NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION AND EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL

Call for applications for
South African postdoctoral researchers interested in undertaking research visits to ERC funded teams

CLOSING DATE: 18 May 2018

In 2015, the South African Department of Science and Technology (DST) entered into an agreement with the European Commission (EC), appointing the NRF and the European Research Council (ERC) as implementing agencies for this partnership. This partnership is part of a larger implementing arrangement developed by the ERC themed: "Opening ERC teams to the world", which solicits interest from ERC funded Principal investigators and Teams to partner and host NRF Funded Postdoctoral Researchers. The aim of the partnership is to provide NRF Funded Postdoctoral researchers opportunities to pursue research collaboration with European colleagues already supported through EU-funded ERC grants. The first call was launched in 2016 and five postdoctoral researchers were funded as a result.

The collaboration is intended to enable South African postdoctoral researchers supported through the NRF to undertake research visits to ERC-supported teams. It is therefore expected that collaborations will occur in similar areas of scientific pursuit and on topics of mutual interest. The NRF is therefore pleased to announce this second call to interested South African postdocs to foster research collaboration with ERC-funded researchers.

Aims of the Programme

- To contribute to scientific advancement in South Africa and the EU through the funding of research visits in research fields of mutual interest, aligned with interested ERC grantholders;
- To provide an opportunity for early-mid career researchers in South Africa to meet and interact with European counterparts; and
- To contribute meaningfully to research capacity development.

Areas of Cooperation

Attached, as Annexure A, is a list of ERC Grantholders interested in partnering with South African researchers. This list also provides the fields of study and a detailed description of the ERC projects. Therefore, those South African researchers working within the same fields are hereby encouraged to apply.

In terms of human capital development, South African applications from previously disadvantaged individuals are encouraged, as is the involvement of historically disadvantaged higher education and research institutions.

Eligibility criteria

Interested South African researchers should be affiliated with a recognised higher education or research institution such as a university, university of technology, science council, museum or any recognised national research institution such as a national facility. Only South African researchers and permanent residents who are currently doing their postdocs, supported through any of the NRF postdoc funding instruments (e.g. Research Career Advancement Fellowship, the
Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, and the Thuthuka Post PhD track), and interested in undertaking research visits to ERC-supported teams as listed in Annexure A, are eligible to apply. Commercial institutions and private education institutions are not eligible to apply under this programme.

Activities covered under the programme

This programme aims to provide opportunities to South African early-mid career researchers to pursue research collaboration with European colleagues already supported through EU-funded ERC grants. The research visits should be organised as follows:

- Single and long-term (e.g. 6-12 months) or
- Multiple short-term visits of not less than 10 days and not more than 6 months (e.g. for joint experiments).

The research visits should begin at least 12 months prior to the termination date of the NRF funded programme and 18 months prior to the termination date of the ERC grant.

Funding modalities

South African researchers will continue to receive their NRF project funds during the period of the visit. Through this collaboration, the South African researchers are permitted to make use of their running and/or travel expenses to cover the travel costs (i.e. flights, accommodation and subsistence costs) associated with their visits to ERC supported teams.

The NRF will make some funds available to top-up the South African researchers’ travel grants should their postdoc grants not be sufficient to cover all related costs. The awarding of a top-up grant will be done on case-by-case basis depending on the strong motivation from the researchers.

Visiting South African researchers will be incorporated into the research teams of the ERC-funded PI (at the Host Institution of the ERC projects) for the duration of the visit, so that any relevant expenses (over and above the travel expenses) can be claimed under the ERC grant by the ERC Grant-Holder.

Supporting documents to be submitted with all applications

- Letter of approval from your employer (i.e. Head of Department)
- Support letter from your supervisor/host to ensure synergy with your already funded South African project
- ERC team / Host Institution (HI) confirmation letter
- Detailed curriculum vitae
- Schedule / work plan with specific timelines
- Budget requested (must be aligned to the work plan / schedule)

Application procedures

Applicants can apply by following the steps below:

- Applications must be submitted electronically to the NRF on the NRF Online Submission System at https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/
- Register/Login using your ID number and password.
- Go to “My Applications” and select “Create Application”.
- Select the call for which you are applying for: NRF/ERC 2018 Call.
- Complete all compulsory sections applicable to you. Please attach the required documents in PDF format.
- Remember to submit your application on completion.
- Incomplete applications will not be considered.
Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be considered (please see above for details on eligibility).

Please contact your research office or Designated Authority if you have any queries.

**Please note:** Applications submitted outside the NRF Online Submission System will not be accepted. No hard copies will be accepted and will automatically be disqualified by the NRF.

**Reporting**

On completion of the visit, the NRF researchers are expected to provide the NRF with a full report indicating the benefits of this collaboration for their NRF funded programmes.

**Contact details for queries**

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