National Research Foundation

7th ANNUAL NRF

Research Administrators Workshop Report

PARTNERS IN EXCELLENCE

4 October 2016 to 6 October 2016
Legend Golf & Safari Resort, Polokwane, Limpopo Province

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AOPP	Audit of the Predetermined Objectives
APR	Annual Progress Report
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CUT	Central University of Technology
DA	Designated Authority
DOI	Digital Object Identifiers
GMSA	Grant Management and System Administration
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
IEPD	Institutional Engagement and Partnership Development
IRC	International Relations and Cooperation
MFAA	Master Funding Administration Agreement
NRF	National Research Foundation
NEP	National Equipment Programme
NNEP	National Nanotechnology Equipment Programme
RAW	Research Administrators Workshop
RISA	Research and Innovation Support and Advancement
RE	Review and Evaluation
SAEON	South African Environmental Observation Network
SARChI	South African Research Chairs Initiative
UCT	University of Cape Town
UL	University of Limpopo
Univen	University of Venda
Wits	University of Witwatersrand

Welcome

The Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA) Directorate hosted its annual Research Administrators Workshop (RAW) from 4 to 6 October 2016 in Polokwane. The workshop aimed to bring together key stakeholders from universities and science councils across South Africa, including international delegates, to share experiences and best practices in research administration and management.

The workshop supports the advancement of the Communities of Practice Platform for our research administrators, designated authorities and financial officers based at various academic and research institutions. This opportunity is motivated by the National Research Foundation's (NRF) mandate to support world-class grant management systems.

The core objectives of RAW included, among others, to:
- Increase the knowledge of funding opportunities offered by the NRF;
- Familiarise participants with the NRF business processes;
- Share expectations on financial reporting by institutions;
- Provide a platform for research administrators to share their experiences;
- Strengthen the research and student support offices' capacity to support their institutions to access opportunities and comply with NRF requirements;
- Create space for international/continental researchers and managers to share their research granting policies and procedures; and
- Provide a platform for strategic networks among professionals in the sector.

The interest and attendance of the 2016 RAW was considered to be extremely good. There were 139 delegates, excluding the NRF staff, from 46 institutions that were formally registered via the online registration process. The external stakeholders' representation consisted of delegates from Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), science councils, National Research Facilities, research institutions and a number of international delegates from Mozambique.

The primary aim of the 2016 RAW was to facilitate discussions among institutions and provide networking and breakaway opportunities on matters of mutual importance. The large NRF contingent (51 delegates/26% of those attending) was mostly due to the proximity (Polokwane); format (breakaways/panel discussions); and numerous requests in the preceding Workshop Survey, that NRF representatives from all levels and directorates be present to ensure meaningful discussions and outcomes. Arrangements were also made to have two representatives from the

Auditor-General's Office present to inform and explain the audit requirements that need to be adhered to by the NRF and its stakeholders.

The majority of the 2016 RAW programme items emanated from an online survey that was conducted to gain a better insight into the interests and expectations of the delegates. Additional items were included to provide for information on systems development and improvements to operational and business practices within the NRF.

The following topics, each with a set of sub-topics, were identified for discussion in an open forum:
a. The Role of the Designated Authority (DA) in research institutions, National Research Facilities and Science Councils;
b. Electronic systems;
c. Finance and auditing;
d. Strengthening partnerships for capacity development;
e. Student affairs;
f. Reviews and evaluation;
g. Improving efficiency; and
h. Compliance.

When compared to the previous workshops, RAW 2016 could best be described as an "open forum" where broader platforms were provided for all stakeholders to engage in meaningful discussions for an improved way forward. The aforementioned topics were mostly addressed in parallel breakaway sessions with plenary sessions for the chairpersons to report back to the larger audience. The breakaway sessions were led by the Designated Authorities (DAs) with the assistance of panellists that consisted of NRF representatives and key stakeholders based on the topic to be discussed. Recognition in the form of a certificate was also given to Research Administrators and Financial Officers for outstanding performance during the gala dinner.

The 2016 RAW was a success and can be best summarised by the following feedback points from the delegates:
• "Interesting and relevant topics";
• "Valuable inputs that will help improve processes at the institutions";
• "The structure of the programme and inclusiveness of the presenters from institutions, National Facilities and science councils was encouraging and appreciated";
• "Information sharing and presentations were very informative";
• "Great networking platform amongst delegates";
• "Excellent venue"; and
• "The workshop was well organised and planned".
A vibrant atmosphere was maintained throughout the workshop as delegates had meaningful engagements over the three days. Institutional knowledge and experiences were shared among delegates, while communication channels were encouraged. It should be noted that RAW 2016 demonstrated that as the NRF continues to coordinate such platforms it is also crucial to allow institutions, National Facilities and science councils to be engaged in the coordination of the workshop programme as this was received with appreciation.

Dr Ndanduleni Nthambeleni,
Executive Director: GMSA
October 2016

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The 2016 RAW was organised by members of the Steering Committee as indicated in the table below:

Nr.	Name & Surname	Designation	Role
1.	Dr Gansen Pillay	Deputy CEO: RISA	Project Sponsor
2.	Dr Ndanduleni B. Nthambeleni	Executive Director: GMSA	Project Manager
3.	Mrs Anthipi Pouris	Director: GMSA	Project Manager
4.	Ms Tshegofatso Makete	Professional Officer: GMSA	Project Coordinator and Programme Director
5.	Mr Simon Lotz	Professional Officer: GMSA	Programme Director
6.	Ms Mpai Motsei	Professional Officer: GMSA	Committee Member
7.	Mrs Pamela Luthuli	Liaison Officer: GMSA	Committee Member
8.	Mrs Vireshni Moonsamy	Liaison Officer: GMSA	Committee Member
9.	Ms Zodwa Mahlangu	Liaison Officer: GMSA	Committee Member
10	Mrs Becky Panzu	Liaison Officer: GMSA	Committee Member
11.	Mrs Bettie de Beer	Support Desk	Committee Member

The following sub-committee was established to assist with the general proceedings, record-keeping, reporting, material and taking of minutes:

Nr.	Name & Surname	Designation	Role
1.	Mr Walter Baloyi	Liaison Officer: GMSA	Support Staff
2.	Ms Virginia Mashishi	Liaison Officer: GMSA	Support Staff
3.	Mrs Lynn Erasmus	Liaison Officer: GMSA	Support Staff
4.	Ms Tebogo Raphetane	Liaison Officer: GMSA	Support Staff
5.	Ms Tebatso Leduka	Liaison Officer: GMSA	Support staff
6.	Ms Tshepiso Masemola	Liaison Officer: GMSA	Support Staff
7.	Ms Rose Skosana	Desktop Support Technician	Support Staff
8.	Ms Tebogo Manganye	Finance Officer: GMSA	Support Staff
9.	Mrs Georgiet Hammond	Graphic and Web Designer	Support Staff
10.	Mrs Maria Matjeka	Liaison Officer: GMSA	Support Staff
11.	Ms Tsebo Masihlelo	Finance Officer: GMSA	Support Staff

The RAW organising committee created an online survey to gain better insight into the interests and expectations of the delegates who would be attending the 2016 RAW. This was also well aligned to the overall theme of this year's event: "Partners in Excellence". To facilitate easy reference of issues raised at RAW 2016, comments and suggestions emanating from the Q&A sessions, breakaway sessions, and the survey questionnaires have been consolidated below:

i. RAW 2016 – Expectations

What are your expectations/what would you like to gain from RAW 2016?
The respondents requested that the RAW 2016 topics should be relevant, current and informative with examples of actual issues, concerns and institution-specific matters for discussion. Throughout the survey it was, however, also clear that the respondents wanted to be given a platform to discuss matters of common interest in an open forum.

The following specific topics were proposed by the respondents:
- National and international best practices/benchmarking;
- A deeper understanding of the NRF; funding, regulations, calls, grant management, student cancellations, institutional responsibilities, timelines, systems and processes;
- New development, improvements and changes at the NRF;
- Challenges, queries, problems and solutions;
- NRF systems, Online-Submission Systems and processes;
- Communication, notification and delays (Calls, systems, nominations, funding, feedback, etc.);
- Feedback from the RE directorate/panels with regard to peer-review panel proceedings.

ii. RAW 2016 – Themes

What overriding theme would you propose to ensure informative briefing sessions, active participation and sufficient networking/engagements that add real value?
Although various themes were suggested, the theme that encompassed what's been mentioned under expectations and topics was: "NRF as a Partner in Optimising Research Success."

iii. RAW 2016 – Topics/Content

What are the major topics you would like to be discussed during RAW 2016?
The survey questionnaire included the following topics highlighted in the RAW 2015 evaluation form:
- Grants Management & Systems Administration;
- NRF Online-Submission System;
- Financial/Auditing;
- Reviews & Evaluation; and
- Compliance.

A request was made to facilitate more collaboration among HEIs, and between the HEIs and the NRF. The NRF should also consider making use of roadshows and workshops at all levels at the universities in future. One of the

respondents indicated that more participation in the form of a working group, consisting of representatives from the NRF and DAs, could assist the NRF with the implementation of new processes and improvement of internal systems. The respondents emphasised the need to split sessions at times; specifically referring to separate/ parallel sessions for postgraduate, finance and pre-award issues.

The respondent also indicated that a guide to improve the quality of future applications would be highly appreciated in order to increase the number of awards, especially related to bursaries.

iv. RAW 2016 – Format

Please indicate what format that you would like to be most prevalent during RAW 2016?
(Breakaways; Panel Discussions, Presentations, Networking/Engagements, Other)
The respondents wished to gain insight into the administration, management and best-practices related to research administration and management from other universities. The topics of financial administration, management and control were raised frequently. Information regarding the policies and procedures of the NRF, difficulties experienced by the NRF and vice-versa were also mentioned. Specific topics include, among others, online adjustments, student nominations, scholarship grants, NRF rating, bursaries.

The following breakdown summarises the format that should be most prevalent during RAW 2016 according to the survey:

	Breakaways	Panels	Presentations	Networking	Total
Total	15	18	19	20	29
%	21%	25%	26%	28%	100%

(This table reflects the inputs from 29 respondents, with 72 responses to the various options)

Although the respondents indicated that they would like to have all the proposed topics addressed, there were some agreement in terms of the format to be used. The majority of respondents indicated that there should be more engagement, panel discussions, breakaway-sessions and networking among delegates themselves and between delegates and representatives from the NRF. The respondents specifically indicated that this did not mean there should not be any presentations, but if there were, these should be limited, relevant and targeted towards the issues at hand.

v. RAW 2016 – General Suggestions
Any additional comments, suggestions, recommendations, etc.
The respondents indicated that the actual content/programmes were previously too laden and left respondents exhausted after strenuous schedules. It was requested that more time be allocated for fun/interactive sessions to lighten the workload. They also emphasised the need for increased visibility of the NRF leadership during RAW 2016 to address/respond to matters across all directorates. It was further proposed that the NRF should consider having annual workshops for interested parties on matters such as the NRF Online System, etc.

3. ATTENDANCE

A total of 169 delegates registered for the 2016 RAW. The delegates comprised NRF staff and external stakeholders.

The external stakeholders' representation included the following:
- Higher Education Institutions;
- Science councils;
- National Research Facilities; and
- Research institutions.

The NRF representation included the:
- The Executive Director from GMSA;
- Grant directors across all directorates (GMSA, RE, IRC);
- Professional officers and liaison officers from each unit within GMSA; and
- Financial officers, administrative assistants and IT support

An illustration of institutional representation at RAW is presented below. The breakdown of the number of delegates per institution is also provided. The 46 institutions that were represented at the 2016 RAW included science councils, National Research Facilities, science museums, HEIs, governmental institutions (e.g. Auditor-General of South Africa and the Department of Science and Technology) and international delegates from, among others, Mozambique and Zambia.

The attendance over the three-day workshop was considered to be very good. There were 139 delegates who formally registered via the online registration process, which excluded the NRF contingent. As the hosts of the 2016 RAW with the aim of facilitating discussions among institutions, networking and breakaways on issues of importance, the NRF representation (51 people) amounted to 27% of those attending. The large NRF contingent was mostly informed by the close proximity of the workshop (Polokwane); format of the workshop (breakaways/panel discussions); and the survey wherein delegates requested that representatives from all levels and directorates be present to ensure meaningful discussions and outcomes.

Figure 1 Breakdown of number of delegates per institution:
(139 Delegates from 46 Institutions)

Number of Delegates per Institution (Excluding NRF Representatives)
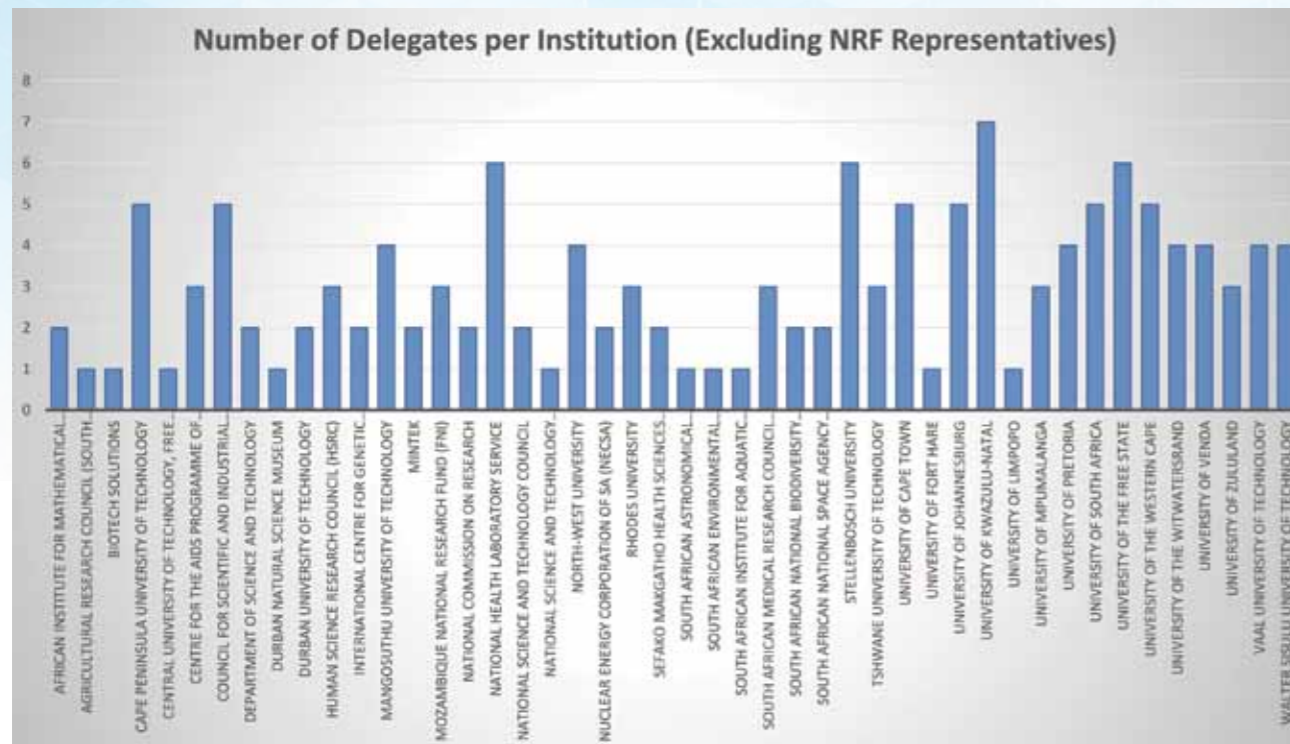
4. RAW 2016 PROGRAMME

To enhance the knowledge of stakeholders about granting policies and processes related to funding opportunities, the responsibility of presenting at RAW was mainly placed on GMSA. In addition, items listed below were distributed to the delegates at the workshop:

- Overview of NRF Funding Opportunities, Grants Management, and the Rating of Researchers – 2017-2018.
- GMSA 2017/2018 NRF Bursary & Scholarship Values, Rules and Guidelines.

The 2016 RAW programme content emanated from the online survey and feedback obtained from previous workshops. Presenters from the various institutions were made aware of relevant issues, questions and concerns that were raised at the 2015 RAW for consideration during their respective presentations. Each presentation was followed by a 20-minute Q&A session to ensure interaction and clarity on relevant issues.

The following determined the contents of the programme:

- Changes in the operations at the NRF;
- Reporting on issues raised for attention at the 2015 RAW;
- Topics suggested by stakeholders and NRF staff; and
- Practical issues pertaining to the effective administration of grants.

Refer to Appendix A for a full copy of the 2016 RAW programme.

Evaluation forms were distributed at the close of the workshop requesting comments on the following:

- Presentations;
- Logistics;
- Key issues for noting; and
- Suggestions for future workshops.

5. BREAKAWAY SESSIONS

5.1 The Role of the DA in Research Institutions – A Common Understanding:

Format: Plenary Session 1
Chairperson: Mrs Tshegofatso Makete, Mr Simon Lotz (Programme Directors)
Panellists: Mr Lebusa Monyooe (NRF), Mr Nugent Lewis (Stellenbosch University),
                Mrs Beate Hölscher (SAEON),
                Mr Joseph Tshikomba (CSIR),
                Ms Lee-Ann Mckinnell (SANSA)
Date: 04 October 2016
Time: 11:00 – 13:00

5.1.1 Summary of the Presentations

The role of the DAs in research institutions was discussed in the form of a plenary session where representatives from each of the various research institutions were given the opportunity to present on their perspective of the role of a DA.

The NRF's perspective on the topic was led by Mr Lebusa Monyooe who used the example of an orchestra to illustrate the importance of DAs in understanding their role, workspace and the partnership with the various parties. The "Black Box" and "Game Plan" metaphor highlighted communication, leadership, accountability, decision-making and trustworthiness as key traits of an effective DA. The need for DAs, and all parties involved, to raise their game, strengthen partnerships and operational synergies, consider improved approaches and amplify performance excellence going forward was emphasised.

Mr Nugent Lewis from Stellenbosch University provided an HEI's perspective on the role and responsibility of the DA. The presentation commenced with a description of the DA, followed by the legitimacy, responsibilities and complexities of the DA, operating in the pipeline of innovation with multiple stakeholders. The remainder of the presentation focused on the roles and responsibilities of the DA as the change agent and link between the applicants/grantholders and funders throughout the granting process.

Mrs Beate Hölscher provided some context to describe the multiple roles that DAs often have to fulfil at the National Research Facilities. The DA's dual role as an experienced scientist for application review and administrative officer to provide support and guidance to students/researchers was highlighted as one of the many intricacies at the Facilities. The presentation closed with a comparison of the expectations from grantholders, the actual multiple roles/responsibilities of the DA's daily work, and ultimately what the DAs at the Facilities would have liked to do in an ideal work environment.

Dr Joseph Tshikomba provided an overview of the CSIR's vision, mission and strategic objective for human capital development within the science, engineering and technology fields. The DA's roles and responsibilities with regard to pre-award activities, academic support and the post-award management of grants at a science council were also described in detail. Ms Lee-Ann McKinnell, Managing Director of SANSA, addressed the role of the DA from a student's perspective. The presentation focused on the student's expectations of the DA, and how the DA's responsibilities extend beyond project/funding opportunities, liaising with funders and grants management.

5.1.2 Recommendations:
The delegates indicated that improvement in the following areas is required for better service delivery by the NRF:
- Improved communication;
- Improved response time to issues and queries;
- Testing by all stakeholders prior to the implementation of changes; and
- Preventing the implementation of business processes that are prone to redundancy.

There was, however, consensus that new and more effective approaches to business should be explored going forward.

5.2 Electronic Systems: Efficiency or Burden?

Format: Breakaway Session 1
Chairperson: Mrs Ayanda Mabude (University of Johannesburg)
Panel: Mrs Anthipi Pouris (NRF), Mrs Bettie de Beer (NRF)
Date: 04 October 2016
Time: 14:00 – 16:30

5.2.1 Summary of the Discussion
The session consisted of sub-topics such as the Rationalisation of Applications; APRs - Changing the Way of Submitting APRs; New Master's and Doctoral/Honours Process; Training of DAs; and Types of Partnerships. These sub-topics assisted delegates in sharing their experiences, challenges and successes that they have experienced with regards to the NRF's systems.

The NRF opens more than 80 calls for proposals annually and plans to group them into the following categories:
1. Research Grants;
2. Students' Grants (Two Calls - Postgraduate Students & Fellows);
3. Travel and Conference Grants;
4. Institutional Grants (SARChI, CoEs and IEPD);
5. Incentive Funding;
6. Infrastructure Grants;
7. Internship; and
8. Rating.

5.2.2 Applications
- The NRF plans to implement one application for each category of call (rationalisation of applications);
- In terms of the migration function, standard information should be migrated to all future applications within the same category;
- DAs raised a concern that the process after submission of applications is not transparent and that the application status should be visible to them. The NRF explained that the reason why DAs have previously experienced difficulty is due to the process of making the 'status of the application visible currently being at its testing phase;
- It was mentioned that a model, such as the one used by the Royal Society, is easier to use and if the NRF builds a compensative system the role the DA plays will have to be examined. Furthermore researchers must be in a position that they align themselves to the international role players;

- It was mentioned that communication might take a bit longer than the expected turnaround time of the DAs because of the large number of applications. Institutions might be small, but the total number of submitted applications to the NRF is usually huge;
- The Master's and Doctoral application forms were also discussed in which the focus was on the details of research sections relating to merit specifications and the concern of reviewers/panellist reviewing an application with little information;
- DAs requested clarity in terms of the Postgraduate Programme, whether both grantholders and students must do APRs;
- A concern was raised regarding the Master's and Doctoral application form about the character counter being too small for the details relating to the research section, specifically the scientific merit section;
- In addition it was encouraged that applications be detailed as reviewers/panellists will find it difficult to review an application with too little information;
- It should be noted that some applications have compulsory attachments and the system should allow other attachments as well. In addition applicants can attach several attachments under one heading with the provision that DAs should check that the correct attachments are uploaded; and
- DAs should do roadshows/workshops at their own institutions to provide training in the proper completion of application forms.

5.2.3 Annual Reports
- It was mentioned that APRs are to be rationalised so that they also have the same sections, but will also have a reporting section for specific funding instruments; and
- A suggestion was put forth regarding the APR template being put on the system throughout the year so that the grantholders can complete them when they have time as this will have an impact on the release of funds.

5.2.4 Appeals
- Appeal forms are not generally open on the NRF Online Submission System – the Calls for Appeals will open in the future after all feedback is sent to the unsuccessful candidates, but the Call will not be announced;
- The appeal form will be linked to the applicants who are allowed to appeal; but
- Implementation has not yet been finalised.

5.2.5 Business Process Mapping
The Business Process Mapping that NRF (RISA) has embarked on was shared amongst delegates which presented a high level granting process. The NRF furthermore noted the concern from the DAs point of view that it's internal processes impacts on their workflow. In response it was mentioned that the challenge is with the bottle neck related to the timeframe from the closing of Calls until the outcomes are communicated.

DAs requested that in terms of the NRF processes, e.g. if NRF requires outstanding documents in order to enable students who have not submitted their documents or complete their applications, be standardised to all institutions.

A question was raised regarding the extent of power that DAs have to reject student applications. DAs do not want to submit poor applications, but if they reject student applications, the supervisor gets involved. In response an agreement was passed that an application that is rejected, should be based on quality control measures.

5.2.6 New Organisation Requests
NRF to build a new process for possible reviewers: When a new institution is approved, the new institution will be automatically inserted in the application of the requestor.

5.2.7 Recommendations:
- On a regular basis, the NRF should send out contact details of NRF staff linked to a programme and update the website with information.
- It was also recommended that DAs be trained on NRF systems and processes at least twice a year (first and second semester);
- DAs recommended that in order to improve the NRF processes, regional DA meetings should be held were the NRF is invited to attend these meetings which will be able to assist with best practice at other institutions;
- To improve systems and operations of the NRF the following must be considered:
  o Clearer instructions of how to complete sections;
  o E-mail reminders to DAs when a closing date is looming;
  o In the Call Communiqué include a grid with the dates for call open, call close, panel meetings, outcomes, feedback, etc.;
  o Notifications to DAs for Student Travel Grants (APRs); and
  o Notifications to DAs of APRs/nominations submitted – Pending approval of proper training for scientists and DAs using the online system.

5.3 Finance & Auditing:

Format:	Breakaway Session 2
Chairperson:	Mr Johann du Plessis (North-West University)
Panellists:	Mrs Rentia Hamilton, Ms Thembi Ramotebele, Mr Bennie Smit - (NRF)
Date:	04 October 2016
Time:	14:00 – 16:30

Mr du Plessis led the discussion/topics with a presentation based on the experiences at North-West University Delegates contributed to the discussions, added their inputs to the topics and contributed with their own experiences.

5.3.1 Summary of the Discussions
5.3.1.1 Grant deposit
The FOs raised a concern that they were not included when finance related information, such as the grant deposits, was communicated to institutions from the NRF. Delegates were advised that the grant deposit should be invested in a separate interest-bearing account, and the released funds should be in line with the grant deposit of the institution. All institutions should adhere to the contractual agreements in the Master Funding Administration Agreements (MFAA).

The MFAA will be sent to all institutions for finalisation.

5.3.1.2 Lines of communication
It was mentioned that FOs are often omitted when information is forwarded regarding changes within programmes and grant conditions, including reasons for late releases. Contributing to the communication challenges, DAs indicated that they either did not receive any feedback and/or experience slow turnaround times for feedback on queries.

5.3.1.3 Carry-forward process
The FOs questioned the involvement, and more specifically, the approval of the carry forwards by the institutional research offices (DAs), and indicated that their involvement in this financial process was unnecessary and a duplication of efforts.

5.3.1.4 Challenges institutions experience regarding grants

Delegates noted that the NRF's transformational objectives are a challenge for some institutions as they tend to attract more students of one race than another. It was agreed that institutions should raise issues of transformation directly with the NRF.

The delegates asked whether the current situation (#fees must fall) at institutions was taken into account by the NRF. It was noted that the current situation at HEIs (#fees must fall) also has a direct effect on the performance of the NRF, and this matter has been considered at the highest level.

Some clarification was requested with regard to the interpretation of the audit guidelines and purpose of the NRF's internal audit. The NRF responded that the internal audit was not intended to review the institution's external auditors since these were two separate processes where the sampling and corresponding findings were different. Audit guidelines will be sent in November with inputs from NRF internal auditors.

Delegates are expected to ensure that the grantholders at their institutions adhere to the Conditions of Grant as signed. Overturning grant conditions only occurs in rare cases; the NRF reviews each case before making the decision to overturn those. It, however, causes serious problems for institutions when this is done.

5.3.2 Recommendations
- The delegates indicated that the NRF should take the depreciation of the Rand into account when funding values are determined. It was agreed that the NRF would review the value of grants awarded due to the depreciating Rand. DAs were requested to raise concerns in this regard directly with the NRF. The GMSA directors will, however, also take into account the depreciating Rand, especially for SARChI, Incentive Funding for Rated Researchers, and Bursaries.
- Delegates requested that the use of student funding from other programmes be considered by the NRF. It was mentioned that the NRF does not control the movement of funds, especially in cases of contract funding.
- Bursaries are taking too long to be cancelled on the system. It was agreed that the cancellation of grants should be improved. The institution, therefore, needs to be clear in terms of the type of cancellation. Once a cancellation has been communicated by GMSA Finance, the relevant Liaison Officer (LO) should cancel the grant. Cancelled grants should reflect as zero instead of being removed from the system.
- Student bursaries should be linked to the institution where the student initially applied. The cancellation of grants should be clarified, especially where students are no longer at the institution. The institution should inform the NRF when a student is no longer with it. Once the NRF has been notified that the student is no longer at the said Institution, the NRF will invoice the student. The NRF should ensure that everyone has access to the student database.
- The programme guidelines were considered to be too restrictive and should be better worded, especially for the Incentive Funding for Rated Researchers Funding Instrument.
- The FOs raised a concern that they were not included when finance related information is communicated from the NRF. Specific reference was made to releases and lump sum payments for multi-year grants. The NRF should communicate how funds should be split in the case where a lump sum is paid for a multi-year grant. The FOs should be copied in all finance-related communication. Feedback will be sent to Institutions stating reasons when/why funds are not released.

5.4 Auditor-General South Africa

Format: Plenary Presentation
Presenter: Ms Lydia Motla
Date: 04 October 2016
Time: 17:15 - 18:00

5.4.1 Summary of the Presentation
A presentation by the Office of the Auditor-General South Africa (AGSA) regarding the NRF's audit outcome was presented before the RAW delegation. The presentation was entitled The Audit of the Predetermined Objectives (AOPO).

The role of the AGSA is to enable oversight, accountability and governance in the public sector through auditing, thereby building public confidence.

The Audit of Predetermined Objectives can be defined as an integral part of the annual regular audit, confirming the credibility of the responded performance information in the annual performance reports of:
- National and Provincial Department;
- Public Entities, Constitutional Instructions, Trading Entities; and
- Parliament and Provincial Legislatures.

The following topics were discussed:
- Legislative requirements and framework for performance management and reporting;
- Audit process; and
- Feedback on 2015-2016 audit.

5.4.1.1 Legislative Requirements and Framework for Performance Management and Reporting
The legislative requirements and framework represents the performance management and reporting framework against which the performance information should be managed and reported. The principles and requirements set out in the framework are used as a basis for the audit. The following legislation supports and promotes audit processes:
- Public Finance Management Act , 1999 (Act No. 1 of 1999) (PFMA)
- Treasury Regulations issued in terms of the PFMA, 2002
- Guidelines and instruction notes issued by National Treasury
- National Treasury Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information (issued by the National Treasury in May 2007)
- National Treasury Framework for Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans (issued by the National Treasury in August 2010)

5.4.1.2 Audit Process
In carrying out the audit process the following criteria is critical:
- Compliance with regulatory requirements
- Applicable to performance management and reporting

Usefulness
- Presentation
- Measurability
- Relevance

Reliability
- Validity
- Accuracy
- Completeness

5.4.1.3 NRF audit outcome for 2015-2016
The selected programme for auditing in the period was the Research and Innovation Support and Advancement (Programme 3). The final audit opinion was "Unqualified for both Usefulness and Reliability".

Findings raised during the audit include:
- Validity, accuracy and completeness (misstatements) of the National Equipment Programme (NEP) and the National Nanotechnology Equipment Programme (NNEP);
- Description of indicators in the Standard Operating Procedures inconsistent with Annual Performance Plan (Corporate);
- Draft Annual Report does not comply with Treasury regulations and guidelines (Corporate);
- Reason for all variances not disclosed in the annual performance report (Corporate); and
- Invalid ID and/or passport numbers resulting in inability to validate race and gender.

The following were findings that affect other institutions:

Validity, accuracy and completeness (misstatements) of NEP and NNEP programmes
- Validity as reported number of users was not supported by logbooks and/or endorsement from the Designated Authority;
- Some users of the equipment were reported more than once and as a result reported information was overstated (Accuracy); and
- Some of the grantholders did not report/submit APR and as a result there was no assurance on completeness of number of users and publications that emanated from the equipment.

The presentation by the AGSA was warmly received by delegates as this also assisted delegates to understand the importance of compliance and importance to refer to requirements of standard operating procedure when working with the NRF. Matters of validity, accuracy and completeness concerning audit findings that affect other institutions were raised. A detailed outline of the work of the AGSA may be viewed in the presentation.

Possible root cause/challenges
- Population to support information reported was not clearly defined which required significant adjustments by management. As a result the audit process was delayed;
- Lack of understanding by officials responsible to collate and verify information supporting performance information included in the annual report;
- Information used to support and verify validity was not consistent;
- The impact of annual performance reports not submitted by grantholders (incomplete reports) was not understood

by management and external stakeholders, i.e. grantholders and DAs; and
- Monitoring controls were not implemented regularly/quarterly as the indicators and targets were annual.

5.4.2 Recommendations
- Governance with affected units, e.g. RISA, should review standard operation procedures addressing the systems and processes for identifying, collecting, collating, verifying and storing information;
- Approved standard operation procedures should be communicated within the NRF to create awareness;
- The agreed upon procedures for the institutions should be reviewed to incorporate audit criteria for AOPO which will provide NRF management with an assurance that performance information reported is valid, accurate and complete;
- Performance information reported including quarterly reports should be supported by reliable evidence; be properly reviewed; and management should confirm validity, accuracy and completeness;
- NRF verification process by internal audit or programme/units may include validation/review of supporting information at the institutions; and
- Specific attention should be paid to ensure that all officials, including external stakeholders, understand their roles and responsibilities in the process of collating information to support reporting, particularly on new indicators.

5.5 Strengthening Partnerships for Capacity Development

Format: Plenary Presentation/Panel Discussion
Facilitator: Priscilla Mensah (NRF)
Panellists: Michael Nxumalo, Sepo Hachigonta, and Raven Jimmy (NRF) and Mike Kachedwa (National Commission for Science and Technology, Malawi)
Date: 05 October 2016
Time: 08:30 - 10:00

5.5.1 Summary of the Presentations
This was the plenary session aimed at strengthening partnerships for capacity building. It was led by the International Relations and Cooperation (IRC) division of RISA. The session was informed by full recognition that internationalisation is driven by the need to establish a global reputation, to access global knowledge and expertise, and to mobilise new resources for capacity development. South Africa alone does not have all the capacity required to train its postgraduate students, hence the leverage of international resources is important.

The session showcased African collaboration. Sepo Hachingonta's presentation focused on Enhancing Research Impact in Africa through Strategic Partnerships - Science Granting Councils and Mike Kachedwa's presentation focused on Supporting Research and Innovation in a Limited Resource Setting - Case of National Commission for Science and Technology (Malawi).

Enhancing Research Impact in Africa through Strategic Partnerships
- Science granting and its role in national development
- Capacity building in the knowledge economy
- Role of the NRF in the South African Science System
- National collaboration in grant making
- Need for Africa collaboration (to among other things share best practices through the Science Granting Council Initiative for example)

Supporting Research and Innovation in a Limited Resource Setting

- Support for research and innovation in a limited resource setting, using Malawi as an example
- Funding joint research projects and conducting joint reviews
- How partnerships leverage additional funding resources
- How issues of graduate unemployment are addressed (given that their training isn't precisely aligned with the needs of the private sector, government or national service)

During the panel discussions, each panellist reflected on the role of having the international partnership as leverage to the strengthening of respective national science systems. Some questions were posed to each panellist which resulted in a very interactive session.

In general, the African delegates were impressed by how the NRF interacts with universities and other research institutions in South Africa. Most of them were ready to have similar interactions with respective institutions in their countries.

5.6 Student Affairs

Format: Breakaway Session 1
Chairperson: Ms Zikhona Lose (NRF)
Panellists: Mr Rozelle Petersen (University of Stellenbosch), Mr Karan Naidoo (University of KwaZulu-Natal)
Date: 05 October 2016
Time: 10:30 – 12:30

5.6.1 Summary of the Discussions

The NRF indicated that its policies with regard to student quotas were well aligned to the relevant Ministerial Guidelines. DAs requested that a clause be included into the Conditions of Grant to clearly indicate whether the grant may be used to pay student loans that were already owed to the institution at the time of the award. It was clarified that, in the event where the student defaults in the current year, the institution has to return the funds to the NRF. If the student defaults after they have already expensed the funds, the matter should be handed over to, and handled by, the NRF. The importance of the supervisory report was, however, also emphasised since it serves as validation of the student's progress.

The DAs indicated that the NRF Online Submission System does not allow students who received Block Grant funding to access Travel Grant applications. The system also does not allow for the capturing of student names when travel funds for Block Grant students are allocated and, as a result, the DAs are unable to determine for whom the travel funds were released from their side. The DAs asked whether it would be possible for the system to allow for the movement of nominations from one programme to another. It would also be beneficial if the system could identify students who are already receiving NRF funding to avoid double dipping. The functionality should furthermore be improved to notify the DAs when Travel Grant applications are submitted on the system and/or when a DA/grantholder nominates a student that is already receiving NRF funding.

The DAs requested that the NRF sends Call information a week before the Call goes out. This will help the DAs to familiarise themselves with the Call guideline on time and easily address queries from the applicants by the time the Call goes out. The NRF should consider opening the Call for continuation of grants later in the year, when most students realise they might need extensions.

The University of KwaZulu-Natal shared information on what they call a fee remission system; where students are given one additional year to complete their Masters and two years to complete their Doctoral degrees. If the students fail to complete either of these degrees within the specified period, they are charged an extra 50% of that which was awarded to them in the first year. The system is optional and allows double-dipping with the NRF.

5.6.2 Recommendations

- Students are expected to direct all their queries to the DA at the Scholarship Office of their institution. There was consensus that all student queries should be communicated to the NRF via the DAs from the respective Research/Scholarship Offices. Neither the NRF nor the DAs should promote direct communication between the student and the NRF;
- DAs asked that the value of the awards for Free-standing, Innovation and Scarce Skills Bursaries be the same to avoid student complaints. This matter will be escalated for consideration at the NRF; and
- It was agreed that an instruction with regard to claiming full funds without expense would be forwarded to DAs.

5.7 Reviews and Evaluations

Format: Breakaway Session 2
Chairperson: Mrs Gaelle Ramon (University of Cape Town)
Panellist: Mr Santosh Ramchuran (Biotech Solutions),
Mr Ferdi vd Walt (Consultant),
Mrs Nosisa Dube (NRF)
Date: 05 October 2016
Time: 0:30-12:30

5.7.1 Summary of the Discussions

5.7.1.1 Virtual Panels (New Way of Doing Panels)

The NRF shared with delegates the new way of review panels through Virtual Peer Review. Since its inception the innovative approach towards reviewing applications online has had positive outcomes. Reviewers are encouraged to review applications at any time that is convenient to them as it does not require them to be physically present at the NRF.

5.7.1.2 Physical Reviews (Normal Peer Review Process)

The Review and Evaluation session deliberated on the importance of providing detailed feedback on unsuccessful applications as this will assist to better future applications. The NRF noted the concern from delegates to strengthen communication channels as it is determined to improve communication barriers. The turnaround time for feedback was also a crucial concern among delegates as it was suggested that perhaps more time needs to be allocated from the time when a Call opens and closes.

Institutions suggested that the NRF should facilitate workshops on proposal writing, roles of panel members and the review process. It was also suggested that during panel meetings (Physical Reviews) students and staff from institutions should be encouraged to sit in as observers (role of peers at institutions). Moreover, in response to the choice of panels, it was mentioned that panels are selected with the consideration of the equity, institutions and expertise.

Researchers should keep in mind that peers recommend which applications are fundable. In order to understand the NRF better some institutions have workshops to explain how the NRF system/review process works. After each panel

meeting an assessor, who is part of the meeting, submits an independent report and it is the NRF's responsibility to ensure that all concerns regarding unbiasedness, preparedness of panel members, equity and demographics are addressed.

The NRF mentioned there is need for researchers to volunteer to serve on panels and DAs were advised to encourage researchers to do so. It was furthermore mentioned that NRF is working on a database for reviewers, recruiting new reviewers (sending out a Call for reviewers and establishing a steering committee for selection) and training reviewers. Reviewers and panel members should have the appropriate knowledge of the subject, but should not be from the same institution or be a student/collaborator of the applicant and preferably have a PhD. The NRF is considering the establishment of a Steering Committee to select reviewers and send out a Call of Reviewers in the near future.

However it is important for DAs, through their institutional structures, to review applications before submitting to the NRF.

A follow up question was posed stating that there might be issues when/if the DAs do not have the knowledge on the subject area of the application or have a specific problem with the application. In response it was mentioned that at UCT researchers have the final say should the application be submitted even if the DA feels that the application should not be submitted. The role of the DA as a gatekeeper of good quality applications was emphasised.

A concern was brought forward by DAs that applicants are asked to choose reviewers and sometimes reports are returned with the appearance of bias. In response, the NRF stated that panel members can see this very easily and assessors are addressing this issue and further treat such reports with caution. It was suggested that DAs should have a guideline of how many national and how many international reviewers should be listed in the application.

Furthermore, a question was posed regarding how strict the NRF is if a researcher is a reviewer. In response, the NRF asks panel members to declare their conflict of interest. Furthermore, it is the role of the assessor to ensure that the same level and integrity of the evaluation is vigorously maintained for all applications. A follow up question was brought forth asking whether there is no need to evaluate an application from a Historically Disadvantaged Institution (HDI), e.g. University of Limpopo (UL) as compared to a comprehensive institution such as the University of Cape Town (UCT). In response, it was mentioned that, without compromising the quality, this matter is normalised with the score card.

Centres of Excellence or South African Research Chairs look at the current infrastructure and institutions such as the University of Venda (UNIVEN) and UCT cannot compete. The NRF encourages that, in such cases, HDI institutions should rather partner with institutions such as UCT in order to establish excellence.

DAs stated that the issue of HDIs competing with other comprehensive institutions is a problem and could cause brain drain. A suggestion was put forth for a differentiation process to take into consideration the past. In response, the NRF mentioned that score cards take care of demographics. Researchers were encouraged to continue trying and to not get disheartened. The NRF will not lower its standards and all role players should participate.

Delegates questioned the NRF regarding the need for one to be a PhD holder in order to be a reviewer/panel member as this might disadvantage other researchers. In response it was mentioned that it might be contradictory if a Master's holder reviews an application from an applicant with a PhD or even a rated one. The NRF maintained that it will look in to the matter as it notes such dynamics and also addressing the concern for South African female researchers as panel members.

5.7.2 Challenges Raised by Panel Members:
- From a reviewer's perspective (Dr Santosh Ramchuran):
- What is surprising is that some applications from rated researchers will have spelling errors, while it is expected from panel members to know what they are doing;
- The number of applications from HDIs is too low and one cannot understand why the NRF does not get an influx; and
- It is encouraged that the Call criteria should be read concurrently with the Framework and the score card should be taken into consideration in order to write a proposal accordingly.
- From an assessor's perspective (Mr Ferdi van der Walt):
- Instructions should be supplied from the Research Offices and the DAs should interpret the Call requirements so that researchers can write good proposals; and
- There is no such thing such as an "accredited journal" - it is called a "peer-reviewed journal". This is a term used in South Africa and is not familiar to/understandable by international reviewers.
- From the NRF's perspective (Ms Nosisa Dube):
- The challenge is to find the right reviewers. The NRF, in terms of transformation, has to work with different races and gender. NRF would therefore like to encourage colleagues from different races to be reviewers in order to diversify the process;
- DAs should encourage researchers to participate in the review process either as observers or as panel members if they qualify; and
- The NRF can facilitate meetings with some of their reviewers to explain how the process works at the research office of their institution.

5.7.3 Recommendations
Applicants should consider the following when applying:
- Criteria on scorecard;
- Human capacity development;
- Language and accuracy;
- Appropriate knowledge of the subject (Preferably with a PhD);
- Outcomes;
- Feedback and the role of the researchers in feedback compilation; and
- Appeals.

5.8 Improving Efficiency (Parallel session)

Format: Breakaway Session 1
Chairperson: Mrs Patricia Jacob (Rhodes University)
Panellists: Mr Praveen Singh (University of Johannesburg), Mr Simon Lotz (NRF)
Date: 04 October 2016
Time: 14:00 – 16:30

5.8.1 Summary of the Discussions

The topic was introduced by Mrs Patricia Jacob, followed by a brief presentation by Mr Praveen Singh and opened to all delegates for inputs, discussions and recommendations. The following topics were addressed during this session:

5.8.1.1 Financial administration

The first item under discussion was improving efficiency with regard to financial administration. A challenge, experienced in a number of cases by both the delegates and NRF, was the delayed uploading of documents by the grantholders and unnecessary delays with the release of funds even after the documents have been uploaded. It was noted that grantholders and students sometimes delay/fail to upload the documents required for the release of funds due to institutional challenges, conference attendance, absence from work, late registration, forgetfulness, etc.

It was proposed that the online system be improved to enable the DAs to create/draw a report of all outstanding Conditions of Grants and Annual Progress Reports at their respective institutions. This will simplify the monitoring and following up of mandatory documentation by the DAs and should improve the turnaround time for submission/ uploading of documents. The NRF also committed to monitoring, and where necessary improve, the turnaround time for the release of funds once the documentation has been submitted/uploaded.

5.8.1.2 Communication channels

The delegates reported that direct correspondence between grantholders/grantholder-linked students and the NRF is still problematic, and requested that the institutional Research Offices be copied in forms of communication between the NRF and grantholders/grantholder-linked students. The unavailability of NRF staff to attend to queries via telephone and/ or email was also raised as a serious challenge for DAs at the various institutions. An example was given that contact people cited on Call documents are often not available to attend to queries by the prospective applicants.

5.8.1.3 Understanding NRF processes

Although the business rules assist with the completion of all compulsory sections on the NRF Online Submission System, DAs requested that these business rules be made available in order to assist them with the completion of the applications.

The DAs indicated that checks and balances should be implemented against the ID-numbers on both the nomination and award for grantholder-linked/Free-standing bursaries to avoid double-dipping.

It was noted that the exclusion related to the 12-hour workweek was interpreted differently by the various institutions and DAs sought clarification in this regard. Delegates were informed that the NRF considers the 12-hour rule to be applicable to work performed at the university (tutoring, etc.). Therefore, any work performed at any other organisation and/or even the student's own business would not apply.

The delegates noted a concern with regard to the funding value of supplementary funding (top-ups). Since the supplementary funding remains R 20 000 irrespective of the level of study, it results in an Honours student's funding effectively being doubled (from R 20 000 to R 40 000), but amounts to a very small addition in the case of postdoctoral funding. It was proposed that supplementary funding rather be allocated as a percentage of the total award based on level of study.

5.8.1.4 Change of institution/PI

The DAs proposed that the student changes of institution should be part of the online process and streamlined on the NRF System. The system might also be able to assist with the processing of a "Change of Institution" up to some level. Grantholder movement from one institution to another should, however, be processed through the Finance & NRF RE Rating Section.

5.8.1.5 Information on changes on Calls

Although Calls are communicated to a specific target group based on a specific funding instrument, e.g. Equipment, Postdoctoral Fellowships, Masters, etc., it was noted that the communication still sometimes reach the wrong DAs. It is proposed that the contact details/DA lists be updated and synchronised at the NRF.

5.8.2 Recommendations

- The NRF should consider how the electronic online system could be improved to give notifications/alerts for:
- Rejected adjustments;
- Students already receiving NRF funding;
- Student travel grant applications; and
- Due dates/reminders for APRs and closing dates in general.
- The delegates indicated that the unavailability of the NRF staff remains a challenge. It is proposed that all NRF staff make use of "out-of-office" messages (email & phones) and ensure relevant contact people are available for queries during Calls. Updated DA and NRF Staff lists should be made available/published on the NRF Website as well as notifications in the event where the NRF will be offline (phone/email/systems) for maintenance/upgrades.
- Clear guidelines should be provided on awards and how grants should be utilised/spent. With the Established Researchers Funding Instruments, e.g. Incentive Funding, running funds is a single line item to be used for any NRF approved purpose. It should be considered how this could be standardised to work for NRF, grantholders and auditors.
- The top-up values for students should be reviewed; DAs proposed that supplementary funding (top-ups) rather be allocated as a percentage of the total award based on level of study.
- Improvement of systems:
- Students Completion Database: Improve functionality in order for the DAs to update the student completion database. Discussions with HEIs to obtain the latest graduation data (HEMIS data);
- Multiple student travel applications on Block Grants: The system should be improved to show the student names;
- Nomination of students: Student nominations should be transferrable from one funding instrument to another;
- Double-dipping of students: The NRF should check on the double dipping of students at the nomination/application stage and award stage. A tool should be developed for DAs to monitor double dipping;
- Applications/Nominations: Repository of documents already uploaded for use in subsequent applications/ nominations. Status changes for applications to be done online. The migration of information from one application to another would assist applicants; and
- Online change of institution/grantholder: To create online motivations/approvals for the movement of students and grantholders from one institution to another.

- The NRF should consider HEIs' closing dates when Call dates are determined. Blogs can be created after each Call to improve interaction and communication amongst institutions and NRF. The NRF should consider creating documents as guidelines on how to apply, review etc.

5.9 Compliance (Parallel Session)

Format: Breakaway Session 2
Chairperson: Ms Zenobia Louw (Central University of Technology)
Panellists: Dr Zolani Dyosi (NRF), Mr Lazarus Matizirofa (NRF), Mrs Thashni Pillay (NRF)
Date: 05 October 2016
Time: 14:30 - 16:30

5.9.1 Summary of the Discussion

The Chair, in her opening statement, reminded delegates of the importance to comply and adhere to polices and guidance in the space in which we operate. Furthermore, the definition of compliance was cited from the Business Dictionary as follows: Compliance can be viewed as the certification or confirmation that the doer of an action (such as the writer of an audit report), meets the requirements of accepted practices, legislation, prescribed rules and regulations, specified standards, or the terms of a contract.

It should be noted that non-compliance creates audit findings to institutions and the NRF. Delegates were further encouraged to commit to compliance. It is imperative that DAs ensure correctness and legality of documents uploaded on the system. By adhering to standard procedures, guidelines and polices we can avoid future audit findings. Non-compliance will possible mean no further funding. This requires that DAs must understand documents so that they can make a commitment to comply. Compliance should be enforced by DAs.

The following areas were covered in the discussion and presentation:
- Required documentation, e.g. Conditions of Grants, Annual Reports, Master Funding Administration Agreement, Proof of Registration, Student Agreements, etc.;
- Missing documents from applications and annual progress reports;
- Compliance challenges, best practice and progress;
- Student completion; completion database is from 2012 and lot of records are not updated;
- Alumni database;
- Financial reporting;
- Knowledge management - National Electronic These and Dissertation;
- Deadlines;
- Documents to be updated;
- DAs to check documents before uploading on the system or submitting of applications;
- Institutions to enforce compliance;
- Institutions to share information with NRF in terms of reporting; and
- Open access compliance and impact.

5.9.1.1 Theses & Dissertations: GMSA Communique 2 of 2015
On completion of the supported degree:
- The Institution is expected to archive the final corrected version in an approved electronic format (single Adobe readable file (PDF)) in the university's repository;

- The institutional office responsible for the award should then ensure that the ETD handle is submitted to the NRF, within six (6) months after graduation;
- NRF-funded ETDs will be harvested and mirrored on the NRF repository at: http://ir.nrf.ac.za/handle/10907/237

5.9.1.2 NRF: National allocating agent for DOIs for datasets
NRF is the national allocating agent for digital object identifiers (DOIs) from datasets in which it demonstrates an elevated level of commitment to open-data and open research. This means that this allows the NRF to become part of a global data-sharing community, learning, collaborating, and advocating with a leading-edge network of data research experts.

Furthermore, the NRF, as a national allocating agent, aims to support and participate in the creation and management of persistent identifiers (DOIs) for research outputs. NRF plays a critical role in advancing DataCite's data-sharing mission through partnership with local HEIs and Academics of Sciences. This will assist in shaping the future of DataCite and data research in general.

5.9.1.3 Requirements under documents
Conditions of Grant:
- Grantholder Conditions of Grant
- Student agreements

APR:
- Complete by grantholder/student
- Student proof of registration

MFAA:
- Overarching agreement between NRF and institutions with regulations on how funds need to be managed, governance and compliance.

5.9.1.4 Improving Efficiencies in Reporting
- Capacity of DAs to validate of report (expertise and resources)
- Aligning reporting requirements with those of institutions
- Reporting timelines linked to project plan
- Capacitating researchers to reporting on finances (future of reporting)
- Receiving reporting improvements from researchers and institutions

It is important to note that the NRF requires reports mainly to review the progress against the plan and report on the outputs to funders.

5.9.1.5 General input/comments
- NRF to re-look at block grant functionalities
- NRF to finalise the student completion database

5.9.2 Recommendations
- DAs to be updated in case of missing documents;
- DAs recommended that turnaround time of the Travel Grant must be on a monthly basis; there must be an application status for update;

- DAs to validate reports;
- Institutions suggested that AGSA visit institutions directly;
- Proof of Registration for Postdoctoral Fellows
- In case where they don't have proof of registration they need to upload commencement letter
- Deadline for grantholder-linked Postdoctoral nominations
- Specified on the award letter, in case where there is no specification, it is after two months of sending award letter.

6. QUESTIONNAIRES

Section	Question / Request	Action
Electronic Systems	The Chinese vs. Indian race should be investigated for student applications	NRF
	Institutions to give researchers more information on how to complete an APR and what to report on	Research Offices
	Institutions agreed to be serious on APR's and reporting, and to have positive attitude	
Reviews & Evaluations	Required detailed feedback on unsuccessful applications	NRF
	Facilitate workshops on particular proposal writing, roles of panel members and review process	
	Develop a database for reviewers, recruit new reviewers and train them	
	Update NRF website with staff details/responsibilities	
	Create blogs for each Call so that common Q&As are accessible to all	
Compliance	Follow up on Block Grant format – nomination	NRF
	Student completion database	
	System to flag whenever data is required/incomplete	
	An instruction with regard to claiming full funds without expense will be forwarded to DAs	
	Required Documentation (CoG, SPR, MFAA etc.)	Research Offices
	Missing Documents from Applications/APRs	
	The importance of Student Completion and Alumni Database	
	NETD	
	Financial Reporting	
	Deadlines	
Finance & Auditing	The NRF to review the value of the grants awarded. The depreciating Rand to be taken into account for SARChI, Incentive Funding for Rated Researchers and Bursaries	NRF
	The Master Funding Administration Agreement will be sent to all Institutions	
	Clarification on audit guidelines, with inputs from NRF Internal Auditors, will be sent in November	
	Guidelines and Conditions of Grant to be uploaded on the system	
	The NRF should communicate how funds should be split in the case where a lump sum is paid for a multi-year grant	
Improving Efficiency	System notifications/alerts for:	NRF
	• Rejected adjustments;	
	• Students already receiving NRF funding;	
	• Student travel grant applications; and	
	• Due dates/reminders for APRs and closing dates in general	
	• Improvement of Systems:	
	• DAs to update the student completion database. Discussions with HEIs to obtain the latest graduation data (HEMIS data);	
	• The system should be improved to show the student names for multiple student travel applications on block grants;	
	• Student nominations should be transferrable from one funding instrument to another;	
	• A tool should be developed for DAs to monitor double-dipping;	
	• Repository of documents already uploaded for use in subsequent applications/nominations. Status changes for applications to be done online. The migration of information from one application to another would assist applicants;	
	• To create online motivations/approvals for the movement of students and grantholders from one institution to another.	

7. EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRES

Questionnaires were distributed to stakeholders focusing on various issues of the workshop in order to identify if issues had been successfully dealt with from the previous workshop. Questions on suggestions and new topics that need to be discussed and facilitated in the next workshop or throughout the year were requested.

8. CONCLUSION

The success of the 2016 RAW was based upon the positive responses, constructive suggestions for improvement, interaction and positive attitude of delegates. The theme and primary purpose of RAW 2016 was to actively engage and network with all stakeholders. Stakeholders and the NRF staff interacted openly and shared experiences and challenges during the breakaway sessions. The programme was aimed at addressing, as far as possible, the interests of the delegates. The NRF also moved closer to its stakeholders in delivering an improved service that focused on customer-centricity as a core value. The workshop provided a foundation on which future events can be built in terms of grant management and systems administration.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The NRF acknowledges the financial contributions from the IRC towards the gala dinner and cocktail party, as well as the sponsorship of the workshop for their contributions and support towards this event.

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