



***COMPETITIVE PROGRAMME FOR
RATED RESEARCHERS (CPRR)***

**KNOWLEDGE FIELDS DEVELOPMENT
Framework Document**

JUNE 2015

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1 FUNDING INSTRUMENT TITLE AND DESCRIPTION

1.1 Name

COMPETITIVE PROGRAMME FOR RATED RESEARCHERS

1.2 Description of Funding Instrument

The Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers (CPRR) is a highly competitive discipline-based funding instrument which supports 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 National Research Foundation (NRF) 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, proposals which are closely linked to and/ or address similar problems through other NRF funding instruments will not be prioritised as part of *this* funding instrument. Rather, 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.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 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 produced by others. This understanding can best be developed through performing research. Publicly funded basic and applied research is viewed as a source of new ideas, opportunities, methods, and most importantly, the means through which problem solvers can be trained. Basic research is considered critical for innovation and potentially, international competitiveness.

The NRF views support for basic disciplinary research as an investment in the country's learning and knowledge production capabilities and capacities. The CPRR is a discipline-based and demand-driven funding instrument. It is restricted to persons who **currently hold an NRF rating**. It is anticipated that these individuals, as established researchers, will continue to produce quality and impactful research, contributing to South Africa's global research and development output in the future.

3 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 recently launched the *NRF Strategy 2020* that aims at two strategic outcomes, namely a *vibrant and globally connected national system of innovation*, and a *representative research and technical workforce* targeting the following four strategic goals:

- A scientifically literate and engaged society;
- World-class benchmarking and grant making systems;
- An internationally competitive and transformed research system; and
- Leading-edge research and infrastructure platforms

3.1 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 basic research¹. In order to participate in an 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 (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 multidisciplinary [and transdisciplinary] (Schneider, 2007).

3.2 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.

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.

3.3 NRF Perspective

The CPRR is a discipline-based, demand-driven funding instrument that focuses on basic disciplinary, trans- and interdisciplinary 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 2020*:

- Promote globally competitive research and innovation;
- Enhance strategic international engagement; and
- Entrench science engagement.

3.4 Institutional structure

The strategic direction and outcomes of the funding instrument are managed by the Knowledge Fields Development (KFD) 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.

3.5 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. Having said this, 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. Applications will be scored according to a scorecard (see **Annexure 1**), and the top scoring applications will be supported until the available resources are exhausted. The financial requirements of the top scoring applications will determine the final number of applications supported.

3.6 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 Science and Technology. These include mainly, Public Universities, Museums, Institutes and Science Councils.

3.7 Information sources

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

<http://www.icsu.org/Gestion/img/ICSU_DOC_DOWNLOAD/549_DD_FILE_Basic_Sciences_1_2.04.pdf>

National Research Foundation 2015. *NRF Strategy 2020*

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

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

Schneider, R. 2007. Science Impact: Rethinking the impact of basic research on society and the economy. *Bridges*, 14, accessed 10/12/2009

<http://www.ostina.org/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id+2324>

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

4 **MODUS OPERANDI**

4.1 **Call for proposals**

All application materials **must** be submitted electronically via the NRF's Submission system at <https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za>

The **NRF closing date** for endorsed applications is **30 July 2015**. 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 institution in order to meet the NRF closing date.

Incomplete OR late submissions will not be accepted.

Call opens: 11 June 2015

Call closes: 30 July 2015

4.2 **Eligibility**

- CPRR grantholders may only hold **ONE** CPRR grant at a time. CPRR grantholders with current grant awards that run beyond the end of [the calendar year] 2015 are **ineligible** for funding in this round. CPRR grantholders with current grant awards that run to the end of 2015 are **eligible** for funding in this round. Funding in this round will support successful applications for a maximum period of 3 years, 2016 – 2018.
- Each new Principal Investigator **may only submit ONE** CPRR application to this call.

- 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. Salaries must be paid by the research institution and 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 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 until re-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.

4.3 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 [Postal]-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 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**

Panels will be broadly constituted to include specialists in such areas as Social Sciences, Law and Humanities; Natural Sciences and Engineering. Panel members will be selected based on their broad overview of the respective knowledge field and their research standing. Panel meetings will be held at central locations 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.

4.4 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 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 must 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 not hold a current CPRR grant.

The principal investigator may submit only one CPRR application to this call for proposals.

In addition to the PI as applicant, 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 post-doctoral fellows, students, technical and support staff DO NOT qualify as co-investigators

The project may also include:

c) Research Associates / Collaborators

These are individuals or groups who are anticipated to make a relatively small, but meaningful contribution to the research endeavours outlined in the application, but who have not actively participated 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.

4.5 Timelines

The CPRR grants will be awarded for a period of no more than three years (2016 – 2018). Successful applicants who wish to apply for further funding upon completion of a three-year funding cycle may submit new grant applications in the 2019 call for proposals.

4.6 Management of funding instrument

The Knowledge Fields Development 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 Reviews and Evaluation 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 feed-back 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 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

4.7 Lines of authority

The funding instrument Director in the KFD Directorate generally manages the CPRR funding instrument with the assistance of a Professional Officer. Where and when appropriate, a call may be managed by a specially appointed project leader supported by a project team of staff drawn from Reviews and Evaluation, GMSA; Knowledge Management and others. The Director responsible for this instrument reports to the Executive Director of the KFD Directorate. Directors from GMSA and Reviews and Evaluation will normally manage the granting and review processes, respectively with the assistance of Professional and Liaison Officers. The Directors in both the GMSA and the Reviews and Evaluation report to their respective Executive Directors

5 FINANCIALS

5.1 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.

5.2 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) Grant holder-linked student support
- b) Staff development grants
- c) 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 5.3**.

5.3 Funding support

The NRF funds the CPRR funding instrument on an ongoing basis. Science councils, public universities, museums and other NRF-recognized institutions are the primary beneficiaries of this funding instrument.

GRANT HOLDER-LINKED STUDENT SUPPORT

Grant holder-linked student support will be awarded in accordance with eligibility criteria as detailed in the **Ministerial Guidelines for Improving Equity in the Distribution of DST/NRF Bursaries and Fellowships** (January 2013). Applications that do not include student participation will not be prioritized in this funding instrument. Student participation via other funding streams must be detailed if grant holder-linked bursaries are not required.

The **equity distribution** for these bursaries for the CPRR funding instrument is targeted at the ratio:

- 80% Black
- 55% Female
- 4% Disabled

The awarding of postdoctoral fellowships will be guided by, but not governed by, equity targets.

The **citizenship distribution** for these bursaries for the CPRR funding instrument is targeted at the ratio:

- 87% South African (including permanent residents)
- 5% SADC
- 4% Rest of the African continent
- 4% Non-African

Postdoctoral fellowships will not be governed by citizenship targets, and remain open to all who undertake research in South Africa.

Values of Student Assistantships

- Final year undergraduate (Full-time) R8 000 pa
- Honours / BTech (Full-time) R20 000 pa

Values of Bursaries & Fellowships

- | | | |
|---|---|-------------|
| ○ | Masters degree (Full-time) | R40 000 pa |
| ○ | Doctoral degree (Full-time) | R60 000 pa |
| ○ | Postdoctoral (<i>pro rata</i> per month) | R150 000 pa |

RESEARCH-RELATED OPERATING COSTS

These costs include: materials and supplies, travel (including conferences and subsistence), equipment, and research / technical / *ad hoc* assistance. Sabbaticals to other research organisations and institutions of higher learning may also be included within the context of the project proposals. These costs should be clearly justified and must be commensurate with the planned research outputs.

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 or the applicant/team member is based at a museum.
- **Basic office stationery**, photocopying costs, printing costs unless these items form part of the research tools or the applicant/team member is based at a museum.
- **Journal publication costs**, journal subscription costs, book costs unless the applicant / team member is based at a museum.
- **Telephone, fax and internet** costs unless the applicant / team member is based at a museum.
- The NRF **will not pay for any salaries in this funding instrument.**

Travel and subsistence

- **International conference attendance:**
Generally the NRF restricts this amount to R50, 000 per application per year for a team proposal, i.e., for principal investigators, co-investigators (local only) and local post-graduate students. This amount may be reduced proportionately if there is no team member and/or post-graduate student involvement.
- **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. Both incoming and outgoing visits will be considered in accordance with resource availability.

- **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 post-graduate students. The applicant should motivate for:

- The value of attending more than one local conference per annum if so requested
- The number of people that should be funded to attend local conferences.

- **Local travel:**

The NRF does not stipulate any rate for mileage as this will depend on the research institutions' rate, which varies per institution. 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 three-star rating establishment, per night per person.

Research / Technical / *Ad hoc* Assistants

- The NRF **will not pay for any salaries in this funding instrument.**
- Requests for research / technical / *ad hoc* assistance should be treated judiciously. Generally the NRF would encourage applicants to engage students to undertake the research rather than employing research consultants. This guideline however does not apply when specific and / or highly specialized research / technical expertise is required. **This should be CLEARLY motivated for in the proposal.**
- **Administrative assistance does NOT qualify as technical assistance.**

Equipment

Equipment requests exceeding R 200 000 per proposal will not be considered.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Grant-holders may apply for Staff Development grants for South African **staff members**, who are not grant-holders in their own right, at their own or other institutions. These staff members **must** be registered for Masters or Doctoral degrees and be supervised by the grant-holder or a team member. They 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. These grants are awarded to a maximum of R30 000.00, depending on the nature of the research and the proximity of the student in relation to the supervisor.

Grant holders themselves are not eligible for Staff Development Grants.

The maximum period of support is three years for a Masters degree and five years for a Doctorate from a valid grant.

FUNDING TO CATER FOR DISABILITIES

Additional funding support to cater for disability will only 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.

5.4 Funding instrument budget

The budget for this funding instrument originates from the NRF's Parliamentary Core Funding.

5.5 Financial control and reporting

Upon receipt of the signed Conditions of Grant letter, 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 an Annual Progress Report. These are to be submitted before the end of March of the following year, and are a prerequisite for the release of the subsequent year's funding. Failure to submit an Annual Progress Report will result in the cancellation of the grant award.

6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE FUNDING INSTRUMENT

The NRF is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the CPRR.

6.1 Reporting

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

6.2. Timeframes for funding instrument review

The CPRR funding instrument will be evaluated by an appropriate external reviewer as appointed by the NRF. RISA will determine and set timeframes for the review, when deemed appropriate, or in line with existing guidelines.

6.3 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 RISA with preliminary input by the KFD Directorate, and in consultation with the Reviews and Evaluation Directorate.

6.4 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. Evaluation results will also be used for funding instrument improvement and development.

QUERIES

REFER ALL QUERIES TO:	
Professional Officer:	
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CPRR	Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers
DST	Department of Science and Technology
GMSA	Grant Management and Systems Administration
ICSU	International Council for Science
KFD	Knowledge Fields Development
NRF	National Research Foundation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RISA	Research and Innovation Support and Advancement

ANNEXURE 1: Panel Assessment Scorecard – Rated Researchers

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Details	Score / 4	Weight (Total = 100%)	Weighted score (Total = 4)
Proposals	Scientific merit and feasibility	Reflect on the proposed rationale, approach and methodology.		50%	0.00
		Reflect on the scientific, ethical ² logistics and technical feasibility as proposed			
Track record of applicant	Past students (graduated)	M and D degrees.		5%	0.00
	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 / Years post PhD		5%	0.00
	Of students supervised	M and D degrees.		5%	0.00
Collaboration	International, national and institutional collaborations	Are the appropriate collaborations proposed in the application? Are the roles of the proposed collaborators clearly indicated?		5%	0.00
Impacts	Impact on knowledge production	Will the proposed work significantly advance discovery and understanding in the field?		10%	0.00
	Wider impact	Has the possibility for economic, societal or environmental impact been appropriately embedded in the proposal? Is it clear how such impact will be measured?		10%	0.00
Data management and use	Digital storage	Has appropriate consideration been given to digital data storage for use beyond the immediate project team?		5%	
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 such ethical considerations and clearances are 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.

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
	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.