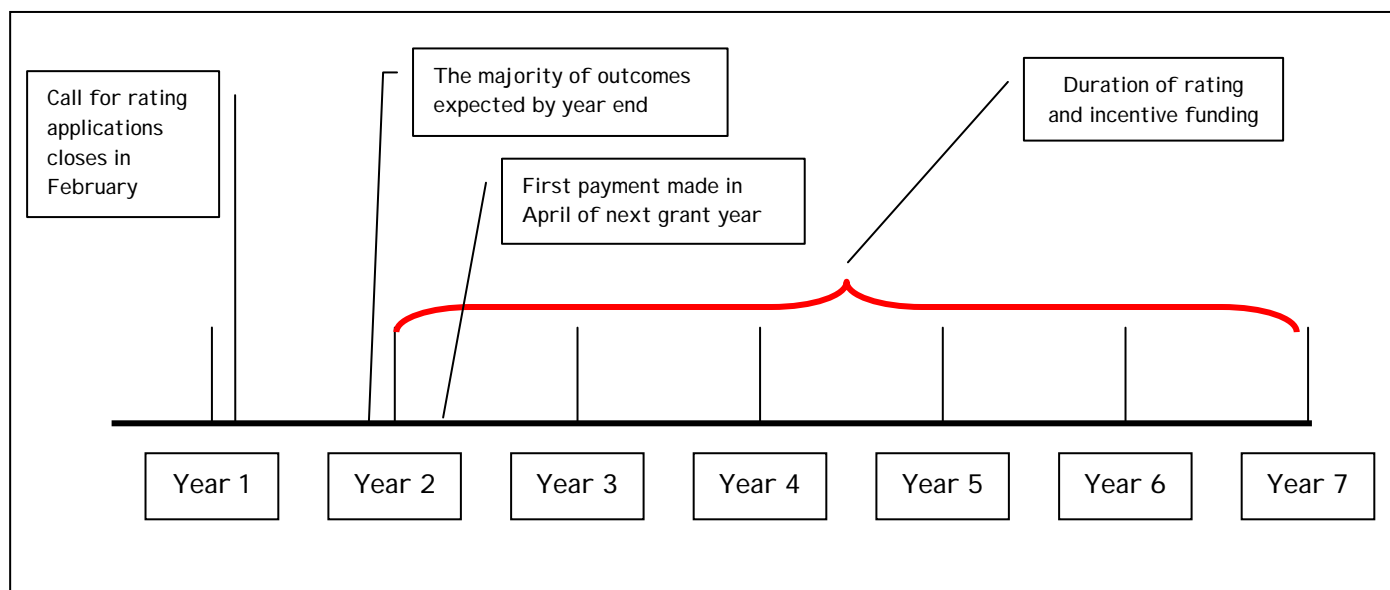


Figure 1: Timeline of Incentive Funding for Rated Researchers

5. Funding Source and Roll Out

This programme will be funded from the NRF Core budget. The cost of this programme is expected to reach about R80 million per annum (in 2008 Rands) once all rated researchers are funded. This cost is expected to grow rapidly over time as it is expected that the scheme will attract more and more rated researchers to the rating system. Growth estimates of between 12 and 20% have been considered.

As the NRF could only budget about R35 million for this programme in 2008; the first year of implementation, a phased roll out will need to be followed. This roll out will follow the following criteria with reasons provided in parenthesis:

1. Funding will initially begin with the highest rating and move down until the budget is exhausted. (Because excellence is rewarded.) The following rating hierarchy, listed in descending order, will be used to make decisions: A1, A2, B1, B2, B3, P, Y1, C1, Y2, C2, C3, and L.
2. Funding will be given to rated researchers currently holding full-time academic or research positions at qualifying institutions.

The NRF will not be posting a Call for Incentive budget motivations in the near future but will invite researchers to apply for Incentive funding as and when funds become available.

6. Financial Control & Reporting

These grants are to be used for research purposes. However, there needs to be considerable flexibility built into their administration so that the grantholders can use the money in various ways to keep their research activities afloat during the occasions when other funding is scarce.

It will therefore be awarded against running costs but can be used to top up bursaries, cover travel costs, etc. Should a grantholder allocate it as a full bursary then it will need to conform to the standard NRF rules for bursaries and the full commitment or study duration will need to be adhered to.

Grant holders will be expected to complete an annual report to reflect how the money was actually used.