ENDORSEMENTS

PREPARED BY DIRECTOR: BLUE SKIES RESEARCH FUNDING INSTRUMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
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<tr>
<td>DR KALUKE MAWILA</td>
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<td>30 SEPTEMBER 2013</td>
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SUPPORTED BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: KNOWLEDGE FIELDS DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

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<td>DR ANDREW KANIKI</td>
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NOTED BY MANAGER: FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

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<tr>
<td>MRS RENTIA HAMILTON</td>
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NOTED BY GRANTS DIRECTOR: BLUE SKIES RESEARCH FUNDING INSTRUMENT

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<td>MR LEBUSA MONYOOE</td>
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NOTED BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: GRANT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND ADMINISTRATION

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<tr>
<td>DR NDANDULENI NTHAMBELENI</td>
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APPROVED BY DEPUTY CEO: RESEARCH AND INNOVATION, SUPPORT AND ADVANCEMENT

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<tr>
<td>DR DORSAMY (GANSEN) PILLAY</td>
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LIST OF ACRONYMS
1 FUNDING INSTRUMENT AND DESCRIPTION

1.1 Name
BLUE SKIES RESEARCH FUNDING INSTRUMENT

1.2 Description of Funding Instrument
Blue skies research should be considered as a multidimensional concept that can be defined from different perspectives viz. that of the researcher, the funding agency, the object of the research, the research approach, and/or the contribution to the knowledge base.

Defined from the perspective of the researcher, it refers to self-initiated, curiosity-driven research (i.e. seeking to explore knowledge beyond the horizon). Defined from the perspective of a funding agency, blue skies research funding implies a willingness to take calculated investment risks. Defined in terms of the object of research, it focuses on exploring important and/or new phenomena - rather than run-of-the-mill themes - as defined by peers in the specific research community. Defined from the perspective of the research approach, it is novel\(^1\) in terms of one or more of the following components: theoretical framework, methodological approach or research context (for example, shifting paradigms or research technology innovation). Defined in terms of the contribution to the knowledge base, blue skies research is expected to push the frontiers of knowledge and possibly become a point of gravity for subsequent research.

Furthermore the Funding Instrument recognises that the epistemological, methodological and other differences between the respective science cultures (e.g. economic, medical, social, engineering and natural sciences) must be acknowledged and therefore the assessment process should take cognisance of this differentiation. However care should be taken to ensure that multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary blue skies research is not be stifled through this differentiation.

\(^1\) Novel research is about leveraging existing ideas in new ways however the paradigms/boundaries/directions must shift (either completely or partially).
2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument can be described as multi-dimensional self-initiated, curiosity-driven inquiry that necessitates high investment risks, addresses new phenomena, as well as push the frontiers of knowledge. Blue Skies-type of research is associated with fundamental and basic research programmes.

The objectives of the Blue Skies Funding Instrument are:
- To provide space and time for research to push the frontiers of knowledge and to encourage imagination through scientific and scholarly endeavours;
- To support and sustain communities of critical and free thinkers;
- To promote and encourage diversity\(^2\) in research for re-imagining\(^3\) disciplines or academies;
- To bring about new and unpredictable scientific / technological / scholarly discoveries / interpretations / understandings / knowledges.

The NRF is cognisant of the complexities of dealing with this multi-dimensional concept and has structured the instrument as follows:
- Call for Concept Notes (call to open on the 01 October 2013 and closes on 18\(^{th}\) November 2013);
- Fund successful Concept Notes for one year only to a maximum of R 200,000 each (applicants will be informed in February 2014);
- Invite successful Concept Note applicants to submit Full proposals (invitations will be made in February 2015);
- Fund successful full proposals for a three-year period (applicants will be informed in April 2014);
- Full proposals must address:
  a. New phenomena
  b. Push frontiers of knowledge
  c. Multi-dimensionality, and show
  d. Proof of concept (clear evidence of progress made and milestones achieved during the Concept Note funding phase).

See Table 1 for specific details regarding the modus operandi of these processes and see Figure 1 for a schematic representation of the application, assessment and funding processes.

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\(^2\) Diversity in research in this context refers to theoretical frameworks, approaches and methodologies.

3 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The National Research Foundation’s (NRF) purpose is to support and promote research through funding, human resource development and the provision of the necessary research facilities in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, and 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).

A review of the Focus Area Programme (FAP) was conducted in 2007. This review recognized that the rationale behind FAP and model underpinning it remained valid. The review also acknowledged that the focus area programme came at the right time, had been partially successful and that a focused research programme should be continued, even if in an amended form. The review recommended the provision of a funding instrument dedicated to promoting discipline-oriented, self-initiated research. Hence, the Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument was initiated in 2008 to provide space for novel fundamental enquiry, curiosity-driven and basic research.

The launch of the NRF’s Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument in 2008 had challenges which included:

- Insufficient time for broader consultation on the definition of novelty within the ambit of different knowledge fields and on the parameters of blue skies research;

- The adjudication process which unfortunately was amended midstream due to unforeseen circumstances;

- The phasing out of the FAP with limited opportunities for researchers to apply to other NRF funding instruments for their research that was previously funded through the FAPs. The confusion and anxiety resulted in a misconstrued understanding of the intended purpose and nature of the Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument;

The NRF acknowledged that it was important to engage with the research community on the refinement of this instrument. A two-staged process was followed which included:

- an open invitation to researchers in South Africa to input into the refinement of the instrument via an online questionnaire, and

- a workshop held on 16 March 2010 in Pretoria (taking into account the comments received from the above step) for invited participants to finalise the refined shape of the instrument (see http://www.nrf.ac.za/files/Final%20report-28%20April%20'10.doc for workshop report).

The Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument has been refined based on the outcomes of the above process- which are reflected in this call for research funding.
3.1 **Environmental scan**

The National Research Foundation’s (NRF) purpose is to support and promote research through funding, human resource development and the provision of the necessary research facilities in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, and 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 launched Vision 2015 that aims to promote world-class research, and create a transformed society and sustainable environment. Soon after its founding in 1999, the NRF took a strategic decision to organise its support and promotion of research in terms of nationally relevant focus areas. These focus areas represented a significant attempt by the NRF to steer the research funding away from the traditional comfort zone of self-initiated research, important as that zone may have been throughout the history of science – until the late nineteen eighties. The focus area approach at this time was partially in line with the strategies of other comparable national funding agencies across the world.

3.2 **Objectives**

The objectives of the instrument are:
- To provide space and time for research to push the frontiers of knowledge and to encourage imagination through scientific and scholarly endeavours;
- To support and sustain communities of critical and free thinkers;
- To promote and encourage diversity in research for re-imagining disciplines or academies;
- To bring about new and unpredictable scientific / technological / scholarly discoveries / interpretations / understandings / knowledges.

3.3 **NRF Perspective**

The Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument creates space to push frontiers of knowledge, enable unpredictable discoveries as well as promote high impact research within disciplines. This is in line with the NRF’s Vision 2015 which envisages the following for South Africa:
- World-class research;
- Transformed society; and
- Sustainable environment

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4 Diversity in research in this context refers to theoretical frameworks, approaches and methodologies.

3.4 Institutional structure

The funding instrument is managed by the Knowledge Fields Development (KFD) Directorate, the Reviews and Evaluation (RE) Directorate is responsible for the review processes up to the award of grants. The Grant Management and Systems Administration (GMSA) Directorate’s responsibilities include disbursement of grant funds and ensuring adherence to the conditions of the grant.

3.5 Financing support

The Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument is made possible through the National Research Foundation’s Parliamentary Core Funding.

3.6 Key stakeholders

Science Councils, Public Universities and Museums

4 MODUS OPERANDI

The Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument modus operandi are described in Table 1 while the flow diagram, Figure 1, depicts the application, assessment and funding processes with appropriate timelines.

4.1 Call for proposals

A call for Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument proposals is made once a year. All application materials must be submitted electronically via the NRF’s Submission system at https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za

The NRF closing date for endorsed Concept Notes applications is 18 November 2013. 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 themselves with the internal closing date, set by their institution in order to meet the NRF closing date. Incomplete or late submissions will not be accepted.

NB: At each phase (Concept note and Full proposal) of the Blue Skies Funding Instrument application process, applicants must ensure that their Curriculum Vitae are updated on the NRF Submission system at https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za.

All outputs that were entered by researchers on the NRF Online system were migrated to the NRF Submission system. When logging on to the NRF Submission system, researchers are requested to verify their outputs on the Landing Page by selecting the type of output under the heading “To be Reviewed” and verifying each output individually until there are none left to be reviewed.

These Curriculum vitae will be used in the assessment processes
FIGURE 1: The NRF’s application, assessment and funding process for the Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument

Call for concept notes by the NRF (01 October 2013)

Submission of concept notes to the NRF (18 November 2013)

Two-tier assessment process for concept notes (postal peer review and panel review) Nov 2013-Jan 2014

Funding decision: Selected pilot/proof of concept projects funded for one year only (applicants will be informed in Feb 2014 for funding in the 2014 calendar year)

Panel review of full proposal submissions (Mar 2015)

Invited submissions of full proposals (only to those funded for Concept Notes) (Feb 2015)

Funding decision: Selected proposals funded at 100% of panel recommended for three years (applicants will be informed by April 2014 for funding from 2014 to 2016)

New cycle starts in 2017

Invited submissions of full proposals (only to those funded for Concept Notes) (Feb 2015)
### 4.2 Eligibility

**TABLE 1: Application, assessment and funding details for concept notes and full proposal submissions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who may apply</th>
<th>CONCEPT NOTES</th>
<th>FULL PROPOSALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only researchers based at public research institutions that are recognised by directive of the Minister of Science and Technology are eligible to apply as the principal investigator. Their affiliation must be either as:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Only researchers who have been funded in Year 1 of that cycle for pilot/proof of concept projects will be invited by the NRF to submit full proposals submissions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time employees on contract but on condition that the appointment 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 university or university of technology on behalf of a third party to fulfill a very specific function for the latter does not qualify for support.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired researchers provided that:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>there is proof of institutional support in the form of an employment contract, office space, administrative support, access to research equipment and space. The institution will have to ensure that a minimum of six months are spent at the facility for the purpose of research and research capacity development.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the researcher must have a research publication track record and must be actively supervising postgraduate students at present.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Process</td>
<td>CONCEPT NOTES</td>
<td>FULL PROPOSALS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
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<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A two tiered peer-review assessment process will be followed, which includes:</td>
<td>The assessment process will include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Postal or remote peer review: The postal or remote peer reviewers will be specialist in the ambit of the respective proposals.</td>
<td>Panel-peer review: One panel will be constituted to assess all the full proposal submissions. This panel will comprise of members with reputable research standing who represent different broad spectrum knowledge fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panel-peer review: Panels will be broadly constituted based (i.e. Social Science, Humanities, Law, Fine Arts, Engineering and Natural Sciences (Physical Sciences, Life Sciences, Biological Sciences etc). These areas may be merged or further disaggregated as appropriate depending on the submission demands. At least one panel will be constituted for multi/inter/trans-disciplinary research (if required). Panel members will be selected based on their broad overview of the respective knowledge field and their research standing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment criteria</td>
<td>Postal or remote peer reviewers will provide qualitative comments on the concept notes in terms of whether the research concept proposes to address:</td>
<td></td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
|                     | - Important and/or new phenomena - as defined by peers in the specific research community.  
|                     | - Novel approaches in terms of the theoretical framework(s), methodological approach(es) or research contexts.  
|                     | - The extent to which, the research proposes to push the frontiers of knowledge production. |
|                     | The panel-peer reviewers will:  
|                     | - Moderate the postal/remote peer review reports and grade each concept note as per the same assessment criteria employed for the postal-peer review process.  
|                     | - Assess the track record of the applicant and team members (if relevant) in terms of the capacity to undertake the proposed research.  
|                     | - Advise the NRF on the appropriateness of the budget request.  
|                     | (see APPENDIX 1 for scorecard details) |
|                     | - The panel-peer reviewers will assess the full proposal submissions in terms of its: |
|                     | - Feasibility:  
|                     | - This will be based on the progress made to date (Year 1)  
|                     | - proposed approaches and activities planned for the research project  
|                     | - availability of required resources.  
|                     | - Envisaged contributions to human resource capacity development (including, issues of equity and redress).  
|                     | - The panel will also advise the NRF on the appropriateness of the budget request.  
|                     | (see APPENDIX 2 for scorecard details) |
### Proposal grading

**Assessment Criterion is graded on a scale as follows:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Meaning of score</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>It is clear that the achievement could not be improved within the specific context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>The achievement is exceeding average but could still be improved within the specific context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>This is an average achievement within the appropriate context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>The achievement is not meeting average expectations within the appropriate context however this could be improved with minor amendments/revisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>There are major shortcomings or flaws in the submission.</td>
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### Context

Note: The scoring process must be made with sensitivity to the context in which the proposal is made. The context will include the research field or discipline. It will also include other relevant influences such as societal and institutional textures. If the criterion is not applicable to an application, the weighting of the criterion will equal zero. The score of each criterion for each application will be contextualised to accommodate variability in knowledge fields, institutional capacity etc.

### Where to apply

- The application system for Concept Note submissions will open on the **0 October 2013**. All applications must be submitted via the NRF Submission system at [https://nrs_submission.nrf.ac.za](https://nrs_submission.nrf.ac.za).
- Select the Blue Skies Concept Notes Call 2013 under Create New Application. The research office of the principal applicant **MUST** endorse each application. Incomplete and late submissions will not be accepted.

### Closing dates

- The closing date for Blue Skies Concept Notes is also **18 November 2013**. All applications must be endorsed by the research office of the principal applicant. Applications will not be accepted by the NRF if any of the below parameters apply:
  - required formats are not adhered to
  - incomplete submissions are made (see below for required

- The NRF closing date for full proposals is **18 November 2013 (this is a closed call)**. Applications will not be accepted by the NRF if any of the below parameters apply:
  - annual progress reports (APR) have not been submitted to the NRF.
  - applications are not validated or endorsed by the research office of the principal applicant.
### Required documentation

- All the documentation below must be submitted online at [https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za](https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za)
  - Completed and validated application form
  - Updated CV
  - Uploaded letters from co-investigators confirming their participation in the proposed research, if relevant
  - Any additional supporting documents

### Funding decision process

The NRF’s funding decisions are informed by the review panels' accumulative weighted score of each assessed application. Only applications scoring accumulative scores of “3” and above across all panels will be considered for funding by the NRF. The NRF will fund the top-scoring applications across all panels within the instrument specific budget.

### Feedback

In principle, feedback on the assessment of the application is regarded as a crucial value-adding function of the NRF. In a limited number of cases, feedback from either the reviewers and/or panel members who evaluated your application will be sent. These selected comments will be provided to give insight into some of the peer thinking that informed the grant decision-making process, and to give constructive support to applicants. In general, no feedback will be sent where the assessment was positive unless specific conditions are attached to the funding.
4.3 **Rules of participation**

Only researchers based at public research institutions that are recognised by directive of the Minister of Science and Technology are eligible to apply as a principal investigator.

For both the Concept Notes and Full Proposal applications phases of the Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument, the core research team consists of a principal investigator and a co-investigator(s). In addition, the **principal investigator** (i.e. the applicant) must be an active researcher who takes intellectual responsibility for the project, its conception, any strategic decisions called for in its pursuit, and the communication of results. The principal investigator 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. S/he will take responsibility for the management and administration of resources allocated to the application.

A **co-investigator** is an active researcher who provides significant commitment, intellectual input, relevant expertise into the design and implementation of the research application. S/he will be involved in all or at least some well-defined research activities within the scope of the application. South African-based co-investigators are eligible to receive NRF funds from the grant if the team's application is successful.

**Post-doctoral fellows, students, technical and support staff should NOT be listed as co-investigators.**

The project may also include:

**Research Associates/Collaborators**

These are individuals or groups who are anticipated to make relatively small but meaningful contribution to the research endeavours outlined in the application. Research Associates/collaborators will not actively participate in the design and implementation of the research application. They are not considered a part of the core research team.

4.4 **Timelines**

Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument grants will be awarded for a period of three years. Successful applicants who wish to apply for further funding upon completion of a three-year funding cycle must submit new applications. All applications will be assessed on a competitive basis. The Blue Skies Research funding cannot be automatically renewed. Preferential treatment will not be given to those who have previously received NRF funding.

4.5 **Management of funding instrument**

The KFD Directorate of the NRF – Research and Innovation Support and Advancement (RISA) manages the Blue Skies Funding Instrument and is primarily 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;
• Ensuring that the funding instrument delivers on its intended goal(s).

The Reviews and Evaluation Directorate is responsible for managing the adjudication process including:

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

The GMSA Directorate is responsible for

• Managing the call process, that is,
  o Posting the call;
  o 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.

4.6 Lines of authority

The funding instrument Director, in the KFD Directorate generally manages the Blue Skies 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 Project team of staff drawn from RE, GMSA; Knowledge Management and others. The Director responsible for this instrument reports to the Executive Director of the KFD Directorate. Directors from GMSA and RE will normally manage the granting and review processes, respectively with the assistance of Professional and Liaison Officers. The Directors in both the GMSA and RE report to their respective Executive Directors.

5 FINANCIALS

5.1 Funding model

The Blue Skies Funding Instrument is made possible through the Core Funding model of the National Research Foundation.
5.2 **Funding ranges**

A maximum budget of R 200,000 (Two hundred Thousands Rands) per Concept Note applications will be considered. Concept Note funding will not be extended beyond one year. Student bursary support will not be provided. Applicant must provide a detailed, high-level operational expense budget with motivations.

Successful Full Proposals will receive funding that accommodates the following budget items:

a. Grant holder-linked student support  
b. Staff development grants  
c. Research-related operating costs     
   o Sabbaticals  
   o Materials and Supplies  
   o Travel and subsistence  
   o Research / Technical / Ad hoc Assistants  
   o Research Equipment

For more detail on budgets, refer to the funding guideline, Appendix 3.

5.3 **Funding support**

The NRF funds the Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers on an ongoing basis. Science councils, universities, museums and other NRF-recognized institutions are the primary beneficiaries of this funding instrument.

5.4 **Funding Instrument budget**

The budget for this instrument originates from the NRF’s Core Funding.

6. **MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME**

The National Research Foundation is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument. Since its inception in 2008, the Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument has been once in 2010, following extensive consultation with the research community. A URL link for the report detailing the proceedings of this workshop is on page 6 of this Framework document. The Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument will be monitored every seven years.

6.1 **Reporting**

The KFD Director is responsible for reporting twice annually on the contribution of the Blue Skies Funding Instrument to the Knowledge Fields Development Directorate’s Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). In addition, the Director is responsible for reviewing progress and reporting two quarterly on the Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument.
6.2. **Timeframes for evaluation**

The Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument will be evaluated every seven years by a team of reviewer who will be appointed by the National Research Foundation. The NRFs’ Knowledge Fields Directorate in consultation with the Review and Evaluation Directorate will agree to and set Timeframes for the review in line with the existing guidelines.

6.3 **Broad terms of reference for evaluation**

The broad terms of reference for the evaluation of the Blue Skies Funding Instrument will be determined by the Knowledge Fields Development prior to the evaluation taking place and in accordance with the tenets set in the NRF’s Review and Evaluation Directorate’s Guidelines.

8.4 **Utilisation of the results of the evaluation**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFERENCE TO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grant officer:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name: Mmamokete Mabuela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: 012 481 4882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-Mail: <a href="mailto:Mabuela@nrf.ac.za">Mabuela@nrf.ac.za</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liaison Officer:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name: Eulenda Mosese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: 012 481 4147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-Mail: <a href="mailto:eulenda.siweya@nrf.ac.za">eulenda.siweya@nrf.ac.za</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

1. APRs- Annual Progress Report
2. CV- Curriculum Vitae
3. FAP- Focus Areas Programme
4. GMSA- Grant Management Systems Administration
5. KFD- Knowledge Fields Development
6. NRF- National Research Foundation
7. SKFG-Strategic Knowledge Fields Grants
## Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Sub-Criteria</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Score / 4</th>
<th>Weight (Total = 100%)</th>
<th>Weighted score (Total = 4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the “Concept Note”</td>
<td>The “Object” of the research</td>
<td>- How important and/or new - as defined by peers in the specific research community- are the phenomena being investigated?</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research approach</td>
<td>- Are novel approaches in terms of the theoretical framework(s), methodological approach(es) or research contexts being explored?</td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contribution to the knowledge base</td>
<td>- Will the proposed research push the frontiers of knowledge production?</td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track record of applicant</td>
<td>Past research</td>
<td>- What is the applicant’s output in terms of publications, patents, designs, performances etc?</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students trained</td>
<td>- What has the applicant’s contribution been in terms of training M and D students? This includes the training of black and/or females students.</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 100%                      | 0.00                      | 100%                      |
# APPENDIX 2: PANEL ASSESSMENT SCORECARD: FULL PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

## Blue Skies Research Funding Instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Sub-Criteria</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Score / 4</th>
<th>Weight (Total = 100%)</th>
<th>Weighted score (Total = 4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feasibility of the research</td>
<td>Progress made to date (in Year 1)</td>
<td>Has sufficient progress been made in Year 1 in order for further investments to be made?</td>
<td>A minimum score of 2 is required for the proposal to be considered for funding</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proposed approaches and activities planned for the research project</td>
<td>Are the proposed research design, methods and data analyses appropriate for the proposed research? Is the work plan achievable within the timeframe and available resources?</td>
<td>A minimum score of 2 is required for the proposal to be considered for funding</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusion and availability of the required resources</td>
<td>Is the relevant expertise included? Are the activities of the students embedded in the work plan (if relevant)?</td>
<td>A minimum score of 2 is required for the proposal to be considered for funding</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human research capacity development</td>
<td>Plans for human research capacity development (HRCD)</td>
<td>Are students appropriately and clearly embedded in the research proposal? i.e. M and D students only.</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity &amp; redress</td>
<td>Of applicant</td>
<td>Black, female, young (five years after obtaining a PhD). or disabled</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plans for training black and/or female students</td>
<td>M and D degrees</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data storage and usage</td>
<td>Plans for digital data storage, usage &amp;/or dissemination</td>
<td>If relevant, are the proposed plans appropriate?</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Totals                          |                           | 100%                      |
APPENDIX 3: FUNDING DETAILS FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS

GRANT HOLDER-LINKED STUDENT SUPPORT

The distribution for these bursaries is targeted at the ratio:

- Final year Undergraduate and Honours/BTech student assistantships: 100% SA citizens with a minimum ratio\(^6\) of 1:1 for Black\(^7\) and White participants
- Masters bursaries: 90% to South Africans and 10% to candidates from other African countries
- Doctoral bursaries: 80:15:5, SA: Other African: Rest of the World
- Postdoctoral bursaries: Open to all who undertake research in South Africa.

Values and period of support for Student Assistantships
- Final year undergraduate (Full-time) R 8 000 pa
- Honours / BTech (Full-time) R 20 000 pa

Values and period of support for Bursaries & Fellowships
- Masters degree (Full-time) R 40 000 pa
- Masters degree (Part-time) R 10 000 pa
- Doctoral degree (Full-time) R 60 000 pa
- Doctoral degree (Part-time) R 12 000 pa
- Postdoctoral (\textit{pro rata per month}) R 150 000 pa

RESEARCH-RELATED OPERATING COSTS

These costs include materials and supplies, travel (including conferences) and subsistence, equipment and research/technical/ad hoc assistance and sabbaticals to other research organisations and institutions of higher learning may be included within the context of the project applications. These costs should be justified and commensurate with the planned outputs, as they will be assessed on this basis. The amount awarded within this framework can be used at the discretion of the applicant.

General guidelines

Sabbaticals

Sabbaticals will be considered for a period from two to six months. The maximum sabbatical amount requested should not exceed R 80,000 for six months. Funding for sabbaticals of less than six months will be reduced pro-rata. Only principal investigators and co-investigators are eligible to apply for sabbatical funding.

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\(^6\) With the emphasis on Black students
\(^7\) Inclusive of Africans, Indians and Coloureds
APPENDIX 3: FUNDING DETAILS FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS

Materials and Supplies

Generally, the NRF does not provide financial support for:

- Basic office equipment including computers and consumables unless the computer is required for the research itself.
- Basic office stationery, photocopying costs, printing costs unless these items form part of the research tools.
- Journal publication costs, journal subscription costs and book costs.
- Telephone, fax and internet costs.

Research Equipment

Funding for equipment will be limited to R 50,000 per year. Requisitions for large equipment items (> R 200,000) should be submitted through the NRF’s Equipment Programme.

Travel and subsistence

- International conference attendance: Generally the NRF restricts this amount to R 25,000 per person to a maximum of R 50,000 per application per year for a team application i.e. for principal investigators and co-investigators (local only). The NRF does not pay for students to attend international conferences.
- International visits: These will be considered on a case by case basis. Such visits must be integral to the research plan and strong motivations should accompany these requests. Realistic funding allocations will be based on the requested activities. Only outgoing visits will be considered depending on the availability of funding. Funding requests for students for international visits will not be considered.
- Local conference attendance: Generally the NRF restricts expenditure against this item to R 4,000 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 benefits to attend 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 rate which varies per institution/organisation. Applicants are requested to provide details of this rate as well as the estimated distance to be travelled within the given year.
- Local accommodation costs should not exceed a 3* establishment

Research / Technical / Ad hoc Assistants

- This instrument does not provide funding for the salaries of the core team members if they are based at organisations/institutions where the salaries are state funded. In cases where the salaries are not state funded, the total salary amount for all core team members will be limited to up to 20% of the overall grant amount. A strong motivation for the salary component must accompany the request.
- Requests for research/technical/ad hoc assistance should be treated with caution. Generally the NRF would encourage applicants to engage students to undertake the research rather than employing research consultants. This guideline however does not apply when specific and/or highly specialised...
research/technical expertise is required. This should be CLEARLY motivated for in the application.

- Administrative assistance does not qualify as technical assistance.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Applicants may apply for Staff Development grants for South African staff members at their own and other institutions, and who are not NRF grant-holders in their own right. These staff members must be registered for either a Masters or Doctoral degree, supervised by the applicant or a co-investigator of the application and must be directly involved in the NRF approved project. These grants can be used to contribute towards the operating costs for research undertaken at the supervisor’s facility, as well as the cost of travel and accommodation to enable staff members to meet with (co)supervisors. Grants usually range between R 15,000 and R 30,000 depending on the nature of the research and the proximity of the student in relation to the supervisor. Applicants themselves are not eligible for Staff Development Grants. The maximum period of support is three years for a Masters degree and five years for a Doctoral degree.

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.